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# A rationale for a correspondence version of a first-year university expository writing course.

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**A RATIONALE FOR A CORRESPONDENCE VERSION  
OF A FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY EXPOSITORY WRITING COURSE**

by  
**Natasha Wiebe**

**A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
through the Faculty of Education  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Education at the  
University of Windsor**

**Windsor, Ontario, Canada**

**1998**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**My task here was to prepare Expository Writing (University of Windsor course #26-100) as a distance education course, which included developing a comprehensive study guide to take the place of classroom instruction (see Appendix A). This rationale justifies the approach I take in the study guide with references to literature in the fields of expository writing and distance education.**

- Chapter 1 reviews the origins of expository writing and distance education courses in Canada. It also touches on the current delivery of these courses, particularly at the University of Windsor.**
- Chapter 2 reviews the literature concerning the pedagogies of writing that gained prominence in Canada in recent decades (the natural process and environmental process approaches) and makes conclusions about what characterizes an effective expository writing course.**
- Chapter 3 reviews the literature related to effective distance education, especially course design, and makes conclusions about what characterizes an effective distance education course.**
- Chapter 4 synthesizes the literature reviews of previous chapters by suggesting features of an effective writing course delivered at a distance. It also recommends ways to implement these features within Expository Writing 01-26-100-91, an undergraduate course offered at a distance from the University of Windsor.**
- Chapter 5 proposes course objectives, a course schedule, and a series of assignments for Expository Writing 01-26-100-91. It also introduces the topics that are explored in the appended study guide, and justifies the inclusion and presentation of these topics with reference to the literature.**

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## **CHAPTER I.**

### **OVERVIEW**

#### **In This Chapter...**

This chapter reviews the origin of expository writing courses and distance education courses in Canada and the current delivery of these courses, particularly at the University of Windsor.

#### **Expository Writing**

Prior to the late 1970s, composition was not studied at most Canadian universities; rather, it was considered the concern of the secondary classroom (McKendy, 1990). By the late 1970s, concern with the illiteracy (McKendy) and deficient writing (Waterston & Beattie, 1977; *Writing Skills, 1977*) of Canadian youth contributed to the formation of undergraduate writing instruction, much as the same concerns led to freshman composition in the 1890s in the US. By 1981, 5 of 30 Canadian universities had compulsory English courses with composition components, and four others institutionalized compulsory testing of writing (McKendy, 1990). Attempts were made to form networks of Canadian writing instructors and researchers, as is exemplified by the series of reports and conferences that resulted from the collaboration of all levels of instructors who met at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, between 1977 and 1981 (*How We Learn, 1980; How We Teach, 1981; Writing Skills and the University Student, 1977; Writing Skills in Ontario, 1978*). In many cases, Canadian writing instructors relied on the experience and expertise of their American counterparts. For example, American experts spoke at Canadian writing conferences and in 1983 a Canadian edition of the popular American text, *The Practical Stylist*, was published (McKendy, 1990).

Where is Canadian postsecondary writing instruction today? It is difficult to find literature concerning the development and status of Canadian writing programs. Perhaps this is partly due to the fact that few institutions employ or provide grants to people who conduct research on writing (Graves, 1993). In 1993, Graves conducted a study of deans

of *all* faculties at 61 (of 87) Canadian universities. His objective was to discover how writing was taught across Canada and how the instruction differed from that in the United States. Graves found that over two-thirds of the responding faculties required or encouraged students to take a course focused on improving writing skills, and that over half of the faculties that responded provided some kind of instruction in writing. In fact, Graves points out, more courses are offered *outside* English departments (and French departments at francophone universities) than within, because of the importance of writing to the daily work of graduates of these departments, such as engineering and business. Another reason that writing courses tend to be offered outside English departments is that many English departments are "reluctant to accept writing as a legitimate area of study and research; consequently they refuse to assume overall responsibility for the teaching of writing" (p. 91). This is reflected by Graves' findings that the departments rely on part-time and short-term contract instructors and on teaching assistants to teach their few writing courses (cf. Long, 1986) and that institutional support for researchers in writing is scarce. First-year writing courses within university English departments are the "exception rather than the rule," reports Graves. This contrasts with American universities where English departments are responsible for most writing instruction and offer large-scale freshman composition programs as an introduction to university writing for *all* students.

Graves (1993) believes that English departments resist establishing composition as a field because, until recently, they were not required to teach writing. That was the responsibility of secondary schools (which, incidentally, emphasized literary study over composition [McKendy, 1990]). Instead of teaching writing, universities were to "preserve and transmit" English and French cultural heritage by "communicating it to students through the study of literature" (Graves, 1993, p.98). In fact, Graves writes that the *belletristic approach* -- the combination in first-year English literature courses of composition, literary study, and the "cultural values embedded in the nature and content of this study" -- is uniquely English Canadian. According to Graves, the emphasis in

these first-year literature courses is almost always on critical reading, with instruction on writing concentrated in one-hour optional tutorials once a week or instructor comments on graded essays. This approach to writing is similar to that followed in American English literature courses in the early part of the twentieth century (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1996), but contrasts with the approach of the few writing courses offered in the US around the same period. The American writing courses divorced literature from writing and sought to teach the writing skills necessary for success in the business world by emphasizing rules and "daily writing drills over cultivating a literary sensibility" (Cmiel, 1990; cf. Berlin, 1984). Graves suggests that, traditionally, American composition courses used literature only as models for students to imitate, but since American classrooms, like Canadian ones, are filling with students from different cultures, he foresees that Americans will move toward an examination of "cultural values in texts and in readers of texts" (p.84).

Graves' survey (1993) shows a constant increase in Canadian writing programs since the early 1970s. However, since writing instruction is offered by variety of departments, he is unable to pin down the "exact nature" of the instruction. Some departments define writing as "remedial grammar"; for example, Graves reports that Quebec writing courses tend to focus on "grammatical purity and correctness." Other departments "treat writing instruction as part of an introduction to critical reading and literary appreciation," as is exemplified by first-year English literature courses. Graves acknowledges, however, that personal narratives, grammar exercises, and essays written in the modes of discourse predominate in many Canadian and American postsecondary institutions. This may not be true of secondary schools, at least in Ontario. From the *Provincial Review of Writing in Grade 12 English* (Ontario Ministry, 1991-92), it seems that teachers of grade 12 advanced English assign essays far more frequently than narratives and grammar exercises and that they assign personal writing assignments (journals, letters) just as frequently as essays.

A recent change to writing instruction and research has resulted from the popularity of the

World Wide Web. Some institutions offer virtual writing centres, such as the Writer's Complex of SUNY Empire State College and the Computer-Assisted Writing Centre of York University. Many Canadian and American institutions publish the syllabi of their writing courses on the Web. Some offer on-line components of writing courses; for instance, Wilfrid Laurier University incorporates computer conferencing into its English 210E Technical Writing course. Bizzell and Herzberg (1996) write that, in the 1990s, little literature on previous areas of focus, such as the writing process, has appeared: instead, compositionists have "forg[ed] ahead into new frontiers" and embraced networking and hypertext. This opens a new area of study for the composition community, as electronic text changes the relationship between writer and reader, reviving features of oral literature (Bolter in Bizzell & Herzberg).

### **Expository Writing 26-100 at the University of Windsor**

Currently, about four sections of Expository Writing 26-100 are offered each semester on the University of Windsor campus, and at least one section per year by distance education. The English department does not recommend Expository Writing 26-100 for English majors; instead, in keeping with the English Canadian belletristic approach (Graves, 1993), the department requires majors to take two survey courses of English literary traditions, and a writing about literature course (University of Windsor, 1996-97). On the other hand, Expository Writing 26-100 is recommended for University of Windsor programs such as Drama in Education, and required in programs such as Science (University of Windsor, 1996-97) and Pharmacy at nearby Wayne State University, Michigan. Non-native English speakers in these programs are encouraged to take Writing English for Non-Native Speakers 26-103 (C. Cassano, English Department, personal communication, 1996).

At least one of the on-campus sections is a large class of roughly 200 students. The remaining, smaller sections are usually taught by instructors on short-term contract, which Graves (1993) finds to be typical of Canadian institutions. The large class is divided into small groups which, also typical of Canadian universities, are taught by



graduate assistants (Graves, 1993). The entire class meets together between three and five times a semester for a session led by the course coordinator, a sessional instructor in the Department of English. During the remainder of the semester, students meet during "labs" to discuss their assigned readings and drafts with their graduate assistant and their peers. Students save their writing in a portfolio, which receives a temporary grade at mid-semester and a final grade at the semester's end. At the end of the semester, students choose their one best in-class essay and their two best out-of-class essays (which include the traditional argumentative essay, narrative essay, and research paper) to be graded by pairs of graduate assistants according to an evaluation form prepared by the course coordinator (C. Cassano, English Department, personal communication, March 13, 1996). As will be discussed in Chapter II, conferencing and portfolio assessment are techniques that are fairly new in popularity in both Canadian and American composition courses. The contemporary approach taken in the University of Windsor's on-campus sections of Expository Writing contrasts with that of the current distance education course (Hurwitz, 1995), which is based on an American package. The distance course follows the traditional American model by beginning with an overview of grammatical rules and an introduction to the structure of good argumentative essays; it assumes that students will learn to write effectively by applying the rules with which they have been presented.

### **Distance Education**

In a series of articles on continuing education, the *Windsor Star* reported that due to emphasis on more job-specific skills (McIntosh, 1995) and an increasing belief that postsecondary education is important for employment (OISE in Whipp, 1995a), adults are "returning to the classroom in record numbers" (McIntosh, 1995; Whipp, 1995b). Some returning students are unable to attend on-campus classes such as Expository Writing because of their work schedules (St. Pierre & Olsen, 1991). Others are disabled (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989), live far from campus (Continuing Education, 1997b), or have familial responsibilities that restrict them from attending classes (Holmberg, 1981 in St. Pierre, 1990b). Today, many of these students take distance education courses, an alternative

system of education which began developing in the US in the early 1700s, and in countries like Sweden, England, Germany and Canada by the 1870s (Willis, 1993).

So-called because its students study "at a distance" or separated physically from their instructor and usually their classmates, distance education became more visible to the public in the early 1970s. This was partly due to the establishment of Canada's Athabasca University and the United Kingdom's Open University, two institutions devoted to distance education research, development and delivery (Willis, 1993). Distance education may also have become more prominent in recent decades because communications technologies are now used to bridge the gap between instructor and students. Groups of students meeting simultaneously in several schools or community centres can now communicate with each other and their instructor through media such as e-mail, audioconferencing (telephone classes) and videoconferencing (interactive video). Contact North, an Ontario government program, assists distance educators by connecting more than 100 classrooms in northern Ontario through audio and videoconferencing (Contact North a; Contact North b). At this point, while institutions gather funds and support for the new technologies, the most common form of distance course in Canada (Morris & Potter, 1996), North America (Thompson, 1990), and the world (Continuing Education, 1997b; St. Pierre, 1990b) remains the correspondence or print-based course, which traces its heritage in the US to the 1700s (Willis, 1993), and in Ontario to Queen's University to 1889 (Continuing Education, 1997b).

A variety of organizations offer distance education courses: postsecondary and secondary schools, businesses and government departments (Continuing Education, 1997b; Leser, 1995a). Some educational organizations are devoted to distance education, such as the Open Learning Agency in British Columbia and Athabasca University in Alberta. Others, like the University of Windsor, provide a distance education program in addition to their on-campus programs. Traditional institutions that offer a distance education program as an auxiliary to their on-campus programs are the primary source of courses to students who choose to study at a distance (Continuing Education, 1997b) — there are over 35

such providers in Canada (Morris & Potter, 1996). According to a recent United Nations report, almost all community colleges in Canada are now offering distance education courses, while the number of university courses offered this way increased by at least 50% between 1986 and 1994 (Pittaway, 1994).

### **Distance Education at the University of Windsor**

Following the lead of distance providers such as Britain's Open University and Alberta's Athabasca University, the University of Windsor has prepared distance courses through course teams since the inception of the distance program in 1989. The teams include:

- a course writer or content expert selected by the relevant academic department.
- an instructional designer who assists the course writer in adapting on-campus instruction to distance education, edits the print materials, and arranges for copyright clearance and the production of other media materials. (Some organizations, such as Athabasca and Ontario's Laurentian University, employ editors as well as instructional designers.)
- a course-materials producer who desktop publishes the print materials.
- technicians who help produce other media to supplement the print materials, such as computer-based instruction, audiocassettes or videocassettes.

At the University of Windsor, courses are reviewed in both their early and completed forms by faculty members. The manual for University of Windsor course writers (Continuing Education, 1996) comments that the "degree of scrutiny that takes place in the preparation of quality distance education material is rarely witnessed in the traditional classroom."

Prior to the beginning of a semester at the University of Windsor, the completed course packages are sent by courier to registered distance students. These packages usually consist of pre-prepared lesson notes, assignments and a textbook. Like the course packages of other distance institutions, the university's print materials are often supplemented by audiocassettes, videocassettes, computer software, or broadcast

television programs. Similar to distance students at most traditional universities, University of Windsor students are required to mail assignments to the instructors by deadlines specified by the instructors; in some cases, students can fax or e-mail their assignments. (Other institutions like British Columbia's Open Learning Agency allow students to decide on their own deadlines and enrol at times that are convenient for them. [Leser, 1995b].) Instructors grade the assignments and return them with comments and sample solutions. The University of Windsor arranges invigilated final examinations at over 70 sites throughout Canada, most within Ontario.

As is common in distance programs, the university offers a telephone-tutoring system that allows students to contact their instructors and participating classmates during designated hours for support. Since September 1994, some instructors have provided their e-mail addresses and set up class listservs (e-mail discussion groups). At the same time, the University of Windsor began delivering several courses through videoconferencing from the main campus to students at sites in Chatham and Sarnia (Mathewson, 1994). The university delivered its first Internet-based distance course in January, 1997. In 1998, some distance instructors began beta testing the university's own Virtual Course Kit (ViCKi), a Lotus Notes application that provides a course events calendar and group discussion forum and that helps the instructor prepare and manage documents for the World Wide Web, manage e-mail from students, and prepare student grades.

The profile of the University of Windsor distance education student matches that of the distance population in general. Most University of Windsor distance students are aged 23 or older, which is older than the traditional on-campus student (18-22 years) (Landstrom & Nantais, 1995; Wiebe & Nantais, 1995; Wiebe et al., 1993). Slightly more than 60% are female. The majority work, mostly at full-time positions (Landstrom & Nantais; Wiebe et al.). The students identify distance from campus (Landstrom & Nantais; Wiebe et al.) and employment responsibilities (Landstrom & Nantais) as the two primary reasons they choose distance over on-campus courses. A study conducted at the University of Manitoba in Spring 1996 suggests that the demographics and motivations

of distance education students are changing, that the population is shifting toward younger students with local residence, part-time service jobs, and full-time course loads who combine independent study with on-campus courses (Wallace, 1996).

### **Summing Up**

As they are in the most North American institutions, the University of Windsor's distance courses are primarily print-based and developed by course teams. Teletutoring is the chief means of contact between students and instructor, although new communications technologies such as e-mail, videoconferencing and World Wide Web pages are making inroads in the distance program.

The University of Windsor takes a traditional, prescriptive approach in its current distance education section of Expository Writing, but follows a contemporary approach in its large on-campus section, which is designed around conferencing and portfolio assessment. The next chapter will distinguish between the traditional and contemporary approaches to teaching composition.

## **CHAPTER II.**

### **REVIEW OF EXPOSITORY WRITING LITERATURE**

#### **In This Chapter...**

The last chapter reviewed the origin and current delivery of Canadian on-campus expository writing and distance education courses. This chapter will review the literature concerning the *process approach*, the pedagogy which gained prominence in Canada in the 1980s and which can be seen as maturing into what Hillocks (1986a) calls the *environmental approach*.

#### **The Traditional Pedagogy (1890-1970)**

Shortly after the inception of freshman composition at Harvard, a committee concluded that students had received inadequate training in writing before entering college. The committee's reports helped to shape the pedagogy of teaching writing in the United States. Because they had no experience in teaching writing, the committee members focused on obvious features of the essays they read: "the errors in spelling...usage, and even handwriting. They thus gave support to the view that found its way into influential composition texts of the period and haunted writing classes ever since" -- learning to write is learning matters of superficial correctness (Berlin, 1984).

One name for the view that the Harvard Reports helped perpetuate is the *traditional pedagogy*. At the turn of the century, the traditional pedagogy became entrenched in American freshman writing courses (Berlin, 1984). For example, by the 1930s, the American College Entrance Examination Board stopped asking prospective students about literature and started asking about vocabulary and syntax (Cmiel 1990). In composition textbooks, discussions of style and different literature genres were replaced by attention to correctness, such as distinctions between *like* or *as* and discussions of parallel structures (Cmiel, 1990). Several decades later, when Canadians began developing writing courses of their own, they too followed the traditional approach, partly because they looked to experienced American writing instructors for guidance

(McKendy, 1990), and partly because it was the same approach espoused in Canadian content classes (Hillocks, 1986a).

What are the features of the traditional composition pedagogy? When comparing a number of conventional textbooks, Richard Young (1978) discovered that they emphasized correctness by highlighting a concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with plain style (economy, clarity). He also noted that the texts contained such features of traditional pedagogy as

the emphasis on the composed product rather than the composing process; the analysis of discourse into words, sentences, and paragraphs; the classification of discourse into description, narration, exposition, and argument...the preoccupation with the informal essay and the research paper; and so on.

In 1980, James Berlin and Robert Inkster (in Hairston, 1982) conducted a study similar to Young's. After analyzing patterns in four acclaimed composition texts, they concluded that the traditional pedagogy emphasizes expository writing to the exclusion of all other forms, and makes style the most important element in writing. Furthermore, Berlin and Inkster added, the pedagogy neglects invention almost entirely. After reviewing the studies of Young, and Berlin and Inkster, Maxine Hairston (1982, p.78) concluded:

I would make three other points about the traditional paradigm. First, its adherents believe that competent writers know what they are going to say before they begin to write; thus their most important task when they are preparing to write is finding a form into which to organize their content. They also believe that the composing process is linear, that it proceeds systematically from prewriting to writing to rewriting. Finally, they believe that teaching editing is teaching writing.

In 1986(a), George Hillocks described the traditional pedagogy (his *presentational mode*

of instruction) as characterized by:

- lecture and teacher-led discussion concerning the concepts to be learned and applied;
- the study of models that explain and illustrate the concept;
- specific assignments and exercises that involve imitating the pattern or following previously-discussed rules; and
- feedback following the writing, primarily from the teacher.

What characterizes effective writing instruction? Advocates of the traditional pedagogy might answer, "Presenting rules and models of good writing so that students can internalize them and produce error-free essays of their own for evaluation by the instructor."

### **Catalysts for Change**

In the late 1960s, the traditional pedagogy began to lose dominance in American composition courses (Hillocks, 1986b), and by the early 1980s, the changes began trickling into Canadian classrooms (see *How We Learn to Write*, 1980 and McKendy, 1990). Catalysts for change included

- the advent of New Criticism (formalism) in the 1930s, which emphasized the relationship between thought and language. New Criticism helped steer the composition community toward a view of writing as a process which included "developing ideas by recasting sentences" rather than a mere act of "pouring ideas into preset sentence forms" (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1996, p.8).
- constructivist psychology which states that learning is not ordered or linear and that learning proceeds best when it is "natural," when it is personally meaningful, and when learners construct concepts for themselves (Weaver, 1996).
- a weak correlation between grammar instruction and writing ability (Donovan &



McClelland, 1980; Hillocks, 1986a; Mullin, 1995; Shuman, 1995).

- the conflict of social, ethnic and regional dialects with the assumption that all writing must subscribe to "Standard English" (Donovan & McClelland, 1986).
- the new open admissions policies of colleges and universities (Hairston, 1982; Howard, 1985). As a result, student populations included more individuals who required remediation in writing (Shaughnessy, 1977).
- the limitations of negative criticism and teacher's written comments (Donovan & McClelland, 1980).
- the return to school of veterans and other groups of students who were "less docile and rule-bound than traditional freshmen" (Hairston, 1982). For instance, McKendy's speaker (1990) talks of how examples such as "The cat is man's best friend" from Baker's *The Practical Stylist* were inappropriate for students worrying about Vietnam.
- an increasing number of high-school graduates going to university and college (Hairston, 1982) as society perceived postsecondary education to be more important (Shaughnessy, 1977).
- the teaching of writing by untrained instructors (Hairston, 1982), such as graduate students, and busy professors of literature with little time or interest to do research in composition (Long, 1986).
- innovative works which reflected a larger shift in theories of and attitudes towards language and language learning. For example, Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations* (1977) provided suggestions for teachers in the new, crowded classrooms of basic writers and encouraged them to address the logic underlying students' writing errors instead of merely drawing attention to these errors. Donald Murray's *A Writing Teacher Teaches Writing* (1968) recommended that instructors teach students to write by initiating them into the process writers go through rather

than by giving them rules (in Hairston, 1982).

### **The Process Pedagogy (1970+)**

Process strategies such as conferencing, journals and freewriting gained popularity in American classrooms in the mid 1960s, and in Canadian classrooms by the early 1980s (see McKendy, 1990). However, in 1986, Arthur Applebee noted that although the journal literature was dominated by the best ways to implement process approaches, extensive research suggested that there had been *no* widespread movement toward process-oriented assignments in American schools and colleges. Applebee acknowledged, however, that composition and grammar texts were changing to accommodate the process approach (for example, they included sections on the writing process) and posited that if these texts were adopted in the classroom, they might lead to more attention to process-oriented activities. From a study conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Education (1991-92), we can infer that process activities have gained attention in Ontario secondary schools. Most of the responding instructors indicated that their students engaged regularly in such process activities as prewriting and conferences.

What distinguishes the process pedagogy from the traditional one? Specifically, the new pedagogy emphasizes the process by which the individual writer produces writing, rather than the appearance of the final composed product (Applebee, 1986). A review of the literature reveals several characteristics of the process approach:

1. It emphasizes the writing process rather than the written product.
2. It teaches personal as well as expository writing.
3. It views writing as a vehicle for learning rather than merely a skill.
4. It encourages students to write spontaneously instead constraining them with certain ideas and forms.
5. It teaches grammar in the context of the writing process rather than in isolation from

the process.

6. It employs writing conferences with instructor and classmates during the writing process rather than confining feedback to the instructor's evaluation of the final composed product.
7. It defers grading so that students are motivated to revise their assignments.

**Tenet 1: Instructors should teach the writing process.**

Murray may have originated the rallying cry of the process pedagogy, "Teach the writing process, not product," in a 1972 article by that title (Hairston, 1982). Whereas traditional educators convey the impression that writing process is linear (Hillocks, 1986a), progressing from prewriting to writing to revising, Murray (1985) stresses that the process is a recursive one that results in several drafts and that varies with the personality, learning style, experience and task of the student writer. Hairston, Hillocks, and Bizzell and Herzberg (1996) state that this view of the writing process is supported by research such as Flower and Hayes'. Applebee (1986) agrees; in fact, he points out that the *emphasis* of process research has been upon the thinking strategies underlying the writing process. Hillocks (1986a) points out that many researchers from 1976 to 1986 concerned themselves with the writing process, particularly the general phases of prewriting, writing and revision, but that there is still a great deal to be learned about subprocesses such as searching memory for appropriate information and applying criteria to make revisions.

Shaughnessy (1977, p.78) believes that familiarity with the composing process is necessary for beginning writers as those who are unaware of the process "tend to think that the point in writing is to get everything right the first time and that the need to change things is a mark of the amateur". Englert, Raphael and Anderson (1992) agree that students should be introduced to writing process, concluding from a literature review and their own modest study that if students share a common writing vocabulary it will be easier for them to express and solve their writing problems. Bereiter and Scardamalia

(1987) argue that students should be aware that most of the writing process does not involve "putting words on paper," and must understand that they must work toward independence in managing the process. Lindemann writes (1987, p.229) that "Process-centred courses assume that if students understand the composing process and become conscious of their own writing behaviors, they'll be better able to control those practices".

**Tenet 2: Instructors should teach personal writing.**

The process classroom includes personal as well as expository writing (Applebee, 1986; Hairston, 1982). Sandra Stotsky (1993) defines personal writing as writing about what you already know, that is, writing about your personal beliefs, feelings, knowledge and experiences. Research conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Education (1991-92) suggests that personal writing (journals, personal letters) is assigned as frequently as expository writing in Ontario's grade 12 advanced-English classrooms. The Ministry reports that in 1991-92, nearly half of grade 12 advanced-English teachers required students to keep a journal or log in which they "reflect[ed] upon and respond[ed] to the literature they...studied" (p.106).

Stotsky writes that theorists, researchers and instructors emphasize personal writing because they believe that learning and motivation to write can be enhanced by assignments that draw or focus on the personal experience, beliefs and knowledge of the student. James Williams (1996) seems to subscribe to this belief in that a tenet of his book for teachers, *Preparing to Teach Writing*, is that writing classrooms should emphasize *meaningful* or relevant tasks for students. The report by the Ontario Ministry of Education (1991-92) lends credence to the constructivist view that learning and motivation can be enhanced by personally-relevant assignments: over half of the students surveyed said they liked personal writing, and most felt their best writing was produced when they chose a topic from a list or came up with their own topic. (I suspect that student motivation may be linked to the *novelty* of writing about self-chosen, relevant topics rather than dry, recycled topics assigned by the instructor. The fact that student

respondents preferred writing poetry, songs, stories and plays to the more traditional essays, reports, notes, and answers to assigned questions further suggests that novelty has a lot to do with motivation.)

What do writing instructors say about personal writing? Instructor Haney (1982) feels that experience is a good way for students to understand new ideas presented in the writing classroom, and her assumption is sound according to cognitive learning theory (Slavin, 1991). From his postsecondary classroom experience, Stephen Judy (1980) argues that the best student writing comes from personal feelings and experiences. Some educators structure their curricula so that students begin the course by reporting or recording their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and gradually move from informal and personal writing (journal entries, letters, narratives) to more academic and public writing (research papers, literary analyses), a pattern that seems based on Piagetian theory (Judy, 1980; Moffett, and Britton et al. in Stotsky, 1993; Williams, 1996). Moffett and Britton et al. advocate the "inner worlds to outer worlds" (personal writing to ideocentric writing) pattern based on the premise that students are more comfortable writing about what they already know, although some studies suggest that children gravitate toward nonpersonal writing first (cited in Stotsky, 1993). Instructor Ruth Saxton (1987) reports that freshmen at California Women's College find it difficult to write about themselves and their opinions, speculating that this is because the personal writing involves "abstract mental processes and communicative structures [seemingly the traditional thesis-support form] of which they know very little." Perhaps Saxton's students would be more comfortable with personal writing if they were writing in familiar communicative structures, such as the letter or journal, rather than the thesis-support or argumentative essay. Although research by the Ontario Ministry of Education (1991-92) indicates that grade 12 advanced-English instructors assign personal writing as often as expository writing, more teachers rated the traditional genre of expository writing as very important to the course than they did personal writing (80%:41%).

### **Tenet 3: Writing is a vehicle for learning.**

The process classroom views writing as an act of constructing or vehicle for learning rather than merely a skill. Journalist and instructor Murray (1985) believes that "The act of writing is an act of thought"; and instructor Dowst (1980) argues that we compose our knowledge when we compose language, that writing is a "means of knowing and a means of coming-to-know." Although Ackerman (1993) argues that there is no empirical evidence for writing to learn, Hairston (1982) reports that research on writers' composing processes supports writing to learn, and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) base their model of writing as knowledge-transforming upon a decade of cognitive research. Hillocks (1986a) concludes from two studies that writers seem to invent or "discover" specific details, words, syntactic structures, and perhaps some larger structures as they write. Because writing can be viewed as a vehicle for learning, many institutions have incorporated *writing across the curriculum* rather than confining it to the English department. This is a radical departure from traditional American pedagogy, which divorced composition not only from other disciplines, but also from the study of literature within the English department.

From his comprehensive review of American composition research since 1963 (which surveys work at all grade levels and summarizes what is known in the areas of the composing process, the writer's repertoire, modes of instruction, grammar, criteria for better writing and invention), Hillocks (1986a) reports that *free writing* "is widely approved by authorities" because it is a means of not only thinking through ideas, enhancing creativity, and increasing writing skill, but also of discovering new ideas. He writes that most studies of free writing are generated as a "response against presenting specific topics, a practice believed to be inhibiting." He concludes that this type of freewriting, even when practised daily or several times per week, does *not* accomplish what process proponents hope for. However, he recommends structured freewriting, in which writers jot down their ideas on a particular topic, for searching memory and generating ideas about which to write.

**Tenet 4: Students should write spontaneously instead of being constrained by certain ideas and forms.**

The view of writing as an act of constructing has had implications for assignments within the composition classroom. Judy (1980) points out that, traditionally, students were shown the structure of an essay and told to make their compositions fit into the structure. In his process classroom, he explains that "form grows from content and is inseparable from it." Judy writes,

Many good writers report that the discovery of an organizational pattern is a mystery. Ideas gather and percolate; the writer thinks over some beginnings and endings; he or she may start and discard some drafts. But eventually, the "eureka" moment happens. A workable plan occurs or presents itself and the writer is off and running (p.41).

Eschholz discourages writing teachers from the traditional practice (Applebee, 1986) of presenting students with *prose models* before they have begun to write. He agrees with Judy that "students must discover what they have to say before they determine how to say it" (Eschholz, 1980, p.29). As Hillocks' (1986a) meta-analysis of American composition literature indicates, Eschholz's view is typical of many process proponents who believe that students are "stultified by exposure to what they see as arbitrary criteria, models, problems, or assignments." Seemingly, this view has some support in research, for Hillocks concludes that the available research would *not* lead us to expect that the study of models have much impact on improvement in writing, perhaps in part because the persistent study of models leads some students to believe that they must sit down and produce a finished essay without the "necessary intervening processes."

Does this mean we should discard the use of models completely? At least half of the advanced grade 12 students surveyed by the Ontario Ministry of Education (1991-92) would say no, for they reported that models of good writing by other students and by professionals were helpful in improving their writing. Eschholz and Judy and many other

process proponents allow students to choose both content and form, but this is not true of many other composition and non-composition classrooms in which students may have some control over *what* they say, but *how* they say it (the form of their assignment) is stipulated by the instructor. Can models help students learn how to produce certain forms? Hillocks (1986a) concludes that models are useful, but not in the way that they were used in the traditional classroom. He (1986b) suggests that to produce a report, analysis or argument of their own, students need more than the knowledge that allows them to identify the forms. His research indicates that the most effective approaches to teaching writing involve students in learning how to examine and analyze data and how to use formal knowledge. Accordingly, Hillocks recommends that before instructors give a writing assignment, they should require students to read several models of the form they will be required to reproduce, identify the characteristics common to the models, and revise or complete inadequate models. This is different from the traditional use of models, which assumes that students will internalize characteristics of the model simply by reading and discussing its characteristics, rather learning the procedures for producing the forms.

**Tenet 5: Grammatical issues should be taught in context of the writing process.**

According to Weaver (1996, p.7), when people talk about “teaching formal grammar,” or “the traditional teaching of grammar,” they usually mean

teaching sentence elements and structure, usage, sentence revision, punctuation, and mechanics via a grammar book or workbook, or perhaps a computer program. They mean teaching grammar as a system, and teaching it directly and systematically, usually in isolation from writing or the study of literature.

The most widely quoted statement about the ineffectiveness of traditional grammar instruction comes from a 1963 publication, *Research in Written Composition* (Newkirk, 1990). Based on a review of almost 70 years of research, authors Braddock, Lloyd-Jones



and Schoer claim (cited by Newkirk) that "the teaching of formal grammar [syntax] has a negligible or, because it displaces some instruction and practice in composition, even a harmful effect on improvement in writing." Hillocks (1986a, p.227) concurs with Braddock and his colleagues:

In short, the findings of research on the composing process give us no reason to expect the study of grammar [syntax] or mechanics to have any substantial effect on the writing process or on writing ability as reflected in the quality of written products....These findings have been consistent for many years.

Some process educators use the conclusion made by Braddock et al. to claim that grammar should *not* be taught (Newkirk, 1990). On the other hand, despite the consistent findings of research that there is "little pragmatic justification for systematically teaching a descriptive or explanatory grammar of the language," many instructors continue to teach it, because they do not believe the research or assume that it is faulty, or because it is easier to assign exercises and grade them than to lead students through the process of producing effective pieces of writing (Weaver, 1996). Hartwell (1988) concludes that the debate about teaching traditional grammar has not been resolved by empirical studies; that educators accept or reject the studies based on their prior assumptions about grammar. However, most process educators would agree that *some* grammar study (syntax, usage and mechanics) is useful, for reasons such as

1. students and instructors need a common vocabulary that relates to language to discuss writing efficiently and effectively (Englert et al., 1992; Newkirk, 1990; Shuman, 1995).
2. the public makes harsh judgments about the intellect of those who make errors in writing (Connors & Lunsford, 1988; Shuman, 1996).
3. errors intrude upon the consciousness of the reader; "They demand energy without

giving any return in meaning; they shift the reader's attention from where he is going (meaning) to how he is getting there (code)" (Shaughnessy, 1977, p.12).

Which selective aspects of grammar should students learn? From an extensive study of 3,000 freshman and sophomore papers, Connors and Lunsford identified the top 20 errors, which Shuman (1995) conveniently groups into three categories: (1) punctuation, especially the misuse of commas and apostrophes, (2) irregular verbs, and (3) the use and reference of pronouns. In her chart of errors that seem most important to address when teaching grammar, Weaver (1996, p.15) marries some errors catalogued by Connors and Lunsford with some catalogued by Hairston (1981), who studied the significance of particular errors to business leaders:

Table 2.1. Comparison of error ranking in the Hairston (1981) and Connors-Lunsford (1988) studies.

CATEGORY IN HAIRSTON STUDY	FREQUENCY RANK IN THE CONNORS-LUNSFORD STUDY
<p><i>Status marking</i></p> <p>Lack of subject-verb agreement: <i>we was; Jones don't think</i></p> <p><i>Very serious</i></p> <p>Lack of subject-verb agreement: <i>The president or the vice-president are going to be at the opening ceremonies. I believe that everyone of them are guilty.</i></p>	<p>Lack of subject-verb agreement is ranked 14, but we cannot tell what proportion of the items fit Hairston's status marking category and what proportion fit her very serious category.</p>
Sentence fragments	12
Run-on sentences	18
<p><i>Serious</i></p> <p>Dangling modifiers</p>	19
Lack of commas to set off interrupters like <i>however</i>	5
Lack of commas in a series	15
Tense switching	10

How should the grammatical items identified by Hairston (1981) and Connors and Lunsford (1988) be taught? Unlike the traditional composition classroom, the process classroom does not assume that students must first learn grammatical rules so that they can construct a meaningful whole (Murray, 1985). Instead, it ascribes to the constructivist principle that learning typically proceeds best from whole to part (Weaver, 1996). As a result, many process educators begin their courses or textbooks by teaching the "global" (above-sentence level) issues of organization, content and communicative effectiveness, and reserve discussions of "local" (below-sentence level) issues until the end when, theoretically, the student would be proofreading and editing his or her work (Applebee, 1986; Green & Norton, 1995; O'Hare & Memering, 1990; Stewart, Bullock & Allen, 1994; Wiener, 1990). This view finds support in the literature. According to Hillocks (1986a), the research, in combination, indicates that the study of mechanics and usage ("conventional correctness") is likely to have effect only during last-minute editing.

Murray (1985) seems to prefer the process approach to grammar instruction ("teach significant grammatical issues last and in context of other writing concerns") to the traditional approach ("present grammatical rules at the beginning of the course"). However, he cautions that writing is not simple and acknowledges that the individual student may require help with the particulars of language before the final draft as parts of a working draft move from vague to concrete. Similarly, Weaver (1996) concludes that teachers should focus on helping students eliminate from the *final* drafts of their more formal writings the kinds of items that are considered most serious by professionals (identified by Hairston, 1981) as well as the kinds of errors that occur most frequently in the writing of college students (identified by Connors & Lunsford, 1988), *as appropriate to the needs of the individual class and writer*. (See Table 2.1 for a list of these errors.) Weaver's recommendation expresses a tenet of process pedagogy: grammatical issues should not be taught in isolation, as they are in the traditional classroom; rather, significant and relevant grammatical issues should be addressed in the *context* of the writing process. Teaching in context would seem to counter the negligible or harmful

effects that teaching formal grammar can have when it displaces some instruction and practice in composition (Braddock et al., 1963 in Hartwell, 1985; Hillocks, 1986a).

What teaching strategies can help instructors teach writing in context, that is, to address significant grammatical issues at the appropriate point in the course as well as at the appropriate points in the individual student's writing process?

1. Rather than marking every mistake in student papers, process instructors often follow Shaughnessy's (1977) recommendation to look for *patterns of error* and attempt to redress the logic that the writer employed in creating certain errors consistently (e.g., Lindemann, 1987; Newkirk, 1990, p.155 & 307). Individual error patterns can be discussed during *student-teacher conferences* (e.g., Mullin, 1995) of 1-2 minutes or longer in length (Weaver, 1996), and collective error patterns can be discussed during class.
2. Many process instructors advocate "small doses" of grammar (e.g., Long, 1989; Weaver, 1996). Newkirk (1990, p.306), for example, recommends that grammar be taught in five to seven-minute *mini-lessons* at the beginning of some writing classes, and that each lesson deal with an issue that *relates* to the writing that students are doing so the instruction has a better chance of "sticking." Weaver points out that teaching through examples is effective because it places the error in a functional context and does not weigh down students with unnecessary terminology. In fact, she argues that instructors can use examples (preferably from the students' writing) to help students eliminate most of the top 20 errors identified by Connors and Lunsford (1988).
3. From her literature review, Weaver (1996) proposes that instructors introduce only a *minimum of terminology*, much of which can be learned sufficiently just through incidental exposure, say, as instructor and students discuss selected words and structures in the context of reading and writing. In fact, Weaver points out that only 5 of the top 20 errors identified by Connors and Lunsford (1988) require an

understanding of grammatical concepts to be understood and then less than 12 terms in total. For many grammatical terms, Weaver writes, students need to understand what the teacher is referring to, but they do not always need enough command of the terms to use such terms themselves. The findings of Richard Haswell (1983, cited in Hartwell, 1988) seem to support Weaver's conclusion. He notes that his students correct 61.1% of their errors when they are identified with a simple mark in the margin rather than by error type.

4. Instructors can help individual students correct grammatical errors by inviting them to *read their writing aloud*. From several studies, Hartwell (1988) notes that when reading their writing aloud, most students "will correct in essence all errors of spelling, grammar, and, by intonation, punctuation, but usually without noticing that what they read departs from what they wrote." Perhaps pointing out this to students, or asking them to read their work aloud to peers who follow along in a draft would help them make the necessary corrections. Recording their reading and then comparing it to their draft can also help students edit their drafts (Weaver, 1996). Weaver claims that student writers can eliminate by intonation at least 3 of the top 20 errors identified by Connors and Lunsford (1988).

**Tenet 6: Writing conferences help students improve their writing.**

The process classroom is learner rather than teacher-centred. For example, its emphasis on personal writing, writing to learn, and contextual grammar study places the student first — these approaches imply that what the individual student has to say is worthwhile (cf. Applebee, 1986, p.104), seem to promote personal over academic growth (cf. Judy, 1980), and place the needs of the individual learner over a set curriculum. The popularity of writing conferences among process instructors further exemplifies the learner-centredness of the process classroom. According to Lensmire (1994), the traditional classroom "locks the student into a teacher-controlled pattern in which the teacher assigns writing, the student writes in response, and the teacher evaluates." The process classroom

attempts to "disrupt this pattern" through teacher-student and peer writing conferences, during which instructor and/or classmates collaborate with the student writer, offering suggestions that will guide revisions (see also Applebee, 1986). To help students learn to read their drafts with increasing effectiveness, and to ensure that students retain ownership of their writing, Murray (1985) emphasizes that the student writer should comment on his or her own writing *before* the instructor or classmates read the draft and respond with questions and suggestions for revisions. Many practitioners recommend that writing conferences be brief to accommodate attention span as well as the busy schedule of the instructor (Williams, 1996). For example, the University of Windsor English Department (1991) recommends the conferences be 20 minutes in length and, in their books for writing teachers, both Murray (1985) and Williams recommend conferences be no more than 15 minutes in duration. From experience, Murray finds weekly conferences with the instructor to be more effective than biweekly or biselectorly conferences.

Various claims have been made about the effectiveness of writing conferences.

According to enthusiastic instructors, conferences are advantageous because they

- help students through the various stages of the writing process. For example, students can use feedback on their work in progress to revise effectively (Williams, 1996).
- discourage plagiarism since the instructor must see the students' work in progress (C. Cassano, personal communication, January, 1997).
- allow the instructor to address the different needs of individual students (Zhu, 1995). For instance, the instructor can address the needs of the individual student in a conference with the student. Or, the instructor can circulate the classroom while students engage in peer conferencing groups (Williams, 1996), offering help to individuals as required.
- teach student writers to edit their own drafts by teaching them to view their work from the reader's perspective (Carnicelli, 1980; Murray, 1985; Newkirk, 1990, p.153;

Shaughnessy, 1977; Zhu, 1995). When a student reviews the drafts of other students, it opens their eyes to questions they should ask themselves and trains them to respond to and improve their own drafts (cf. Lensmire, 1994; Lindemann, 1987).

- allow instructors to make more effective responses orally than they could in written comments (Carnicelli, 1980). (A survey conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training in 1991-92 belies this claim, since instructors and students of grade 12 advanced English saw both written comments *and* instructor-student conferences as very helpful in improving writing; in fact, more respondents rated written comments as very helpful than they rated conferences as very helpful.)

In addition to support from practitioners, support for conferencing has come from theories (Zhu, 1995) such as Vygotsky's (1978) *theory of proximal development*, which states that adult guidance or collaboration with more capable peers can increase the learning of children. Hillocks (1986a) writes that some treatments suggest a combination of instructor and peer conferencing has greater effect than either individually. However, there does not seem to be much conclusive data on the effectiveness of instructor-student or peer conferencing.

**Tenet 7: Deferred grading motivates students to revise their assignments.**

In the learner-centred process classroom, portfolio assessment seems popular (Despain & Hilgers, 1992; Hillocks, 1986a; Lindemann, 1987). In fact, after surveying over 170 instructors of all levels, Jerry Johns (1992) found that in northern Illinois between 1990 and 1991, instructor familiarity with the portfolio concept grew 50%. Usually, portfolio assessment means that grading is deferred to the end of the course, when students submit all assignments and sometimes drafts to the instructor in a portfolio. Often, students select for grading (sometimes by teams of evaluators, as is the case for the large on-campus section of 26-100) what they believe to be the best of the assignments. One argument for portfolio assessment is that many samples of student writing give better portraits of the students as writers (Despain & Hilgers, 1992). Another argument for portfolio assessment

is that students' motivation falters when their writing receives bad grades; thus, if instructors provide comments during the course and grades at the end, students will stay motivated writers throughout the course (Bernthai & Ludwig, 1986; cf. Lindemann, 1987; cf. Newkirk, 1996). As students seem to ignore the instructor's written comments on assignments in favour of the final grade (reviewed in Williams, 1996), yet another argument for portfolio assessment is that it encourages students to read the instructor's comments on their drafts and to revise their assignments accordingly. Although in her dissertation abstract, Nelson (1994) asserts that little formal investigation of the ways students understand portfolios has been undertaken, the claim that portfolios provide an impetus for revision is supported by her modest ethnographic study. Albeit of only eight college students and two teachers, the study indicates that students found the advice offered by readers of their portfolios to be useful for further revision.

James Williams (1996) argues that portfolio grading is highly reliable as an assessment procedure; that is, that neither administration nor time of administration affects evaluation significantly. Most instructors responding to Johns' (1992) survey agreed that portfolios should be ongoing during the course, include a variety of writing relevant to the student, and allow for reflection by both teacher and student. Respondents identified planning, managing and organizing portfolios as serious problems, although the study suggests that as familiarity with portfolios grows, concern with practical problems diminishes. Johns notes that the concern with practical problems was slightly higher for respondents who did not use portfolios. In addition to the problems rated by Johns' correspondents, two composition instructors from Michigan State University point out in their handbook for graduate assistants that students sometimes make the case that they have been surprised unfairly by their final grades, especially if instructor comments on assignments have been overly enthusiastic and encouraging (Bernthai & Ludwig, 1986). Accordingly, it is possible to assign a temporary grade to assignments, emphasizing to students that this grade could be improved if they revise the assignment, and that reading instructor's comments on their assignments is one step toward revision.



## **Criticisms of Process Pedagogy**

As just discussed, the process pedagogy (1) teaches the writing process as well as product, (2) promotes writing as a means of personal and intellectual growth, and (3) places students at the centre of the classroom. Although some see the process pedagogy as remedying the shortcomings of the traditional one, it is not without its problems.

Criticisms include:

1. There is inadequate research to indicate that the process pedagogy is effective.
2. It promotes an idealistic view of the learner that breaks down in classroom practice.
3. It overemphasizes personal writing which can limit intellectual growth.
4. It downplays or overlooks instruction in grammar and style.
5. It is prescriptive, much like the traditional pedagogy.

### **Criticism 1: Process pedagogy has a shaky research base.**

Proponents of the process pedagogy argue that it is founded upon research.

Hairston (1982, p.78) states that unlike the traditional pedagogy, which is ineffective because it "did not grow out of research or experimentation . . . but . . . seems to be based on some idealized and orderly vision of what literature scholars imagine is an efficient method of writing," the process pedagogy is tested against linguistic research and research into the composing process. For example, Hairston cites the protocol analysis of Linda Flower and John Hayes which has given us insight into the writing process (Flowers and Hayes tape record students' oral reports of the thoughts that come to them as they write and the choices they make). Applebee (1986, p.96) writes that the popularity of process approaches is unusual in education, since it is "a clear instance of research driving practice." He states that several general findings are evident in process research: that the writing process consists of recursive subprocesses (such as planning, revising, editing, etc.) (Hillocks [1986a] concurs), that expert and novice writers differ in their use

of these subprocesses, and that the processes vary with the writing task.

From his review, Hillocks (1986a) concludes that the process approaches to teaching composition (that is, the *natural process* and *environmental modes*) are significantly more effective than the traditional approach.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, Hillocks recommends the following environmental teaching strategies as effective in the composition classroom:

- inquiry, that is, developing strategies to meet specific writing situations.
- scales, criteria and specific questions which students can apply to their own or others' writing.
- sentencing combining or building more complex sentences from simpler ones.

According to Hillocks, less effective strategies include studying models exclusively, freewriting about whatever interests or concerns the writer, and traditional school grammar, but Hillocks argues that these weak strategies can be effective when integrated with those strong strategies listed above.

Critics attack several tenets of process pedagogy that Hillocks (1986a) does not concentrate on within his meta-analysis. From an evaluation of 35 studies of writing-to-learn, Ackerman (1993, p.360) concludes that "demonstrable proof that writing leads to learning remains the Holy Grail of research." Similarly, after reviewing over 600 texts on writing across the curriculum, Anson, Schwiebert & Williamson (in Stotsky 1993) report that only a few were research studies and their results were inconclusive. Stotsky argues that there is *no* supportive evidence for the usefulness of personal writing and writing across the curriculum. Perhaps one reason for the lack of research base for writing to learn, writing across the curriculum, and personal writing is that the process pedagogy is still relatively young and needs time to develop a body of empirical research literature.

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<sup>1</sup>Hillocks does not call the environmental mode a process approach; rather, it is Applebee (1986) who makes the contention.

Testimonials, which are prevalent in the literature, provide "immediate" feedback, whereas research studies take time to design, implement and analyze. In his foreword to Bereiter and Scardamalia's *Psychology of Written Composition* (1987) Walter Kintsch writes that until a "few years ago," writing research relied on informal observation, introspection and correlational methods; and that only recently did cognitive research such as task analyses, experimental studies and the first models and theories begin to appear. It seems that certain process teaching techniques are clearly more effective than traditional techniques, but that some assumptions underlying these techniques require more research, particularly that writing is a means of learning and that learning and motivation to write can be enhanced by assignments that draw or focus on the personal experience, beliefs and knowledge of the student.

**Criticism 2: Process pedagogy promotes an idealistic view of the learner.**

As a student teacher, I encountered Thomas Newkirk's *To Compose*, a collection of essays designed to introduce instructors to the process approach. What I was reading seemed too good to be true; I wondered if the essayists ever had days when teaching was not inspiring and effortless, when their students did not *want* to write in their journals or preferred to use peer-editing time to catch up on the latest gossip. I was not surprised to learn that a common criticism of the process approach is its idealistic view of the learner. Ackerman (1993) criticizes, "Advocates of write-to-learn and process approaches overstate the transforming powers of an instructional technology and philosophy." Peer conferencing does not guarantee that "the kind of interaction and negotiation considered crucial to meaningful learning" will take place (Zhu, 1995, p.517). Even Vygotsky, whose theory of proximal development lends support for peer conferencing (Zhu, 1995), stated that it is interaction with a *more capable* peer that can aid in the development of a child's mental functions (Vygotsky, 1978).

Timothy Lensmire (1994, p.2) criticizes the idealism of peer-conferencing advocates such as Murray (1968), who "tend to tell success stories," and describes the peer hierarchies

that created conflict within his elementary classroom. In a survey conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (1991-92), 38% of the teachers of grade 12 advanced English saw the competence of students in peer evaluation (and self evaluation) as of great concern, and 42% saw it of some concern. Tudge's (1990) two experimental studies with children suggest that the feedback of a peer who is not confident in his or her views and/or who presents reasoning at a lower level than his or her partner leads to regression in the partner's thinking. At the postsecondary level, Judy (1980) suggests that successful peer editing is counteracted by ego trips, inhibitions to present or receive critiques, the belief that only teacher advice counts, and unskilled student editors. Zhu's literature review indicates that, because of a lack of knowledge about writing and peer response techniques, some students do not respond to peer writing critically and, therefore, do not provide useful feedback (Flynn, 1982; George, 1984; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Newkirk, 1984; Rothstein-Vandergriff & Gilson, 1988, all cited by Zhu, 1995).

Lensmire (1994) asserts that the peer-editing problem has not been addressed in any serious way by peer-conference advocates and "other progressive educators and researchers who call for the increased liberation of student intention and association in classrooms -- most likely because such writers have pointed, often with good reason, to the traditional teacher and textbook as the primary enemies of student voices in school." Lensmire and Jeske (1993) agree that the instructor is often involved insufficiently in peer conferences; that peer editing does not always suffice. Accordingly, Lensmire argues that instructor must intervene and help all students to participate and have their texts taken seriously. Williams (1996) concurs that instructor intervention is important, and recommends that the instructor circulate among peer conferencing groups in the classroom, offering advice and monitoring groups as necessary. The recommendation of instructor intervention finds support in several studies that suggest instructor assistance plays an important role in facilitating the effectiveness of peer conferencing. Educating students on how to respond to a text effectively is supported by Slavin's (1991) literature review in *Educational Psychology*, which reports that training peer tutors is critical for

the effectiveness of peer tutoring. In particular, training composition students in peer response techniques is supported by Zhu's (1995) findings. From a study of 169 students in 8 sections of a freshman composition class, Zhu reports that students trained in strategies for peer response through teacher-student conferences provided significantly more and significantly better quality peer feedback (comments, suggestions, questions, and corrections) than did students who received no training.

Lensmire (1994) argues that some writing-conference advocates focus on "crafting texts and avoid the content of student writing, except to say that we should validate it and help students express it more effectively." His question seems to be, What do we do when students choose inappropriate content or content that has harmful effects on others in the classroom? I asked similar questions after reading the essays of *To Compose* (Newkirk, 1990). One theme of the essays is the importance of student ownership, that the instructor must not appropriate student writing (e.g., Tobin, 1990) as this can undermine the student's motivation to write or development as a writer (Lensmire, 1994). But what if the topics students choose are limited in scope? How can they move beyond examining their own limited world of experience to examining broader issues if they are not pushed to do so? Hogan (1987, in Lensmire, 1994) discovered that some of her freshmen tended to rely on what they could do or knew well, seldom challenging themselves with new topics or forms. Similarly, after nearly a decade of cognitive research, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) suggest that many writers rely on *knowledge telling*, that they retrieve and record from their memory what they already know about the particular writing topic. Bereiter and Scardamalia argue that the instructor must help students away from reliance upon what they already know to *knowledge transforming*, or what others call writing to learn, and suggest that students pursue challenging goals and not always write about that which is most prominent in their mind or easiest to do well. From his experience, Lensmire also recommends teacher intervention as a solution for student complacency in writing. He suggests collective writing projects developed by the teacher that both teacher and students can pursue as a class, such as producing a student magazine

or focusing on individual products connected by a common theme. According to Lensmire, the student-centredness of the process classroom has been taken to an extreme and needs to be tempered by teacher intervention. Lensmire's claim finds some support in Hillocks' (1986a) meta-analysis of composition literature. Hillocks found the environmental process approach to be more effective than the natural process approach (and the traditional approach). A critical difference between the environmental approach and the natural process one is that the former incorporates teacher intervention. Rather than leaving writing choices entirely to students, the environmental instructor *plans* instructional experiences that will help students, both individually and collectively, to understand and experience a particular writing principle.

### **Criticism 3: Process pedagogy overemphasizes personal writing.**

In a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (April 1993), Sandra Stotsky argues that there is *no* supportive evidence for the usefulness of personal writing. This is particularly important when one considers that many process classrooms view personal writing as critical to a profitable student writing experience (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987, p 360). Stotsky speculates that personal writing is emphasized in the writing classroom to the point that it can lead to the misinterpretation of texts when students view new ideas through the limiting eyes of experience. As Ingarden suggests (1973, in Stotsky, 1993), relying on prior knowledge instead of pushing forward to new intellectual horizons can limit the intellectual growth of the learner. Wershoven (1991) also criticizes the proliferation of personal writing in freshman composition and basic-writing courses, and argues that emphasizing personal writing "may become exclusionary rather than liberating" and that it is "crucial to teach students how to read, react to and write about anything beyond the self."

So that students can grow intellectually, Stotsky (1993) recommends that instructors introduce literature as a source of information for writers. Similarly, Lensmire (1994) recommends using literature from both the official and unofficial canons in the process

classroom -- texts that are already in the classroom, and texts that students encounter daily, such as cartoons, magazines, and song lyrics. Lensmire does not mean using texts as models of the forms students are attempting to produce, a teaching strategy used in both the traditional and process classrooms. Nor does he mean literature appreciation or reading about the composing processes of real writers, methods that play significant roles in the process classroom. Lensmire advocates literary criticism, something he feels is missing from the process classroom. Not only should students produce certain forms of texts, Lensmire argues, but they should also be able to respond critically to texts so that they can enrich their "worlds." If Lensmire's feelings reflect those of many American composition educators, American composition pedagogy could be moving toward the combination of literary criticism and composition foreseen by Graves for American schools (1993; see Chapter I) and already characteristic of postsecondary Canadian writing instruction.

In *The Psychology of Written Composition* (1987), the result of nearly a decade of cognitive research, Bereiter and Scardamalia make suggestions for pushing students from retelling what they already know (*knowledge telling*) to developing their critical-thinking skills, knowledge, and independence and competence as writers (*knowledge-transforming*). To push the students from personal to ideocentric writing, Bereiter and Scardamalia recommend that the instructor

- make students aware that most of the writing process consists of "setting goals, formulating problems, evaluating decisions, and planning in the light of prior goals and decisions" rather than "putting words on paper" (p.262).
- model this type of thinking in composition. (Incidentally, Hairston, 1982 and others identify the modelling of writing by the instructor as characteristic of the process classroom.)
- involve students in investigations of their writing strategies and knowledge, and encourage them to help others develop knowledge.

- encourage students to pursue challenging goals; to not always write about what they know well.
- provide students with "simplified routines and external supports" to help them in their quest toward independence.

**Criticism 4: Process pedagogy side-steps instruction in grammar and style.**

Aware that grammar study (identifying parts of speech, their functions in sentences, etc.) and emphasis on mechanics and the conventions of punctuation and usage have little or no effect on writing quality (Hillocks, 1986a), and anxious not to overemphasize correctness like their predecessors, it seems that many process instructors have side-stepped such issues altogether. Bishop (1995) asks, "Why did compositionists jump on the process bandwagon in the 1970s and 1980s, seemingly leaving issues of grammar and style and producing final products in the classroom dust?"<sup>2</sup> She argues that "grammar for writers has never been absent from the writing process workshop, but it has certainly been under-discussed and, I'd argue, under-taught." This is to the chagrin of many postsecondary students who equate good papers with "good grammar" (Mullin, 1995) and feel ill-served by a writing class that downplays grammar instruction (C. Cassano, personal communication, January, 1997). The peripheral role of grammar in the process classroom is emphasized by the instructor "handbook" *To Compose* (Newkirk, 1990): although other sections in the book contain three to five essays, the Style and Grammar section of *To Compose* contains only one — and it deals with breaking rather than mastering the conventions!

A study conducted by Joan Mullin (1995) underscores the peripheral role of grammar in the process classroom. Mullin reports that 156 composition instructors from 13 American

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<sup>2</sup>Unless otherwise specified, I have used or I have assumed that my sources use *grammar* to mean sentence elements and structure, usage, sentence revision, punctuation and mechanics. My definition is adapted from what Weaver (1996, p.7) says people usually mean when talking about "teaching formal grammar" or "the traditional teaching of grammar."



institutions agreed that grammar is a "distraction from the teaching of writing"; that the grammar handbook should be used as a reference guide only; and that students should develop the responsibility to refer to the handbook when they need to — although the instructor can use the handbook in a conference with an individual student to rectify a large number of errors. Shaughnessy (1977), who argued against traditional grammar instruction, would probably be uncomfortable with the turn that things have taken. Many who profess to follow in her footsteps rely on handbooks and workbooks to help students correct grammatical errors (cf. Mullin, p.107), although Shaughnessy suggests that traditional grammar teaching may have failed to improve writing because the grammar lessons ended up with exercises in workbooks, "which by highlighting the feature being studied rob the student of any practice in seeing that feature in more natural places" (p.155). Shaughnessy argues that throughout grammar instruction, a student should be encouraged "not simply to have the right answers but to have grammatical reasons for what he does, for grammar is more a way of thinking, a style of inquiry, than a way of being right" (p.129). Many of the composition instructors who responded to Mullin's study seem to expect that by the time students reach freshman composition, they should be prepared for growth as a writer — that grammar is only a "MINOR component if at all a component." Bishop seems to believe this expectation is misguided, for she argues, "Most composition textbooks and teachers speed dizzily through revision discussions, assuming assigning drafts and allowing for peer response will do the work that needs to be done. It does not." Grammar *is* part of the writing process, says Bishop. It deserves as much attention as, say, prewriting.

Mullin (1995) agrees with Bishop that grammar should be addressed in the classroom. She posits that although postsecondary instructors downplay traditional grammar instruction by relegating it to a handbook, they send students the message that it is very important by concentrating on it when they grade the work (perhaps because it is easy to fix). Like Shaughnessy's students (1997, p.8), the students encountered by Mullin believe that a good paper is one that is "correct." Mullin believes that students are learning from

books and teacher comments that grammar is "a necessary school constraint"; but because they are not receiving guidance in the classroom, they are memorizing grammar rules without understanding them. She implies that students need to understand that grammar rules have a purpose, otherwise they'll treat the rules as absolutes, which is problematic as there are exceptions to every rule. Perhaps Mullin takes her lead from Shaughnessy, who writes (1977) that "Grammar should be a matter not of memorizing rules or definitions but of thinking through problems as they arise."

***What about alternate styles?*** According to Bishop (1995), process instructors not only downplay instruction in grammar, but also in style. Winston Weathers, author of *An Alternate Style: Options in Composition* (1976, in Bishop) claims that most writing texts and instructors confine students to one dominant style — that of the traditional pedagogy — with its characteristics of continuity, order, reasonable progressions and sequence, consistency, unity, etc. Weather states that by neglecting to teach alternate styles we are teaching students to play only bridge with a deck of 52 cards when many other games (options, alternatives) exist. Instructor Tom Romano (1990) argues that much like Walt Whitman, e.e. cummings and Virginia Woolf altered or broke stylistic conventions for the sake of meaning, students can employ such unconventions as sentence fragments, labyrinthine (run-on) sentences, lists, and double-voice. He reminds his secondary students that readers have expectations about the way print should look and that they must weigh their violations of those expectations against the results they hope to achieve. Bishop concludes that we must discuss writer options, discuss when and if students should obey stylistic conventions and what these conventions are, when and if they should break these conventions, and how this is possible, and encourage students to revise one text so that it is riskier or more conventional. Why? Doing so raises students' "linguistic confidence," helps writers find their voices (Romano, 1990), and helps students edit sentences appropriately (Weaver, 1996).

Teaching style seems to walk hand in hand with making students aware of different dialects. Weaver (1996) suggests that students explore the grammatical patterns of ethnic

and community dialects and contrast these with the corresponding features of the Language of Wider Communication (standard English). She recommends that instructors emphasize as appropriate to the student's needs those aspects of grammar that will help the student edit sentences of conventional mechanics, and that this might include teaching some grammatical features that differ from the Language of Wider Communication and other dialects. Koch and Brazil (1978, p.107) believe that it is best for writing instructors to focus on major writing problems first, leaving dialect features (such as loss of *ed* endings and loss of *s* endings) as a very low priority: "Once dialect speakers become fluent, sophisticated writers, they can choose whether to learn the prestige patterns... [and] will probably do so with a minimum of effort."

**Criticism 5: Process pedagogy takes a prescriptive approach, just like the traditional pedagogy.**

A dominant criticism of traditional pedagogy is that it reduces writing to a set of rules to be learned. Although process pedagogy is partly a reaction to this view, it seems that many process instructors continue to rely on a prescriptive approach to teaching writing, perhaps because it is familiar or "easy" to teach. Bishop (1995, p.178) notes that "assigned process sequences too often produced a 'clunk' curriculum, with invention on Monday, drafting on Wednesday, and editing on Friday, inculcating still a linear and unitary sense of writing." The research conducted by Applebee and Langer in American secondary schools and colleges (cited in Applebee 1986) suggests that many instructors have reduced the writing process to a tidy formula that teaches well, but breaks down in practice, since not every writing task is the same. Applebee argues that writers use different writing strategies for different writing tasks (a research paper will include more revision than a one-hour essay exam, and a literary analysis on an unfamiliar book more prewriting than an opinion paper on a familiar topic). As a result, Applebee recommends the writing processes be reconstrued as *strategies* that writers rely on to solve different writing problems, and that the teacher support the student in deciding which strategies will be helpful in completing the writing task successfully. Hillocks (1986a) would agree,

for he concludes that effective instruction guides students in the discovery of strategies that will meet specific writing situations (*inquiry*). Furthermore, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987, p.5) describe the mental processes of the competent writer (their *knowledge-transforming* model) in terms of problem solving; they see writing as a "task that keeps growing in complexity to match the expanding competence of the writer. Thus, as skill increases, old difficulties tend to be replaced by new ones of higher order." Teaching writing as informed decision making or problem solving, that is, teaching writing in terms of choosing appropriate writing strategies rather than completing stages, is preferable to the formulaic approach taken by some process instructors.

### **Finding a Balance: The Environmental Approach**

We all know the problem with false dichotomies — hot and cold, good and bad, old and young cannot comingle — although they do as warm, complex, or midlife. So too, we think, process never includes product, or so it would seem, since products would short-circuit the recursive non-linear, reiterative, exploratory and therefore open-ended flow of a pedagogy meant to encourage further and deeper thinking about and through writing.

But...Process writing workshops, contrary to labeling, continuously result in products. (Bishop, 1995, p.1).

The criticisms of the process pedagogy concern its excesses: the idealism of its advocates (Ackerman, 1993; Lensmire, 1994), its shying away from grammar, usage and style (Bishop, 1995; Mullin, 1995), its overemphasis of personal writing (Stotsky, 1993) and self-direction (Lensmire, 1994), and its prescriptive approach to the writing process (Applebee, 1986). Similarly, the criticism of traditional pedagogy concerned its extremes, such as its overemphasis of correctness and, in the US, the divorce of literature from composition. Accordingly, it seems that an effective expository writing course would find a balance between the extremes of both pedagogies. Instead of chasing the pendulum of educational theory as it swings from one side ("teach product and advocate teacher-centredness") to the other ("teach process and advocate student-centredness"), perhaps writing teachers should take a position in the middle.

Koch and Brazil (1978) argue for a middle ground when they write, "We would not argue

that the traditional practices should be abandoned, but they can be modified or supplemented by other strategies to make them more effective and interesting." Applebee (1986) also argues for a middle ground when he states that we must reconstrue writing processes as *strategies* that writers use to solve particular writing problems rather than activities that every writer engages in during every writing task. As Applebee (1986, p.97) writes, "In the first flush of enthusiasm, process-oriented instruction was embraced simplistically and naively; in the next wave of reform, we must carry it toward a more sophisticated maturity." Hillocks (1986a), too, advocates a middle ground when he proposes the *environmental approach*, which "moves beyond process without abandoning it" and balances the student-centredness of the process classroom with the teacher direction of the traditional. Hillocks writes that the environmental approach is much more effective than either the traditional or natural process approach, perhaps because it takes advantage of "all resources of the classroom": "The environmental mode appears to place teacher and student more nearly in balance, with the teacher planning activities and selecting materials through which students interact with each other to generate ideas and learn identifiable writing skills." Whereas the traditional instructor tells students what to do, and the natural process facilitator encourages students to follow their "spontaneous interests and impulses" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), the environmental instructor provides opportunities for students to *use* the information that he or she presents. As a result, the students appear to gain "operational knowledge" of the criteria that influences their own independent writing. Hillock's description of the teacher's role is reminiscent of Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) suggestion that the instructor use *procedural facilitation* — "simplified routines and external supports" — to help students toward independence and competence as writers.

I remember a fellow M.Ed. student who called the lecture, a fixture of the traditional classroom, "bad," and others who felt that *every* class they taught should incorporate group work, a strategy of the natural-process classroom. Murray (1985, p.89) found that when he published a range of contradictory syllabi in *A Writing Teacher Teaches*

*Writing*, "they were taken too seriously. Readers focused on one syllabus and said *that* is the way writing should be taught." With these examples in mind, it would appear that when presented with an approach that is pronounced "significantly effective," instructors might be tempted to pronounce the environmental approach as *the* way to teach composition, and structure all lessons according to the model that Hillocks (1986a, p.122) describes: brief introductory lectures that lead to small group discussion and culminate in individual practice. By doing so, however, they would make the same mistake as their traditional and natural-process predecessors: taking a prescriptive approach to teaching composition. It seems that an effective writing course is one that follows the spirit rather than the letter of the dominant pedagogy; it recognizes that classrooms are made up of individuals with varying needs and selects teaching strategies to suit each classroom's unique context. In the case of an environmental composition classroom, this could mean devoting less time to small group discussion when a class has a dynamic that makes such discussions ineffective or dedicating an entire lesson to individual work and conferencing when an assignment due date looms. In the words of Murray (p.5), it is important to recognize that "There is no one way"; that there is no one student or teaching approach, and that "our individuality as students and teachers should be central to all that we do."

### **Summing Up**

According to the literature on composition instruction, an effective composition course:

- minimizes teacher presentation yet allows the instructor to carefully structure and introduce activities on which students can work collectively and/or individually (Hillocks, 1986a).
- provides opportunities for students to use the knowledge they have acquired (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Hillocks, 1986a).
- uses a problem-solving approach; that is, invites students to work through problems that both illustrate and allow them to practice the principle being taught, and helps

students select the strategies that are appropriate for specific writing situations (Applebee, 1986; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Hillocks, 1986a).

- invites students to investigate their own writing strategies and knowledge both individually and collectively so that they can become more competent writers (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987).
- makes students aware of the recursive writing process so that they can converse efficiently about writing problems by using the same vocabulary (Newkirk, 1990; Shuman, 1995), work toward independence in managing the process (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), and recognize that this process varies with the individual (Applebee, 1986).
- employs the effective strategies of inquiry, sentence combining, as well as scales, criteria and specific questions, and integrates grammar instruction, models and freewriting with these activities (Hillocks, 1986a).
- assigns tasks that are personally meaningful to students to enhance motivation and learning in writing (see Weaver, 1996, on constructivism).
- teaches small doses of grammar (sentence structure, sentence revision, usage, punctuation, mechanics) that are appropriate to the students' current writing tasks so that the instruction is meaningful, and distinguishes between the conventional and alternate styles to help guide students' stylistic choices (Weaver, 1996).
- provides concrete feedback on writing from peers and instructors as students write (Hillocks, 1986a).

## **CHAPTER III.**

### **REVIEW OF DISTANCE EDUCATION LITERATURE**

#### **In This Chapter...**

Chapter II discussed the features of an effective expository writing course as presented in the literature. This chapter will review what the literature says about effective distance education, particularly effective distance course design.

#### **What Characterizes an Effective Distance Course?**

In 1990, Suzanne St. Pierre reviewed the limited body of current American research on *correspondence courses*, that is, distance courses which are print-based. From her review, she selected several facets as critical to effective distance learning, including (1) student-instructor interaction and (2) instructor feedback. Since the majority of distance programs worldwide use print materials as their primary component (St. Pierre, 1990b), clearly we can add (3) design of course materials to St. Pierre's list. The following literature review is organized around these three facets of effective distance learning. As my task was to prepare distance education course materials (see Appendix A), my literature review will be weighted toward the design of course materials rather than interaction or feedback.

#### **Student-Instructor Interaction**

Based on her review of American correspondence research, St. Pierre (1990b) calls interaction between students and instructor the "heart of correspondence teaching," partly because it helps forestall loneliness. Loneliness or isolation is generally acknowledged as a primary problem in distance education (Mackenzie, Christensen & Rigby, 1968; Scales, 1984). Because of factors such as geographic isolation and time constraints, distance students find it difficult to contact other students (Kahl & Cropley, 1986), although some distance institutions attempt to make this easier -- for example, the University of Windsor encourages study groups by preparing a directory of participating students' names,



locales, phone numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses. The most important link for students, however, seems to be that with their instructor. Gordon Thompson (1990) of the University of Manitoba discovered that if on-campus students are to be attracted to correspondence courses, they need assurance that they will have access to their instructor. A University of Windsor study (Wiebe et al., 1993) suggests that after students enrol in correspondence courses, communication with the instructor remains their primary concern. The separation of distance student and instructor can lead to attrition (Bååth in Ming, 1988; Scales, 1984). Bååth (1982) believes that the instructor should contact students as close to enrolment as possible. He speculates that getting to know the instructor at a very early stage in the course can help prevent student withdrawals. From a study of 210 randomly-chosen distance students in four University of Wisconsin programs, Gibson and Graff (1992) conclude that instructor direction and support, especially early in the course, could discourage withdrawals. Research of on-campus courses seems to support Gibson and Graff's conclusion, as it indicates that student contact and interaction with faculty is related positively to course completion (reviewed in Sweet, 1982).

In addition to traditional correspondence by post, most distance programs institutionalized *teletutoring* (telephone tutoring) to help reduce attrition, based on the assumption that personalized attention from the instructor helps distance students feel less isolated and complete their courses (Flinck, 1978; Sweet, 1982). Most teletutoring systems allow students to contact their instructors for course-related assistance and support during designated contact hours. Despite evidence that students feel positively toward teletutoring (Flinck, 1978; Ming, 1988; Rekkedal, 1989; Sweet, 1982), and that a positive relationship exists between telephone contact and course completion (Scales, 1984; Spencer, 1980; Ming, 1988), some distance educators and researchers report that teletutoring systems are not well used by students (Bates, 1985; Kember et al., 1992; Krumm, 1993; Wiebe et al., 1993; Wiebe, 1996). Some students complain about long-distance rates (Wiebe et al., 1993), but Bates reports that in 1985, only 10-15% of

students used the toll-free services offered by Athabasca University.

What are the real reasons students do not call? Distance educators speculate that students see their calls as interrupting the instructors (Landstrom, 1995), and that the immediacy of questions fade before instructor contact hours. Garland's (1994) modest study suggests that it is difficult for distance students, mature adults who work full-time and have families, to take on the "subordinate" role of the student by contacting the instructor for help. A sampling of student comments from Garland's study also suggests that instructor condescension reinforces student discomfort with contacting the instructor. By extension, it seems that instructors should be friendly, respectful and mindful of distance students' age and experiences if they wish to encourage student calls. To further encourage student calls, Feasley (1983 in St. Pierre, 1990b) and Landstrom (1995) recommend that instructors send a personal letter of introduction to students, which they speculate will eliminate a feeling of isolation for the student, as well as encourage student comments and feedback to the instructor (Lewis, 1982 in St. Pierre, 1990b). Some instructors make at least one telephone conference with the instructor mandatory during the course, assuming that after making the required call, students will be more comfortable to initiate further calls. Data from a unpublished study conducted at the University of Windsor (Wiebe, 1996) indicates that students would be more comfortable telephoning instructors if instructors initiated the first call. Unfortunately, many university departments cannot afford to reimburse long-distance calls, or pay for toll-free lines to the department, let alone to off-campus instructors.

Although teletutoring seems to be the primary medium for instructor-student interaction in distance programs, some also incorporate correspondence by fax, e-mail, audiotape, as well as audioconferencing and videoconferencing. For those students willing to use these communications networks, studying at a distance can become "an intensely personal and highly rewarding form of learner-centred education," conclude Burpee and Wilson (1991) after a study of one of McGill University's distance education programs. Courses at McGill promote two-way communication through telephone, e-mail, and fax, and many

students report that they have never had such close relationships with their professors. The relationship between distance student and instructor is one-on-one; it is "unique and often creates a perception in the learner's mind of being very special" (McInnis-Ranking & Brindley, 1986 in Burpee & Wilson, 1991). Holmberg (1985) argues that *didactic conversation* in the form of written and phone conversations between instructor and students helps foster feelings of personal relations between the two, which in turn promote "study pleasure" and motivate the student to work on the course. From a survey of 337 Pennsylvania State University correspondence students, St. Pierre and Olsen (1991) discovered that didactic conversation with the instructor contributed significantly to the satisfaction of students comfortable with this type of exchange. (Unfortunately, the pair do not define what they mean by didactic conversation, so we must assume that they are using it in Holmberg's sense. Furthermore, it is not clear in which ways the correspondence students were corresponding with their instructors, such as telephone or post, and this is important as different means of conversation may affect student satisfaction.) Thus, although they are not at the centre of the distance classroom, instructors play a critical role in distance education. Their written and spoken conversations with students can increase student satisfaction with distance education and encourage course completion.

### **Instructor Feedback**

One form of student-instructor interaction in distance courses is that of instructor feedback on assignments, which often takes the form of model answers and written comments on the students' work. From their literature reviews, St. Pierre (1990b) and Willis (1993) conclude that the timing of instructor feedback on assignments is critical to effective distance education. From a survey of a random sample of 337 Pennsylvania State University students who had completed a correspondence course during a one-year period, St. Pierre and Olsen (1991) found that students who received their corrected work back promptly, especially at the beginning of a course, experienced more satisfaction with correspondence student than students who did not. St. Pierre and Olsen do not define

what they mean by *prompt* or *beginning of course*, making it difficult for instructors to apply their results; however, in her dissertation, St. Pierre establishes prompt turnaround time as within 7-10 days of mailing by the student (St. Pierre in St. Pierre, 1990b). In a true experiment conducted with 127 randomly chosen distance students, Rekkedal (1973) found that 91.3% of the students who received assignments back from the instructor within a week of mailing completed their correspondence course, whereas only 69% of students who received assignments back after a week of mailing completed their course. More students in the first group were satisfied with the turnaround time than those in the second (86.7%: 57.1%). From the results, Rekkedal speculates that drop-out rates can be lowered by reducing turnaround time. In a survey of 800 American correspondence suppliers conducted by the Correspondence Education Research Project (CERP [Mackenzie et al., 1968]), two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they provide feedback in seven days or fewer from time of receipt. Nevertheless, CERP concluded (its not clear whether they based their conclusion on research) "this effort cannot begin to match the immediate response of a teacher in the classroom....After seven days the student may experience considerable difficulty in changing a week-old pattern of thought or performance." Although students do not particularly seem to like submitting assignments by mail, the results of St. Pierre and Olsen's (1991) survey suggests this procedure does not affect their satisfaction with correspondence study. Since mail turnaround time is slow, some distance educators recommend that instructors use fax or e-mail to return assignments without delay (Willis, 1993).

### **Design of Course Materials**

Like instructor-student interaction and instructor feedback, the design of the course materials is critical to effective distance education. Most distance courses include a comprehensive study guide. As discussed in Chapter I, this guide is prepared by a course writer or content expert who usually works closely with an instructional designer and desktop publisher, and perhaps an editor or technician. In general, the study guide includes the course schedule, policies and procedures, and several lessons and

assignments. The study guide is not a series of transcribed lectures, but a written version of what the course writer usually delivers orally in class (Smith, 1994), including commonly-asked questions and favourite examples. It guides students through the course content and assignments, and teaches and encourages students to reflect on the subject matter (Sammons & Kozoll, 1994). Appendix A includes a sample study guide for Expository Writing 01-26-100-91.

Study guides are usually divided into modules or lessons so that students are presented with manageable quantities of learning material and can regard studying each portion of the course as a separate task (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989). Several course writers' manuals recommend that writers treat each lesson as 8-12 hours of student activity per week, not including assignments (cited in Continuing Education, 1997b), roughly the equivalent to one week of work per class on campus. Distance education lessons usually contain the following components, as encouraged by course writers' manuals (Continuing Education, 1997b; Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989; Sammons & Kozoll, 1994; Zubot, 1993):


- i. elements to orient learner;
- ii. input from the course writer;
- iii. exercises, questions and/or assignments so that students can practice or apply what they have learned;
- iv. assigned readings.

These components correspond with the components that researchers and instructors generally agree are best for direct (teacher-structured) instruction (Slavin, 1991). Like an effective on-campus lesson, the distance lesson orients students to what they will learn (component i), discusses the lesson topic (components ii and iii), and provides learning exercises and assignments so that students can assess their understanding and use new information (component iii) (Slavin, 1991).

**i. An effective lesson includes elements to orient the learner.**

Cookson (1989 in Dekkers et al., 1993) argues that the effectiveness of any distance education program depends upon the students' satisfaction with their learning experiences. Several researchers (cited in Dekkers et al.) suggest that this experience can be influenced by the students' orientation to learning, for example, by how well the course materials help students decide what and how to study. Distance educators advocate learning objectives to orient learners to the main ideas of the lesson (Continuing Education, 1997b; Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989; Sammons & Kozoll, 1995; Zubot, 1993), following the lead of research in on-campus courses which seems to indicate that stating objectives clearly at beginning of lesson helps learners to achieve these objectives (cited in Slavin, 1991). Canadian instructional designer Myra Zubot (1993) notes that distance students often use objectives as a guide to what is important and should be studied for exams. Distance educators have adapted Skinner's stimulus-response theory in formulating learning objectives in measurable terms (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989). Course designers favour *behavioural objectives* (Continuing Education, 1997b; Sammons & Kozoll, 1989; Zubot, 1983) so that course writers can organize learning experiences to achieve such objectives and that students can easily evaluate their learning at the end of the lesson (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989). (The preference of course designers for objectives that can be "performed" by distance students is shared by the proponents of the environmental pedagogy that Hillocks [(1986a)] identifies as most effective in teaching writing.)

Research suggests that the accessibility of course materials to students is significant in predicting student satisfaction with course materials (St. Pierre & Olsen, 1991). Distance students do not have the visual and auditory clues given by instructors in the classroom as to what is important (Howard, 1985; Willis, 1993). Accordingly, in addition to learning objectives, distance educators and researchers recommend the following *learning aids* to cue students to what is important and guide them through the course materials:

- advice and suggestions to students on what to do, to avoid, to pay attention to and why (Holmberg, 1983).
- bridges or links to indicate when a lesson is switching from one topic to another and how the two topics are related (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989; Holmberg, 1983).
- summaries and conclusions, which students rate highly as study aids (Dekker et al., 1993).
- introductions, and advance organizers that remind students of what they already know (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989), making it easier for them to grasp new ideas. Research in on-campus courses supports advance organizers (Slavin, 1991).
- lists of points that keep important material from being buried in text (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989), and which students rate highly as study aids (Dekkers et al., 1993).
- **boldfacing** and *italicization* to set out key terms and phrases, rated highly by students as study aids (Dekkers et al., 1993).
- headings to divide text into cognitively manageable chunks (Sammons & Kozoll, 1994). Headings help learners identify topics and therefore pick out salient ideas (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989).
- different typefaces (Sammons & Kozoll, 1994) and icons as cues to help students find their way around course materials (Zubot, 1993). For example, all exercises could be set out with the icon of a writing hand , so students are reminded to complete rather than merely read the exercises.
- graphics, diagrams and tables. Research suggests that most learners prefer visual teaching alternatives (Dekkers et al., 1993). Gaston and Daniels (1988) note that written materials for adults with limited reading skills often use visual cues to clarify and interpret words. Langford (1993) suggests that students are more likely to remember an idea when it is presented to them in pictorial *and* textual form.

**ii. An effective lesson includes input from the course writer.**

Each lesson includes commentary from the course writer that parallels what happens in the classroom. In his or her commentary, the course writer discusses the lesson topic, highlights important ideas, provides analogies and examples to clarify these ideas, offers explanations, presents opposite views (Zubot, 1993), and links the discussion to the textbook and other media included the course package sent to students. One obstacle facing distance learners is that they have more reading and less uninterrupted study time than the average on-campus student (Howard, 1985). St. Pierre and Olsen (1991) discovered that the accessibility and understandability of the study guide was significant in predicting student satisfaction with the study guide. Accordingly, Gaston and Daniels (1988) recommend that course writers limit their discussion of an idea to a single page or facing pages, saying this is particularly important for adults with limited reading skills.

Other educators recommend that the study guide be written in a friendly, *conversational or letter-writing style* (Holmberg, 1989b in Burpee and Wilson, 1991; reviewed in Smith, 1994) that research suggests is effective in motivating distance students (reviewed in Smith, 1994). Theorist and instructor Bjorg Holmberg seems to be the driving force behind the conversational style of distance education lessons. Holmberg (1983) adapted his *theory of didactic conversation* for distance education in 1960. He (1985) argues that good distance education resembles a guided conversation aiming at learning, and that the presence of the typical traits of such a conversation (e.g., colloquialisms, humour) facilitate learning. (In Holmberg's view, "guided conversation" has two parts -- both the written and phone conversations between instructor and student *and* the conversation simulated in the course materials.) According to Holmberg, messages given and received in conversational forms are easily understood and remembered. This statement has some empirical validity (Holmberg, 1983). For example, from a survey of 337 Pennsylvania State University correspondence students chosen at random, St. Pierre and Olsen conclude that easily understood lesson materials are a significant variable in predicting student satisfaction with print materials. As part of his theory of didactic conversation,



Holmberg also states the "simulated conversation" of the lessons motivates students since it helps foster feelings of personal relations between the student and instructor, which in turn promote study pleasure and motivation. This, Holmberg argues, is a "generally accepted belief." There is some empirical evidence that instructor qualities like "warmth," enthusiasm and empathy can further study motivation of correspondence students (e.g., Gibbs & Durbridge, 1976 in B   th, 1982). The survey of St. Pierre and Olsen (1991) suggests that students comfortable in engaging in didactic conversation with the instructor experience significantly more satisfaction with correspondence study than students who do not feel comfortable. Unfortunately, St. Pierre and Olsen do not define didactic conversation, nor do they suggest which type of students were more comfortable or how to increase the comfort level of students.

According to the literature, features of conversational writing style appropriate for distance education materials include

- referring to self as *I* and student as *you* (Chambers, 1993; Continuing Education, 1997b; Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989; Holmberg, 1983; Smith, 1994).
- creating a dialogue within the text by anticipating and answering student concerns and questions (Smith, 1994), providing self-checking exercises with model answers (Holmberg, 1983), asking questions, and criticizing and supplementing what is provided in the textbook (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989).
- using clear, colloquial language (Holmberg, 1983; Smith, 1994). "It's okay" for a distance course writer to use contractions and colloquial phrases (Zubot, 1993).
- using features of spoken language such as humour. *Italics* can convey tone or stress (Smith, 1994).
- making study relevant to the individual learner and his or her needs by inviting an exchange of views and attempting to involve him or her emotionally so the learner takes personal interest in the course (Holmberg, Schuemer & Obermeier, 1982; some

statistical support for this statement in Holmberg, 1983).

**iii. An effective lesson includes practice or application of new knowledge.**

Distance educators have adopted *Rothkopf's model of written instruction*, which advocates in-text questions to facilitate active learning (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989). Much like an effective on-campus lesson (Slavin, 1991), an effectively designed distance education lesson includes interaction between the course materials and the learner as well as opportunities to practice new knowledge (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989). Course-writer training manuals state that distance lessons should provide ample opportunity for participation to help facilitate learner interest, motivation and retention (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989; Zubot, 1993). Unlike the traditional on-campus student, distance students are mature students with familial and employment responsibilities vying for their time; as a result, they often have experience in areas of a course (e.g., they may be working as managers while studying business management) and seek to apply immediately what they have learned or relate it to their life experiences (Continuing Education, 1997b). From their survey of 337 correspondence students, St. Pierre and Olsen (1991) found a positive relationship between student satisfaction and the opportunity to apply what they learn during a course.

Distance educators encourage course writers not only to include exercises in their lessons, but also to encourage students to complete these exercises. Because instructors often implement distance courses in manner different from that intended by course writer and designer, affecting student achievement significantly, educators believe that the responsibility for learning be placed on students (Lopez, Sullivan & Weber, 1988). Willis (1993) states that students must take an active role in distance courses; they must assume greater responsibility for their own learning and understand that more independent activity will be required. Lopez et al. feel that course materials should emphasize the importance of completing the learning activities, for the self-tests and feedback will help students learn the course content and monitor self-performance, and encourage them

through successful completion of their work (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989).

What types of exercises should appear within the distance education lessons? Distance educators encourage course writers to incorporate

1. *assignments* that are sent to the instructor for grading and feedback.
2. *in-text questions* that do not necessarily require formal written answers, but help keep students alert; that make them stop and think (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989).
3. *self-assessment activities* that are graded by the learner. Many course designers adopt Egan's structural communication model by dividing lessons into sections and providing self-tests with model answers after every "small dose of information" (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989). Dekkers et al. (1993) found that distance students rate review questions and feedback and solutions highly as effective study techniques.

Bááth (1980 in St. Pierre, 1990) and Coldeway (1982 in St. Pierre) report that self-check exercises and assignments are more motivational than instructor feedback.

**iv. An effective lesson includes *current* readings.**

In addition to exercises and assignments, distance education lessons include relevant readings from textbooks and other sources such as newspaper and journal articles. From her literature review, St. Pierre (1990b) concluded that up-to-date course materials are critical to effective distance education; for the distance program to maintain credibility, the knowledge in materials must be current (Moore, 1986 in St. Pierre, 1990b). Five to seven years seems to be the average "shelf life" of a distance course (Chacon-Duque 1986, in St. Pierre, 1990b; Continuing Education, 1997b) after which the course is rewritten or revised significantly. However, before the five to seven years are up, it is often necessary or desirable for minor updates to be made to the course materials -- for example, several typographical errors may surface in the course materials, or current events may necessitate the rewriting part of a lesson. In these instances, instructors can

mail corrections or supplementary information to students. Pierre (1990) suggests using audiotapes as a way to update course materials easily.

Significant revisions are costly to any distance program: often, stock must be discarded, and new materials must be prepared and mailed to students. To minimize potential revisions, instructional designers often encourage course writers to choose a recently published edition of a textbook (Zubot, 1993). Designers may also encourage course writers to avoid using page numbers (which often change from one textbook edition to another), and to treat the textbook as a supplement rather than the basis of their lessons (Continuing Education, 1997b; Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989; Sammons & Kozoll, 1994). In 1996, the University of Windsor distance program administrators went further. They ask course writers to write lessons that do not allude to a specific textbook and can be used with any good textbook in the course content area. Course writers "match" the lessons to the textbook in a separate chapter of the course materials (e.g., see the Textbook Key in Appendix A). This way, if the textbook changes, only the chapter linking the textbook to the lessons requires updating.

### **Fostering Dependent rather than Self-Managed Learners?**

Advocates of distance learning argue that the physical distance between instructor and student should be viewed as an advantage, for it facilitates self-managed learning, the purpose of distance study (Boud, 1988, Brookfield, 1986, Kahl & Copley, 1986; Mezirow, 1981 and Paul, 1990, all cited in Garland, 1994). However, some critics of distance courses argue that distance courses foster not self-managed learning but dependence upon the instructor or course materials. In particular, some critics argue that the traditional approach favoured by course developers (known as the systems, scientist or *behaviourist approach*) reduces learning to "surface information processing" (Kasworm & Yao, 1993; cf. Beaudoin, 1990), that the emphasis on skills and knowledge reduces content to facts they must memorize. Chambers (1993) points out that the traditional model, although suited for science courses, is inappropriate for dealing with

the humanities; that strategies such as periodic self-tests and behavioural objectives cannot accommodate the textual analysis, interpretation, and criticism fundamental to the humanities. Accordingly, to move beyond memorization to critical thinking in humanities distance education, Chambers recommends such strategies as requiring students to find the relationship between their experience and course terms and ideas, frequently reminding students of what they are doing and why they are doing it, and using narrative to design course materials rather than the traditional "'logical' structure," since the narrative forms the basis of much writing in the humanities.

Bullen, Neufeld and Uegama (1993) agree with Chambers that the traditional model of course design is inadequate for conceptual courses. They assert that the behaviourist view of learning cannot address critical thinking (that is, the "ability of students to think critically, creatively and independently"). Like Chambers, Bullen et al. suggest that instead of applying the same model to each course, educators develop different models for different courses. Bullen et al. recommend that these models should be based on factors such as the instructor's teaching style, the characteristics of the student and the content of the course.

Whereas Chambers implies memorization and recitation would be appropriate learning strategies for some courses, and analysis and critical thinking for others, other educators advocate combining both approaches within a single course. Kasworm and Yao (1993) believe that distance students may find it difficult to adjust to self-managed study since they are accustomed to the "passive teacher-student mode" of the traditional campus. It seems that students need to be weaned to self-reliance from dependency on the instructor (the centre of the traditional classroom) or the course materials (an instructor substitute [cf. Kahl & Cropley, 1986]). How can this be done? Many distance institutions emphasize that instructors should encourage their students to become self-managed learners, so that students become less reliant on instructor guidance and advice and more independent and autonomous in the learning process (Cole et al., 1986, in St. Pierre, 1990b). One way to wean students from the instructor is to encourage them to interact

with their classmates, especially at the beginning of the course. Also, some educators recommend that course developers begin the course materials with a lot of direction and instructions and gradually diminish these throughout course (see Gibson and Graff, 1992), moving from study hints and low-level exercises such as memorization and recitation to high-level exercises such as analysis, providing one's own examples and linking experiences to course content (see Kasworm & Yao, 1993).

Kahl and Cropley (1986) recommend this gradated approach. From a questionnaire distributed to 112 on-campus students and 289 distance learners in the same programs at Open University in Hagen, Germany, they found that the distance learners -- who were isolated from the instructor and classmates, and faced job and familial constraints more frequently than on-campus students -- displayed lower levels of self-confidence than on-campus students. The researchers also found that distance students wanted highly-structured teaching materials, whereas on-campus students preferred to provide their own structure. Kahl and Cropley attribute the distance students' desire for highly-structured course materials to their low self-confidence, speculating that the students see structured and organized learning as a way to complete their studies in a timely way, reduce the anxiety arising from their competing roles and obligations, and provide a substitute for the instructor. Although advocating carefully designed and organized courses, Kahl and Cropley caution that they can be regarded as pandering to student anxiety. Accordingly, to break down student anxiety, Kahl and Cropley suggest that the course materials *begin* by presenting material in a highly organized, logical and friendly manner; discuss frequently occurring problems, errors, and misunderstandings; and provide a large number of exercises and model answers on which students can work without time pressure, gaining confidence from their "small successes" (p.45). At the same time, Kahl and Cropley believe that course materials should "prepare students for structuring tasks on their own and encourage them in the belief that they are capable of doing this" (p.47). The course materials should state clearly that acquiring course content and skills is not the student's priority; rather, it is learning new study skills and developing critical

thinking:

...learning materials need to make it plain to learners that

- they should not place too much emphasis on immediately useful results, but on acquiring methods and strategies;
- one can never know in advance exactly what will result from thinking processes, so that it is necessary to plunge in, even where outcomes are uncertain;
- the real purpose of the program is to learn how to direct and guide one's own work; as one becomes more skilful, favourable results become more common (p.47).

As a means to developing self-managed, critical thinkers, Kahl and Cropley feel the course materials should help students discover *how* they study, for example, by encouraging them to record the study strategies and steps they take spontaneously to approach a task or solve a problem and then assess the success of their efforts. Kahl and Cropley also encourage exercises that will help students develop autonomous, critical thinking such as providing texts and requiring students to find connections between the texts and the course ideas.

### **Summing Up**

What characterizes an effective distance education course? Based on the literature I have reviewed in this chapter, an effective distance course:

- follows the general structure that researchers and instructors of on-campus courses agree are characteristic of effective instruction: orientation of learners to new ideas, presentation of new ideas, and incorporation of practice and feedback.
- incorporates learning aids such as boldfacing, lists, illustrations, summaries, and review exercises with feedback to help guide students through the course materials.
- uses a conversational writing style to motivate students.
- includes bridges to and encourages conversations among instructor and students.

- **assists learners along the road to independent study by emphasizing *how* to learn and gradually decreasing instructions and low-level exercises in favour of high-level exercises.**
- **includes prompt return of graded assignments to students.**



## **CHAPTER IV.**

### **SYNTHESIS OF LITERATURE REVIEWS**

#### **In This Chapter...**

Based on the literature reviews of Chapters II and III, this chapter identifies several features that educators see as critical to distance education and composition instruction. The chapter also makes recommendations for implementing these features within a correspondence section of Expository Writing 26-100, an undergraduate course offered by the University of Windsor.

#### **The Features of Effective Composition and Distance Courses**

Chapters II and III reviewed the literature related to composition and distance education in order to answer the question “What characterizes an effective course?” from the perspective of both communities. As this chapter will demonstrate, composition and distance educators concur that:

1. an effective course follows the traditional sequence of direct instruction;
2. an effective course guides the student toward self-managed learning;
3. an effective course emphasizes didactic conversation between teacher and student;
4. an effective course encourages and mediates didactic conversation among students.

#### **1. Effective composition and distance instruction follow the traditional sequence of direct instruction.**

According to Slavin (1991), there is general agreement among instructors and researchers as to the sequence of events that is best in direct or teacher-structured instruction:

- i. *Introduction* — The instructor begins the lesson by orienting students to what they will learn and what performance will be expected of them by the end of the lesson.

For example, he or she reviews prerequisite information and states learning objectives.

- ii. *Discussion* — Next, the instructor presents and discusses new information with the students, gives examples, demonstrates concepts, etc.
- iii. *Application* — The instructor provides learning exercises and assignments so that students can practise what they have learned independently. He or she also assesses the students' performance and provides feedback, say by calling on randomly-selected students to read their answers to assigned questions. The instructor then assigns homework so that students can further practise what they have learned.

Many training manuals for distance course writers adapt the above approach, proposing that distance lessons include (1) introductions and objectives to orient students, (2) commentaries on the lesson topic, and (3) practice exercises and assignments with model answers (Continuing Education, 1997b; Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989; Sammons & Kozoll, 1994; Zubot, 1993). Like the recommended distance lesson, the environmental approach to teaching writing, found to be effective in Hillocks' (1986a) meta-analysis of composition research, follows the above sequence: (1) teachers often provide brief introductory lectures, and (2) students work on and discuss tasks in small groups before (3) practising what they have learned independently.

Although most course writers adhere to the above sequence when preparing materials, their careful planning may be undermined by the fact that, to ensure students receive materials in time, the materials are produced well in advance of the course start date, and due to financial constraints, they are usually not rewritten for five to seven years (Continuing Education, 1997b). These factors impose three limitations on pre-produced course materials, regardless of how well the materials are structured.

- i. Because distance course materials have a shelf life of five to seven years, they can become outdated easily. Distance program administrators are reluctant to lose money

by discarding outdated materials (Mackenzie, et al., 1968) yet, at the same time, feel that outdated courses, such as one that teaches WordPerfect 7.0 when WordPerfect 8.0 is available, affect negatively the credibility of their programs (Moore, 1986 in St. Pierre, 1990b).

- ii. Lindemann (1987, p.224) observes, "Just as writers confront unique possibilities in every act of composing, writing teachers discover with each group of students different ways to engage the process of teaching". Unfortunately, pre-prepared course materials make it difficult for instructors to adapt the course to the needs of their respective classes.
- iii. The course materials may imply to students that there is one linear path through the course; students may feel obligated to begin with Lesson 1 and work consecutively through each example and exercise until the course is completed. This is problematic in that, although the course is sequenced thoughtfully, not all students learn in the same manner, or need to know in the same detail or sequence the topics discussed in the course materials.

Ways that the course writer can address these limitations will be discussed later in the chapter.

## **2. Effective composition and distance instruction promote self-managed learning.**

Practitioners in the distance education community agree that an effective course promotes self-managed or autonomous learning. In fact, many adult educators see self-managed learning as the goal of distance education (see Garland on the goal of adult education, 1994; Kahl & Cropley, 1986). Consequently, after a review of American correspondence literature, St. Pierre (1990b, p.83) concludes that "encouragement of correspondence students to become more independent learners is being stressed to correspondence instructors". The very design of correspondence courses encourages autonomous learning. Students work almost entirely on their own, planning their study schedules, monitoring

their performance through self-tests and model answers, and contacting the instructor for assistance when they feel it would be useful. Some practitioners believe that distance students find it difficult to adjust to self-managed study because they are accustomed to the traditional teacher-centred classroom (Kasworm & Yao, 1993). As Smith (1982 in Garland, 1994) observes, "learners suddenly confronted with more responsibility for their own learning than they expected or are used to usually respond with anxiety, and sometimes withdrawal." Accordingly, practitioners suggest that course developers prepare materials that help wean students from instructor dependence to self-reliance. For example, distance courses can begin with detailed instructions, study hints and low-level exercises such as memorization and recitation, and move toward fewer instructions, and high-level exercises such as textual analysis, providing one's own examples, and linking experience to course content (see Gibson & Graff, 1992; Kahl & Cropley, 1986; Kasworm & Yao, 1993). It seems that this graduated approach to course design can also prevent other problems acknowledged by practitioners, such as stifling learning pleasure with too much structure (Smith, 1982 in Garland, 1994), or inviting students to transfer their dependence upon the instructor to dependence upon the course materials (Kahl & Cropley, 1986).

Like distance instructors, composition instructors believe that an effective course should promote self-managed learning. For example, the writing conferences supported so enthusiastically by some instructors (e.g., Carnicelli, 1980; Murray, 1985) place the responsibility for improving drafts upon the individual student. There is some support for the effectiveness of self-managed learning in composition research. From his meta-analysis, Hillocks (1986a) found the natural process approach to be 50% more effective than the traditional teacher-centred approach to teaching composition. The natural process approach assumes that students should be "free" to choose their own writing topics and forms, and that the instructor's role is to respond to student's work. However, Hillocks found the environmental approach to be even more effective than the natural process approach. Like the natural process approach, the environmental approach promotes self-

managed learning through collaborative learning, peer conferencing, and individual writing tasks. A critical difference between the environmental and the natural process approach is that the former incorporates teacher intervention. Rather than leaving writing choices entirely to students, the environmental instructor *plans* instructional experiences that will help students, both individually and collectively, understand and experience a particular writing principle. Thus, much like distance practitioners advocate a “weaning” approach to course design as a balance between too much and too little direction for students, Hillocks advocates the effective environmental approach to teaching composition as a balance between the extremes of the teacher-centred traditional classroom and the student-centred natural-process one.

As part of self-managed learning, composition educators believe that courses should develop *metacognition* (awareness of how one thinks and learns) and, specifically, awareness of the mental processes that lead to *composing* (e.g., Shaughnessy, 1977). Instructors contend that awareness of the writing process will help students work toward independence in managing the process. Lindemann writes (1987, p.229) that “Process-centred courses assume that if students understand the composing process and become conscious of their own writing behaviors, they’ll be better able to control those practices”. This claim has some empirical support. For example, from an experimental study of grade 4 and 5 students, Englert, Raphael and Anderson found (1992) that both learning-disabled and nonlearning-disabled participants in a program that emphasized talk about the writing process and strategies demonstrated a greater knowledge of writing, a greater ability to express their understanding of a text, and a greater ability to use their knowledge to write independently and proficiently than those students who did not participate. Even more significant is Bereiter and Scardamalia’s (1987) conclusion, based on nearly decade of cognitive research, that for students to move beyond retelling what they already know (knowledge telling) to developing their critical-thinking skills, knowledge, and independence and competence as writers (knowledge-transforming), they must be aware of the “full extent” of the composing process and must understand that

they must work toward independence in managing the process.

Metacognition is also recognized by distance educators as part of self-managed learning. Some educators recommend that course materials make it clear what students are studying and why (Chambers, 1993), and that the students' priority is *not* to learn content, but to learn new study skills (Kahl & Cropley, 1986; Kasworm & Yao, 1993). After discovering that distance learners at the Open University displayed lower levels of self-confidence and greater desire for highly-structured materials than on-campus learners, Kahl and Cropley (1986) recommend that distance materials present materials in a "highly organized, logical and easily understandable way" but, to avoid pandering to the low self-confidence of the distance learner, also make it clear that the emphasis of distance education is on acquiring skills rather than content, and that the real purpose of distance education is to learn how to "direct and guide one's own work; as one becomes more skillful, favourable results become more common" (p.47).

### **3. Effective composition and distance instruction emphasize didactic conversation between student and instructor.**

A review of the literature reveals that both composition and distance educators see didactic conversation between instructor and student as critical to effective instruction. *Didactic conversation* is a term coined by Börje Holmberg (1983), who theorizes that "good distance education resembles that of a guided conversation aiming at learning...." According to Holmberg, didactic conversation in distance education is constituted by both (1) the dialogue between course writer and student, which is simulated through the student's interaction with the course materials, and (2) the written and/or telephone interaction between instructor and student, which is brought about by the assignments, questions related to the course materials, and so on.

From a review of American correspondence research, St. Pierre (1990b) concludes that interaction between students and instructor is the "heart of correspondence teaching," partly because it helps forestall loneliness. Loneliness or isolation has long been seen as a

problem in distance education (Mackenzie et al., 1968), and is often cited as the root of course withdrawals (Scales, 1984). Holmberg (1985) argues from “generally accepted belief” that didactic conversation (simulated conversation through course materials and real, two-way conversation between student and instructor) helps foster feelings of personal relations between the student and instructor which, in turn, promote “study pleasure” and motivate the student to work on the course. Burpee and Wilson’s (1991) study of distance students in McGill’s education program suggests that satisfaction increases for those students willing to converse with their instructor weekly through fax, e-mail, and telephone. Burpee and Wilson’s sample may not be representative of the distance student population at large as it consists only of practising teachers, who may be more inclined to contact the instructor than students who are not teachers. Nevertheless, Burpee and Wilson’s findings are supported by St. Pierre and Olsen’s (1991) correlational study. From a questionnaire distributed to a random sample of Pennsylvania State University students who had completed correspondence courses, St. Pierre and Olsen found that didactic conversation with the instructor contributed significantly to the satisfaction of students *comfortable with this type of exchange*. Unlike Burpee and Wilson, however, St. Pierre and Olsen do not indicate how frequently students must converse with the instructor to experience satisfaction. Nor do they address the factors which make some students more comfortable contacting and conversing with instructors than others.

Awareness of the factors that make one student more comfortable calling the instructor than another is critical for distance educators, since the telephone tutoring systems provided by most distance programs are not well used by students (Bates, 1985; Kember et al., 1992; Krumm, 1993; Wiebe et al., 1993). For example, an unpublished survey of randomly-chosen University of Windsor correspondence students indicates that 61.5% of the respondents did *not* call their instructor during designated contact hours (Wiebe & Nantais, 1996). There are little data to suggest why students do or do not call the instructor. Although students complain about long-distance costs (e.g., Wiebe et al.,

1993), it seems that finances do not deter student calls; for example, Bates (1985) reports that only 10-15% of students at Athabasca University, an institution devoted to distance education, use the toll-free lines provided. Interviews with several University of Windsor instructors suggest that students perceive calls as interrupting the instructor (Landstrom, 1995). From the results of the University of Windsor study, it seems that students would be more comfortable telephoning instructors if instructors initiated the first call (Wiebe & Nantais, 1996). Unfortunately, few university departments can reimburse the instructors for long-distance calls made to distance students, and few can fund toll-free lines to the department, let alone to each off-campus instructor teaching a distance course for the department.

From a small ethnographical study, Garland (1994) concludes that it is difficult for distance students -- mature adults with full-time jobs and families -- to take on the "subordinate" role of the student by contacting the instructor for help. A sampling of student comments from Garland's study implies that instructor condescension during telephone conversation can reinforce student discomfort with contacting the instructor. Accordingly, it seems that instructors should be friendly, respectful and mindful of distance students' age and experiences if they wish to encourage student calls. University of Windsor program administrators agree, encouraging instructors to be "welcoming and encouraging to those who call for guidance, reassurance or advice" (Continuing Education, 1996). St. Pierre's (1991) review of American correspondence research supports the need for a "welcoming telephone manner" in that it emphasizes the importance of instructor warmth, enthusiasm and empathy in motivating correspondence students.

In addition to conversing with students through telephone, the instructor's written feedback on assignments is a particularly important form of student-instructor interaction within distance courses. Several studies indicate a significant correlation between course completion and the prompt return of assignments to students (within 7-10 days of mailing) (e.g., Rekkedal, 1973; St. Pierre & Olsen, 1991; St. Pierre, 1990a). Although



from their correlational study, St. Pierre and Olsen (1991) conclude that students do not like submitting assignments by mail, they also note this procedure does not affect their satisfaction with correspondence study. Since mail turnaround time is slow, some distance educators recommend that instructors use fax or e-mail to return assignments quickly (Willis, 1993). University of Windsor instructors who make themselves available to distance students through e-mail find that less than 10% of their classes use the medium (M. Landstrom, personal communication, September 6, 1996). This may change when more students get access to the hardware necessary for e-mail contact.

The composition community shares with the distance education community an emphasis upon didactic conversation between instructor and student. For example, many English departments include mandatory conferences between instructor and students as part of their writing courses (e.g., Bernthai & Ludwig, 1986, Michigan State University; Cassano, 1997, University of Windsor), based on the premise that these conferences can help students improve their writing. It appears that little empirical study has been conducted to explore this premise, although there are many instructor testimonials to the benefits of conferencing (e.g., Carnicelli, 1980; see Newkirk, 1986). Although Holmberg implies that didactic conversation should be "guided" by the instructor, writing conferences can be counterproductive if the instructor appropriates student writing by forcing his or her opinions, a shortcoming noted by several contributors to Newkirk's *To Compose* (1990). This is partly why Murray (1985) recommends that instructors begin each writing conference by inviting the student to comment on his or her writing, and then respond to what the student has said.

Much like the distance instructor's written comments on assignments, the composition instructor's comments on assignments constitute a major part of didactic conversation between composition instructor and student. In theory, the student's end of the conversation occurs in learning from the instructor's comments and applying what he or she has learned, rather than responding directly to the instructor (Williams, 1996). What about in practice? Do students use written comments to improve their writing? In

*Preparing to Teach Writing*, Williams (1996) cites several studies that indicate students do *not* use written comments to improve their performance from one assignment to the next (Gee, 1972; Hausner, 1976; Schroeder, 1973; Ziv, 1981). In an unpublished study conducted at UCLA, Pitzman (cited in Williams) found that the only comments students paid attention to were the personal responses made by an interested reader, such as "This is an interesting point..." Students seem to remember personal comments rather than those concerning organization or mechanics. Williams offers some reasons why students overlook the didactic comments that are written on their final drafts:

- It seems that students recognize what Williams discovered in a informal survey, that there is a definite correlation between the grade and the amount of red ink applied in comments -- the lower the grade, the more ink. As a result, Students tend to look at the grade and ignore the comments (Bernthai & Ludwig [1986] agree).
- Many instructors use the traditional abbreviations, such as AWK (for "awkward"), to point out problems in assignments. Students may not know what the abbreviations mean, and if they do know the abbreviations' meanings, they may be unsure how to solve the problem that the abbreviations identify.
- As comments are made on the final, graded drafts, students have no chance to practise the skills that they are supposed to learn. Hillocks (1986a) seems to agree with this point. Although from his meta-analysis, he concludes that written comments on compositions are generally ineffective, he acknowledges that "when comments are focused and tied to some aspect of instruction, either prewriting or revision, they do increase the quality of writing."

The Ontario Ministry of Education's survey (1991-92) with advanced grade 12 students lends some support to the claim that comments on written work *in progress* will be read by students as students can use them to revise their work. Fifty-five percent of the student respondents found teacher comments on written work in progress to be very helpful. In fact, more respondents rated written comments to be very helpful in improving writing

(55%) than any other writing aid or strategy, including reference books (49%), individual conferences with the instructor (44%), self-editing practices (27%), peer feedback (24%), grammar handbooks containing exercises, whole-class lessons, specific teacher instruction in grammar, models of good writing, authors visiting the classroom, and computer software. Hillocks [1986a] believes that instructors who write questions or offer suggestions that help the student writer to make or think through the necessary changes are helping students more than those instructors who make changes to show students what to do the next time.

As an alternative to writing comments on assignments, some composition and distance (Contact North a; Watkins, Goulding & Cherwinski, 1993) instructors tape-record their reactions to an assignment, and invite the student to listen and even respond. (Murray [1985] objects to this sequence in a composition course, arguing that when audiotaped responses are used as a substitute for a writing conference, the student should tape their responses first, and the teacher respond.) In her on-campus writing class, Joan Mullin (1995) reads students' papers into a tape recorder, recording what she thinks while she reads. Mullin finds audiotaped responses to be effective in teaching writing in that students can hear, say, a sentence fragment when she reads the fragment. Audiotaped responses also permit instructors to give more "detailed attention to parts of a paper than is possible by writing a long note" (Lindemann, 1987). Although Murray criticizes audiotaped responses as "substituting a machine for a person," others see audiotaped responses as personalizing instructor comments. As Lindemann points out, hearing the instructor's voice has "more pleasant connotations than the overmarked page." Hearing the instructor's voice could be particularly effective for distance students who often complain about "isolation" from the instructor.

#### **4. Effective composition and distance instruction encourage didactic conversation among students.**

The literature related to composition and to distance instruction not only advocates didactic conversation between instructor and student, but also didactic conversation among students. For instance, collaborative learning plays a central role in the environmental approach to teaching writing, an approach which Hillocks (1986a) found effective in his meta-analysis of composition literature. As established in Chapter II, peer conferencing plays an important role in the composition classroom (although there is little empirical evidence to support its use), whereby students guide one another through the writing process by providing feedback on their partners' work in progress so that their partners can revise effectively (Murray, 1985; Williams, 1996). The Ontario Ministry of Education's (1991-92) survey of grade 12 advanced-English teachers and students suggests that both teachers and students prefer instructor-student conferencing to peer conferencing.

Student interaction is also encouraged in the field of distance education, but is not emphasized nearly as much as it is within the composition community. For example, from two years of study, which included interviews with American correspondence educators, an analysis of existing data on American correspondence education, an analysis of a questionnaire sent to every correspondence institution in the US, and a review of source material on correspondence instruction in American libraries, the Correspondence Education Research Project (CERP) included only two short paragraphs on student-student interaction within their 240+ page report (Mackenzie et al., 1968). Essentially, the CERP's report says only that lack of student interaction is a limitation of correspondence courses, particularly because students learn from contact with each other. Since the CERP's report in the 1960s, communication technologies such as fax machines and e-mail have become available to the public. Consequently, the number of correspondence students who can contact each other through these means is growing. As it is becoming easier for students to contact one another, perhaps more discussion will be

devoted to student-student interaction in the distance education literature. At this point, most references to student-student interaction consist of recommendations by practitioners that students contact one another in order to confirm their progress in the course, receive support from those experiencing similar challenges, form study groups (Continuing Education, 1997a), wean themselves from dependence upon instructor (Gibson & Graff, 1992), and experience some of the discussion, exchange and collaboration that occurs in the on-campus classroom (Giltrow, 1995).

As established earlier, distance students are hesitant to contact the instructor by telephone. The literature indicates that they are even more reluctant to contact their classmates (and this is mirrored in the composition literature by the preference of composition students to work alone or meet with the instructor rather than to work with their classmates [Ontario Ministry, 1991-92]). For example, the designers of the Virtual Writing Center for SUNY Empire State College (an on-line student writing centre) discovered that most students chose the independent exercises and tutor option rather than taking "advantage of the chance to converse about writing using the collaborative conferencing mode" (Oates, Handley & Copley-Woods, 1996). Much like SUNY provides an opportunity for students to connect with one another through the World Wide Web, the University of Windsor publishes a directory of the names, course numbers, locales, phone numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses of participating distance students. However, just as few SUNY students use the conferencing mode on the World Wide Web, few University of Windsor students have expressed interest in or registered for the directory, and of those who sign up, even fewer call a classmate (Wiebe et al., 1993; Wiebe & Nantais, 1995). Perhaps they feel only teacher advice counts, or perhaps they see their calls as interrupting their classmates. Nevertheless, based on the premise that student-student interaction can help students learn, the University of Windsor has increased the promotion of the directory in their distance education newsletter and course materials. Accordingly, the number of students joining the directory seems to be increasing (J. Baldwin, personal communication, August, 1996).

Encouraging distance students to contact one another does not ensure that their conversations will be beneficial. Obviously, not all conversation among students in a composition or distance course will be didactic, even if this is the intent of the conversation. Post-secondary instructor Stephen Judy (1980) identifies two constraints to learning through student-student conversation in the composition classroom: the belief that only teacher advice counts and inhibitions over presenting or receiving critiques. Furthermore, two experiments conducted by Tudge (1990) with children indicate that peer feedback can actually lower the learning of students when the peers are uninterested in helping, lack confidence in their views, or are less capable or knowledgeable than their partners. Lensmire (1994) would probably address the constraints of student interaction with instructor intervention, as this is his solution for countering the peer hierarchies that created conflict in his elementary-school student conferences.

How can the instructor mediate didactic conversations among students to ensure that they are effective? In the composition classroom, the instructor can provide guidelines for constructive criticism, assign student groups, and circulate among student-conferencing groups to ensure that all students are participating, their writing is being taken seriously, and that the advice is useful (Lensmire, 1994). Mediating student conversations becomes more difficult within a correspondence version of a composition course, however, since students and instructors are separated. Nevertheless, the correspondence instructor can be available to offer a second opinion to that of the student's peers. Furthermore, the instructor can also provide distance students with guidelines for constructive criticism and revision aids (like those recommended by Hillocks, 1986a) so that they will be equipped to critique the writing of others (as well as their own). Educating distance students on how to respond to a text effectively is supported by Slavin's literature review in *Educational Psychology* (1991), which reports that training peer tutors is critical for the effectiveness of peer tutoring. Providing guidelines for constructive criticism and revision aids is also supported by Zhu's (1995) findings. From a study of 169 students in eight sections of a freshman composition class, Zhu reports that students trained in

strategies for peer response through teacher-student conferences provided significantly more and significantly better quality peer feedback than did students who received no training.

### **Incorporating the Features of Effective Instruction within Expository Writing 01-26-100-91**

To recapitulate, from a synthesis of the literature related to composition and distance instruction, we can infer that effective composition and distance instruction

- follow the traditional sequence of direct instruction: introduction, discussion and application;
- promote self-managed learning, partly by teaching how to acquire knowledge and skills rather than merely relaying content or rules;
- incorporate didactic conversation among students and between instructor and student.

These conclusions are drawn more from informed practice than empirical study. Of approximately 50 publications cited in this chapter, less than half are research studies, and only about half of these research studies are based on quantitative research. Other than the course materials themselves, the literature includes very little on composition courses delivered at a distance. Thus, until more data are gathered, developers of composition courses offered through distance education must rely on their experience and that of practitioners in both the composition and distance communities.

Since the features listed above are reputed to be effective in both composition and distance courses, it follows that they should be incorporated in a composition course delivered by correspondence (print-based distance education). However, several constraints face the course writer who seeks to include these features within a correspondence section of a composition course.

- How can the course writer prepare an effective course when distance students are

**reluctant to contact the instructor (constraint upon didactic conversation)?**

- **How can the course writer prepare an effective course when the postal service slows the exchange of assignments, and students may not read the instructor's comments when they finally do receive their evaluated assignments (constraints upon didactic conversation)?**
- **How can the course writer prepare an effective course when students are reluctant to contact each other, and when they *do* contact a classmate for help, may find the person's feedback is not useful (constraints upon didactic conversation)?**
- **How can the course writer prepare an course that meets the needs of the individual student when the course may be taught by another person and the materials used by students whom the course writer has probably never met (constraints upon course design and self-managed learning)?**

**Drawing largely from the experience of practitioners, the remainder of this chapter will make recommendations for overcoming these constraints within a correspondence section of Expository Writing 01-26-100-91, an undergraduate writing course offered by the University of Windsor.**

### **1. Overcoming student reluctance to contact the instructor.**

**How can the course writer promote didactic conversation between instructor and student within a correspondence section of Expository Writing 01-26-100-91 when students are reluctant to telephone the instructor (Bates, 1985)?**

- **In the course materials, the course writer can frequently encourage students to call the instructor whenever they have questions about the course or assignments. The course writer can counter the misperception that calls interrupt the instructor (Landstrom, 1996) by reminding students that answering questions is part of the instructor's "job."**
- **In an instructor's guide, which the University of Windsor encourages each course**



writer to prepare (Continuing Education, 1997b), the course writer could encourage instructors to write a friendly letter of introduction to students. Some educators speculate that a letter of introduction from the instructor will encourage student calls (Feasley, 1983 in St. Pierre, 1991; Landstrom, 1995).

- In the Instructor's Guide, the course writer could emphasize being friendly and approachable during telephone conversations with students (Continuing Education, 1996; Garland, 1994; St. Pierre, 1991) so that students will feel that their questions are welcomed and will continue to call.
- The course writer could recommend that the instructor *require* one or more telephone conferences as part of the final grade. This option would depend on size of the class and could require some scheduling on the part of the instructor.

In the Instructor's Guide, the course writer could also encourage didactic conversation between instructor and student through means other than telephone conferences:

- The course writer could recommend e-mail correspondence between instructor and student (Continuing Education, 1996; Willis, 1993), an option which might be preferred by some students to telephone contact. Students who perceive their telephone calls as interrupting the instructor may feel more comfortable posing questions through e-mail which can be read at the convenience of the instructor. Moreover, e-mail allows students to express questions as they encounter them, rather than forgetting or discounting them before the instructor's telephone office hours. Moreover, e-mail solves the problem of telephone office hours being inconvenient for some students.
- The course writer could suggest faxed correspondence (Willis, 1993) which might be preferred by some students for the same reasons they prefer e-mail correspondence. Since the quality of faxed transmissions is often poor, and faxed correspondence creates more work for the staff receiving faxes (Continuing Education, 1996),

instructors should be encouraged to use the fax selectively, for example, for those students unable to call during telephone contact hours.

- The course writer could propose audiotaped exchanges, whereby the instructor records his or her comments concerning an assignment, and the student listens to the comments and possibly records his or her response (see Contact North a; Mullin, 1995; Watkins et al., 1993), or vice versa (Murray, 1985). As audiotaped exchanges may not be feasible for a large class, they could be used selectively by the instructor, say, for those students who are unable to call during office hours due to conflicting schedules with the instructor or those having recurring problems with sentence fragments or run-ons.

## **2. Overcoming the slow exchange of assignments by post.**

How can the course writer overcome the slow exchange of assignments by post in a correspondence section of Expository Writing 01-26-100-91?

- In the Instructor's Guide, the course writer could recommend fax, e-mail (Willis, 1993) and mandatory telephone conferences as ways of relaying instructor comments to students more quickly than traditional postal delivery.
- The course writer could propose deferred grading to the instructor. This would allow students to improve their work based on instructor comments since they would have until the end of the semester to do so (Williams, 1996).
- The course writer could recommend that, upon receiving most assignments from students, the instructor skim the assignments for recurring problems, such as writing too much or too little. The instructor could then mail a letter to the class that addresses these problems (Continuing Education, 1996). Students will receive individualized comments later, when the instructor has had time to "digest" each assignment.

A word on the last recommendation: Because they are skimming assignments for common problems, some instructors might concentrate in their class letters upon the correction of surface errors, which are easy to detect. Instructors should be encouraged to comment on issues of structure and content as well as grammatical issues. However, it is useful for students if instructors comment on collective mechanical problems. Some on-campus instructors begin their classes with "small doses" of grammar (Long, 1988/89) related to recurring problems in current assignments. They believe that, because the "mini-lessons" are brief and relevant to current work, the instruction has a better chance of "sticking" (Newkirk, 1990). We can view the correspondence instructor's letter to the class as taking the place of a classroom mini-lesson.

### **3. Encouraging students to read instructor comments.**

How can the course writer of Expository Writing promote didactic conversation through instructor comments on assignments if students overlook the comments in favour of a final grade (Williams, 1996)?

- The course writer could recommend deferred grading to the instructor. Williams (1996) implies that deferred grading could increase the likelihood that students will read instructor comments -- as the drafts would be graded at the end of the course, students will have an incentive to read the comments. To avoid surprising students with an unsatisfactory final grade, partway through the course, the instructor and student could discuss the student's progress (Bernthai & Ludwig, 1986). The instructor could also assign a temporary grades to assignments, emphasizing that they can be improved if students revise the assignments using the instructor's comments as a guide.
- Toward the end of promoting conversation between instructor and student, the course writer could require students to attach cover letters to their assignments (C. Cassano, personal communication, February 12, 1997; Newkirk, 1990) in which students identify, say, three strengths and three weaknesses of their work. The students'

comments could form the basis of the instructors' written response, leading to an further exchange of ideas though writing, telephone, etc. This teaching strategy applies Murray's (1985) response model which states that students should comment on their writing first, and instructors then respond to these comments.

#### **4. Overcoming student reluctance to contact each other.**

How can the course writer address student reluctance to contact (Wiebe et al., 1993) and converse with one another about their writing (Oates et al., 1996)?

- In the course materials, the course writer could promote the Distance Education Directory for Students and explain how feedback from a classmate could help students to improve their writing.
- To encourage conversation about writing among students, the course writer could incorporate student publication within the assignments (discussed further in Chapter V).
- The course writer could recommend that the instructor create a class listserv so that those students with e-mail access could share writing problems and strategies.

#### **5. Promoting useful advice from peers.**

How can the course writer promote the exchange of useful advice among students who converse with one another about writing?

- Since peer training has been found to affect positively the quality of feedback (Slavin, 1991; Zhu, 1995), the course writer could provide guidelines in the materials for responding constructively to another's writing.
- To further facilitate feedback that is useful, the course writer could provide revision aids, such as questions and checklists (Hillocks, 1986a), with which students can evaluate their classmates' writing.

It may be difficult for Expository Writing correspondence students to network with a classmate, particularly if few classmates choose to be listed in the Distance Education Directory, or if those classmates who *are* listed live in remote areas or are unable to exchange drafts by fax or e-mail. In these cases, the course writer could encourage students to try to find a local reader who can read their drafts *in addition to* the instructor. Although someone who is a more competent (Tudge, 1994) writer than the student is preferable (for example, an English teacher or professional writer), not all distance students will know or be able to find such a person, particularly those students who live rural areas. How can the course writer help students find a peer reader whose feedback will be useful? In the course materials, the course writer could recommend that students look for

- someone who is interested in reading the student's writing, and interested in helping the student improve the writing (Tudge, 1990).
- someone who is supportive of the student taking distance courses, since it seems that the lack of support of friends and family can pose a barrier to learning. Garland's (1993b in Garland, 1994) small study at the University of British Columbia identifies poor family support as a barrier to course completion; and Parry's (1994) study of 438 students at the University of Victoria suggests that about one-quarter of distance students -- mostly female -- view lack of encouragement from family and friends as a barrier to learning.
- someone who is confident (Tudge, 1990) that he or she can read the student's paper and indicate tactfully to the student when he or she encounters an idea that is unclear. To enable readers to meet this goal, the course writer could provide the reader with a brief explanation of the reader's task, as well as a list of questions for the reader to answer after reading the paper, such as "What is the main point of this paper?", "What two things did you like best about the paper? Why?", and "Which two things did you like least? Why?"

## **6. Overcoming the inflexibility of pre-produced course materials.**

How can the course writer prepare Expository Writing 01-26-100-91 materials that meet the needs of different students and allow the instructor to be flexible to the needs of the class?

- In the course materials, the course writer could emphasize to students that the course schedule is *suggested*. (Survey data from over 400 Australian respondents in five disciplines suggest that most distance students already establish their own timetable based on the course schedule [Dekkers et al., 1993].) The course writer could also encourage students to jump ahead to lessons or portions of lessons that they feel will help them with current writing problems, particularly those identified by the instructor in his or her comments on the assignments.
- The course writer could employ different media to reach students with different learning styles (Slavin, 1991). For example, illustrations could reach those students who learn best visually. Using idea trees to brainstorm assignment topics could reach students who learn best by doing. An audiotaped lesson or response to an assignment could reach students who learn best by hearing.
- The course writer should follow the University of Windsor's guidelines for a "generic" course so that the course can be adapted easily by the individual instructor. This means that no information on assignment grading or due dates should be included in the course materials so that the instructor can prepare and inform students of these details. Furthermore, the assignments should be placed together within the course materials so that they can be replaced easily if the instructor chooses to modify them (Continuing Education, 1997b; Continuing Education, 1996).

A comment on the last recommendation: Since not all instructors are experienced in distance education, the course writer should provide the instructor with some guidelines for preparing and assessing composition assignments in a correspondence course

(Continuing Education, 1997b). For example, for those instructors who have not received professional development in the area of grading, the course writer could suggest that the instructor address patterns of error in student assignments rather than identifying each mistake (Lindemann, 1987; Newkirk, 1990; Shaughnessy, 1977). The course writer's suggestions would be in addition to those teaching strategies shared by experienced instructors at the tri-annual Forum for Distance Instructors, hosted by the Division of Continuing Education at the University of Windsor.

### **Summing Up**

According to the literature related to composition and distance education that was reviewed in Chapters II and III, an effective correspondence section of Expository Writing 01-26-100-91 should follow the *traditional sequence* of instruction used in direct instruction, promote *self-managed learning*, emphasize *didactic conversation* between instructor and student, and encourage and mediate didactic conversation among students. These features seem derived more from practice than from empirical research. Incorporating the features within a correspondence section of Expository Writing 01-26-100-91 is difficult, as students are reluctant to contact the instructor and each other, the postal service delays the exchange of assignments, students may not read instructor comments on returned assignments, peer feedback may not be useful, and the advanced preparation of course materials may imply erroneously that there is one "right way" through the course and the process of writing. Consequently, drawing largely from the experience of practitioners, this chapter discussed how the course writer can address these constraints when preparing the course materials.

## **CHAPTER V. RATIONALE FOR COURSE**

### **In This Chapter...**

This chapter proposes course objectives, a course schedule and a series of assignments for a section of Expository Writing offered by correspondence. It also introduces the topics that are explored in the course appended to this thesis, and justifies the inclusion and presentation of these topics with reference to the literature.

### **Course Objectives**

The following objectives for Expository Writing are expressed explicitly or implicitly within the University of Windsor English Department's Statement of Objectives for 26-100 (1991), the syllabus of the present course coordinator (Cassano, 1997), or the course manual prepared for instructors and graduate assistants by the late course coordinator (Long, 1988/89). These documents demonstrate how practitioners interpret the 26-100 course description in the *University of Windsor Undergraduate Course Calendar* (1997-98).

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. describe and practice the process by which good writing is produced. This process includes generating ideas, revising, editing and proofreading (C. Cassano, personal communication, October 3, 1995; Cassano, 1997; Long, 1988/89).
2. follow the conventions of writing in the university community (Cassano, 1997; English Department, 1991; Long, 1988/89), such as organizing their writing around a thesis (English Department) or central claim, supporting their arguments with evidence (see assignments of Cassano and Long; English Department), and using language that is appropriate for a university audience (English Department; Long).
3. read critically the drafts of others, and make suggestions for improving their writing (Cassano, 1997) at both the global and local levels (Long, 1988/89).



4. revise their writing, at both the global and local levels (English Department, 1991), with help from the instructor, other readers (Cassano, 1997; Long 1988/89), and course revision aids.

As Chapter IV concluded, an effective correspondence section of Expository Writing should guide the student toward self-managed or autonomous learning. This feature of effective instruction underlies objectives 1, 3 and 4. Awareness of the writing process (objective 1) is seen by both practitioners (Lindemann, 1987) and researchers (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Englert et al., 1992) as a means toward managing that process independently. Analyzing the writing of others (objective 3) exemplifies the peer editing process central to many composition classrooms. Some instructors claim that peer editing can help students see and amend the same problems in their own work (objective 4) (Carnicelli, 1980; Murray, 1985; Newkirk, 1990; Shaughnessy, 1977). As discussed in previous chapters, there is some empirical support for this claim (e.g., Zhu, 1996). For instance, from his meta-analysis of composition research, Hillocks (1986a) suggests that a useful tool for improving writing is heuristics, that is, scales, criteria and specific questions that students can apply to their own and others' writing (objective 4). Hillocks observes that students appear to internalize the criteria when they use them systematically.

Another feature of an effective correspondence section of Expository Writing is that it encourages didactic conversation between instructor and student, and among students. Students cannot achieve objective 4 without didactic conversation; they must use the suggestions of others to revise their writing.

### **Course Schedule**

The following course schedule is based on the course objectives and, by extension, the literature review of previous chapters. Although the course schedule has been prepared thoughtfully, the lesson sequence is recommended to students, who may adapt it to fit their personal schedule. For example, work-related travel may prevent some students from completing a lesson during the recommended week of the semester. Moreover, as

students have unique ways of learning and face different challenges, the course materials encourage students to skip ahead or return to the lessons that address problems they are facing in a current writing assignment (e.g., see p. 125 of the appendix). For instance, if struggling with writer’s block while working on an assignment midway through the course, a student may find it helpful to review the strategies for overcoming writer’s block discussed in Lesson 2. During their telephone conferences with students, and in their comments on student assignments, instructors could recommend that a student review relevant portions of the course that precede or follow the lesson upon which the student is currently working.

<b>UNIT 1: GETTING STARTED</b>		
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Lesson 1</b>	<b>Course Introduction: What You Do When You Write</b>
<b>Week 2a*</b>	<b>Assignment 1</b>	<b>Introductory Letter [Diagnostic Paper]</b>
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Lesson 2</b>	<b>Getting Started Writing</b>
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Lesson 3</b>	<b>The Essay and the Thesis</b>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Lesson 4</b>	<b>Paragraphing</b>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Lesson 5</b>	<b>Building a Paragraph</b>
<b>Week 4a</b>	<b>Assignment 2</b>	<b>Global Revision Exercise</b>
<b>UNIT 2: THE ARGUMENT: GLOBAL ARGUMENT</b>		
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Lesson 6</b>	<b>Argument and Accommodation</b>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Lesson 7</b>	<b>Substantiation Arguments</b>
<b>Week 6a</b>	<b>Assignment 3</b>	<b>STAR Exercises</b>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Lesson 8</b>	<b>Evaluation Arguments</b>
<b>Week 7a</b>	<b>Assignments 4 &amp; 5</b>	<b>Drawbridge Assignment &amp; Submission for Class Magazine</b>
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Lesson 9</b>	<b>Recommendation Arguments</b>
<b>UNIT 3: REVISION</b>		
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Lesson 10</b>	<b>Creating Atmosphere with Language</b>
<b>Week 9a</b>	<b>Assignment 6</b>	<b>Argument</b>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Lesson 11</b>	<b>Editing for Punctuation</b>

Week 10	Lesson 12	Editing for Sentence Variety
Week 11	Lesson 13	Proofreading
Week 12	Portfolio preparation	
UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR		
Week 13	Lesson 14	Approaching Essay Exams
Week 13	Assignments 7 & 8	Portfolio & Final Exam
<p>*Assignment 1-6 are due (postmarked) on the Monday of the specified weeks.  Assignment 7 is due on the day of the final exam and would be submitted to the exam invigilator.</p>		

### **Why Focus on Argumentation?**

The traditional modes of discourse taught in postsecondary composition courses like Expository Writing 26-100 since the turn of the century generally include exposition, description, narration and argument (e.g., Cassano, 1997; Kurata, 1983). According to Fulkerson, author of *Teaching the Argument in Writing* (1996), this scheme has been under attack for decades. Fulkerson criticizes the scheme for restricting “ ‘argumentation’ to a particular pigeonhole of discourse and thus [implying] that description, narration, and the exposition that we generally claim to teach are devoid of argument” (p.2). In fact, Fulkerson asserts, one may describe or narrate for many different reasons — including to explain and argue. Norton and Waldman (1992) acknowledge that much of expository (explanatory) writing includes elements of argument. Heilker (1996) states that the traditional thesis/support form taught in composition classes is, in fact, an argument since it is intended to “sell a point”; Larson (in Fahnestock & Secor, 1990) speculates that “Probably at least half of the assignments in most writing courses invite argument”; and Fulkerson agrees that any discourse with a thesis is “an argument in which the thesis is the argumentative conclusion”.

Not only is argumentation a common element to the modes of discourse traditionally taught in composition courses, but it is also common to writing assignments across the university curriculum. For instance, University of Windsor students who take Expository

Writing 26-100 both on campus and through distance education are not English majors, but are enrolled in programs such as Human Kinetics, Biological Sciences, Arts, Social Sciences and Business. These programs require a variety of assignments, such as lab reports, essay exams, literary analyses, journals, research papers and case studies (D. Mady-Kelly, Dramatic Arts, director, personal communication, November 28, 1996; T. Sands, Biological Science, personal communication, November 27, 1996). The assignments require students to formulate and support arguments and, in many cases, to respond critically to the argument of another. Williams (1996) believes that the prevalence of argumentation as an activity on university campuses justifies a series of composition assignments based on argumentation, and the late course coordinator of Expository Writing 26-100 may have used similar reasoning when he focused his assignments on persuasion (Long, 1988/89). Weiss (1980) argues:

If preparation for content-related writing is the end of the composition course...then instruction in the specialized writing forms familiar to [our colleagues in departments other than English] should follow or supersede instruction in the 'literary' forms familiar to us....

Simon Fraser University has put the recommendations of educators like Williams and Weiss in practice. Like Expository Writing 26-100, a goal of Simon Fraser's University Writing 199-3 course is to introduce students to the kinds of writing valued in university settings. To meet this goal, the distance course emphasizes argumentation over the other modes of discourse (Giltrow, 1995). A required composition course at Penn State University is devoted entirely to written argument out of the conviction that written argument brings together all other writing skills and prepares students for the writing tasks demanded in postsecondary courses and careers (Fahnestock & Secor, 1983).

A benefit of a focus on argumentation is that it not only prepares students for university writing, but also better prepares them for the types of writing they encounter in the world outside the university. Fulkerson (1996) contends that argumentation is as prevalent within real-world texts, such as editorials, letters of recommendation, advice columns,

and business reports, as it is within the literary criticism and scholarly discourse of the academic community. He believes that teaching students to argue in writing not only prepares them to write well in the university community, but also in the world outside the university. In his foreword to Fahnestock and Secor's *Rhetoric of Argument* (1990), Richard Larson writes that in helping students learn to argue successfully, we prepare them "not only for writing in academic disciplines, but for their participation in civic and professional world beyond the campus where, in diverse settings, they will need to use words to encourage beliefs and to bring about desired actions." The real-world application of argument is of particular importance to distance students as a positive relationship has been found to exist between student satisfaction and the opportunity to apply what is learned during a course (St. Pierre & Olsen, 1991).

Expository writing means "informational" (Newkirk, 1990) or "explanatory" writing (Norton & Waldman, 1992). The appended version of Expository Writing 26-100 not only helps students to inform or explain things clearly to their readers, but also teaches them to use information and explanation to persuade. Although the course touches on other modes of discourse (e.g., the writing samples that students critique include descriptions, narrations and definitions), the course emphasizes argumentation because it is prevalent within the discourse of the university community and an objective of Expository Writing 26-100 is to prepare students for writing within this community.

### **Rationale for Lessons**

So that the course meets the expectations of the University of Windsor English Department, I have derived the following lesson topics from the English Department's Statement of Objectives for 26-100 (1991), the syllabus of and conversation with the present course coordinator (C. Cassano, personal communication, October 3, 1995; Cassano, 1997), and the course manual prepared for instructors and graduate assistants by the late course coordinator (Long, 1988/89). These documents elaborate on the course description in the *University of Windsor Undergraduate Course Calendar*.

## **Unit 1 Getting Started**

**Lesson 1 Course Introduction: What You Do When You Write**

**Lesson 2 Getting Started Writing**

**Lesson 3 The Essay and the Thesis**

**Lesson 4 Paragraphing**

**Lesson 5 Building a Paragraph**

## **Unit 2 The Argument & Global Revisions**

**Lesson 6 Argument and Accommodation**

**Lesson 7 Substantiation Arguments**

**Lesson 8 Evaluation Arguments**

**Lesson 9 Recommendation Arguments**

## **Unit 3 Local Revisions**

**Lesson 10 Setting Atmosphere with Language**

**Lesson 11 Editing for Punctuation**

**Lesson 12 Editing for Sentence Variety**

**Lesson 13 Proofreading**

## **Unit 4 Wrapping Up**

**Lesson 14 Approaching Essay Exams**

## **Unit 1 -- Getting Started**

Much like an effective lesson begins by orienting students to what they will learn in that lesson (Slavin, 1991), the course begins by introducing students to course policies and procedures and, most important, the course objectives (see p. 121 of the appendix). It is important to state the course objectives clearly to students at the outset of a course. As Slavin points out in *Educational Psychology* (1991), the “sum of the research” on objectives suggests that stating them clearly to students at the beginning of instruction often increases student achievement of the objectives.

Lesson 1 embodies some features of *instructional design* that carry through the remainder of the course. For instance, the lesson is written in a conversational style that

the literature suggests is motivational for students (reviewed in Smith, 1994). It incorporates learning aids such as behavioural objectives, boldfaced key terms, lists of ideas, an illustration of the writing process, and a summary. Moreover, Lesson 1 also follows the general structure that on-campus researchers and instructors agree is characteristic of effective instruction (Slavin, 1991):

1. *orientation of learner to new ideas*. Both the lesson introduction and objectives help “set the stage” for the remainder of the lesson.
2. *presentation of new ideas*. The body of lesson explores ideas that may be new to students, such as the concept of the writing process.
3. *incorporation of practice and feedback*. For instance, students are required to find the areas of overlap between the lesson ideas and those presented by the textbook author. Answer guidelines are provided so that students can evaluate their work (see p. 397 of the appendix).

Lesson 1 introduces a model of the writing process that students will explore during the remainder of the course: writing occurs in a series of subprocesses that include prewriting (idea generation), writing, and revising; these subprocesses are recursive and differ with the individual writer. As discussed in Chapter II, this model is supported empirically. For example, Applebee (1986) concludes that most studies of writing processes find that writing includes several recursively operating subprocesses, including planning, drafting, revising and editing. The claim that introducing students to a model of the writing process will enable them to better manage this process also finds some support in empirical research, such as that of Englert et al. (1992) and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987). As established in Chapter IV, *self-managed learning* is a feature of an effective correspondence section of Expository Writing.

It corresponds with Gagne’s general teaching model (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989) and with common sense to introduce the writing process early in a course about writing.

Consequently, I have followed the example of many instructors, including Cassano (personal communication, October 3, 1995) and Lindemann (1987), to introduce the model of the writing process within Lesson 1. Students will explore this model in Lesson 2, during which they will apply some strategies for generating ideas (e.g., free writing, idea trees, journals), starting to write, and dealing with writer's block. The lesson emphasizes that the writing process is highly individualistic, that students must find the prewriting strategies that work best for them, and that different prewriting strategies may work better under certain circumstances than others. Emphasizing an "individual" approach may help students avoid seeing the model of the writing process as prescriptive and linear (Applebee, 1986), a misconception which was identified in Chapter II as a shortcoming of process composition pedagogy.

Lesson 3 reviews the traditional model of the essay, an argumentative form familiar to many students; it includes an introductory paragraph with a thesis that usually appears near the end of the paragraph, several body paragraphs that develop the thesis, and a concluding paragraph that restates the thesis. Some instructors have found this model or variations thereof, such as Sheridan Baker's (1991) "keyhole" model, to be useful for students who have difficulty with organizing and planning their writing (e.g., Addison, 1991; McLachlin, 1981). However, McLachlin emphasizes that students should move on to more sophisticated development after mastering this form, and that sometimes students need only a portion of the formula and that they should not be forced to use it if they do not need it. Accordingly, the appended course explores adaptations of the traditional model and emphasizes that students should make choices that will help them reach their audience and fulfil their writing purpose most effectively (e.g., see section 3.5 on p. 165 and see p. 418).

Much like Lesson 3 does with the essay, Lessons 4 and 5 take a *problem-solving approach* to teaching the paragraph. They do not present rules; rather, they invite students to work through exercises that illustrate or apply a principle being taught, and provide guidelines to help students select the writing strategies that are appropriate for a specific



situation (e.g., when to begin a new paragraph, how to improve a paragraph, how to sequence detail in a paragraph sequence, and the like). Lessons 3 to 5 invite students to investigate the characteristics of the traditional essay and paragraph (Hillocks, 1986a) and evaluate ineffective writing samples (e.g., see the review exercise on p. 180 and section 5.8 on p. 195). The remaining lessons of the course also invite students to solve writing problems (Applebee, 1986) as this approach has been found to be effective in teaching writing (see Hillocks, 1986a, on inquiry and models). For instance, Lessons 7 to 9 provide students with checklists that they can use to identify and amend the weaknesses in written arguments that are provided in the course materials or written by themselves.

## **Unit 2 -- The Argument & Global Revisions**

The second unit explores argumentation, which, as discussed previously, is the focus of the course. Unit 2 follows what Fahnestock and Secor (1993) call the *rhetorical/generative approach* to teaching argument. The two English professors argue that the best way to teach argument is to teach several forms of argument that are transferable to a wide variety of writing situations: categorical propositions and causal statements, evaluations, and proposals, or what Fulkerson (1996) calls substantiation arguments, evaluation arguments, and recommendation arguments. Fahnestock and Secor argue that students should learn to write an argument of each form, in the aforementioned sequence, and on their own topics. They call this approach the *rhetorical/generative approach*. They contend that the rhetorical/generative approach is superior to the *logical/analytical approach* which presents students with the rules and terminology of formal logic, and fails because knowing the rules does not mean that a student can construct an written argument. The *content/problem-solving approach*, somewhat better than the logical/analytical approach, seeks to help students absorb the principles of methods of written argument by inviting them to write their way out of problems in letters, memos, reports, and articles; unfortunately, the content of such assignments tends to crowd out the writing instruction since students may choose topics that are outside the instructor's area of expertise. Each of the three approaches to teaching argument falls

within a composition pedagogy evaluated by Hillocks (1986a) in his meta-analysis of composition literature:

Approaches to teaching composition	Presentational	Natural process	Environmental
	<i>Least effective</i> ————— <i>Most effective</i>		
Approaches to teaching argument in a composition course	Logical/Analytical	Content/Problem solving	Rhetorical/Generative

As the appended course adapts the environmental pedagogy of teaching composition described in Chapter II, it is logical that it also follows the rhetorical/generative approach to teaching argument.

Lesson 6 recasts the thesis statement as the argumentative conclusion (Fulkerson, 1996) or central claim made by an essay. Based on the work of Fahnestock and Secor (1990 & 1993) and of Fulkerson, the lesson introduces three types of claims and gives students practice identifying them:

1. *Substantiation* — claims that do not involve value judgements, but may state facts, give definitions, or state cause and effect. Example: “Most distance education students enrol in distance education courses because their work schedule conflicts with the university’s course offerings.”
2. *Evaluation* — claims that assert something is good/bad, right/wrong, desirable/undesirable, effective/ineffective. Example: “Distance education is the best way for working parents to get a degree.”
3. *Recommendation* — claims that state something should/ought/must be done. Example: “Hundred-percent final exams should be abolished from distance education courses.”

Lesson 6 assumes that, once students realize which type of claim their thesis makes, they will know which types of arguments that sort of thesis requires in order to persuade a critical reader (Fulkerson, 1996). The evidence that would provide support for the above claims and the ways to structure this evidence are explored in the remainder of Unit 2

(e.g., see section 8.13 on p. 247 and section 8.18 on p. 251).

Throughout Unit 2, students are provided with revision aids, a practice which Hillocks (1986a) finds effective. The revision aids are designed to help students to assess the strength of the arguments that they and their peers have written and to decide whether each argument is presented in a manner that is respectful of the intended reader. One such revision aid is Lesson 7's STAR test (Fulkerson, 1996), which requires students to decide whether an argument uses *sufficient* examples, whether the examples are *typical* of the issue being argued about rather than exceptions to the rule, whether the examples are *accurate*, and whether the examples are *relevant* to the claims made in the argument. Heuristics like the STAR test encourage students to revise the *global* (above sentence-level) features of writing, such as content, organization, and communicative effectiveness. Unit 2 emphasizes global revisions as, in theory, students would not finalize their writing assignments until the latter portion of the course, when they choose their best writing for inclusion in a portfolio. In practice, however, some students may need help in *local* (below sentence-level) revisions as portions of their drafts move from vague to concrete (Murray, 1985). Accordingly, the course materials (and the instructor would also) refer these students to the appropriate sections of Unit 3, which includes lessons on style, editing, and proofreading.

### **Unit 3 -- Local Revisions**

In accordance with process pedagogy (see Chapter II) and following the lead of many composition instructors (e.g., Bishop, 1995; Wiener, 1990) and textbooks (e.g., O'Hare & Memering, 1990; Green & Norton, 1995), the course schedule discusses local issues near the end of course, when students will be polishing their assignments for inclusion within a graded portfolio. Lesson 10 explores diction and style, Lesson 11 addresses common punctuation errors, Lesson 12 invites students to edit sentences for variety in length, and Lesson 13 provides proofreading tips and exercises.

As discussed in Chapter II, one criticism of contemporary composition courses is that

they downplay the teaching of style and do not clarify that there are many styles that are acceptable in different circumstances rather than one “correct” style. In Lesson 10, students investigate several styles they may encounter and employ in their daily lives (colloquial/dialect, general, formal/technical), and decide when these styles are appropriate. In particular, the lesson emphasizes the style that is conventional in the university community (cf. Mullin, 1995; Romano, 1990), and invites students to revise texts so that the texts would accommodate a general university audience (Bishop, 1995).

As part of her well-known book, *Teaching Grammar in Context* (1996), Weaver reviews two major studies, one on the frequency of error in freshman writing assignments (Connors & Lunsford, 1988), and the other on the significance of particular errors to business leaders (Hairston, 1981). Weaver merges the results of these studies to produce a list of errors that are most important to address when teaching *grammar*, by which she means sentence elements and structure, usage, sentence revision, punctuation, and mechanics. Unit 3 explores most of errors identified by Weaver and follows her suggestions for teaching them effectively. For instance, Lesson 11 teaches punctuation through dictation, an approach recommended by Weaver and others, such as Scardamalia, Bereiter and Fillion (1981). So as not to overwhelm students with grammatical terminology, the unit explains only those terms identified by Weaver as most important. Furthermore, following the example of Shaughnessy (1977) and others, the lessons invite students to identify and concentrate on the patterns of error that they make most frequently (e.g., see section 11.4 on p. 302 and see p. 422).

Lesson 12 invites students to vary the length of sentences and helps them learn to do so through sentence combining, which is identified by Hillocks (1986a) as a useful writing strategy. Students have been found to write long, awkward, incorrect sentences when they perceive that the aim of sentence combining is to produce bigger sentences. Accordingly, the lesson emphasizes that big sentences are not necessarily better than short ones, that the key is to provide variety for reader to avoid boring him or her (Crowhurst, 1983). Furthermore, because students tend to combine sentences only in the exercises assigned

by the instructor (Crowhurst, 1983), Lesson 12 invites students to make sentence combining part of their revision habits. The lesson asks students to review their assignments, all of which would be submitted to the instructor in a portfolio at the end of the semester, and revise the assignments for sentence variety, as necessary. (See sections 12.5-12.6 on pp. 315-316).

#### **Unit 4 -- Wrapping Up**

As the course culminates in a final examination, Lesson 14 follows the lead of the late and present on-campus course coordinators and discusses strategies for preparing for and writing essay questions (C. Cassano, personal communication, October 3, 1995; Long, 1988/89). Students would practice what they learn in Lesson 14 by completing a practice final exam, which is a conventional part of University of Windsor distance courses (Continuing Education, 1997b). The last week of the course is a fitting time to discuss strategies for essay exams, as students would write the final exam the following week and would be more likely to retain what is studied and practised immediately prior to the exam (Gardner & Jewler, 1992).

#### **Rationale for Proposed Assignments**

Following the recommendation of the University of Windsor English Department (1991), the course schedule incorporates eight assignments:

- Assignment 1**    **Introductory letter [diagnostic paper]**
- Assignment 2**    **Global revision exercise**
- Assignment 3**    **STAR exercises**
- Assignment 4**    **Drawbridge assignment**
- Assignment 5**    **Submission for class magazine**
- Assignment 6**    **Argument**
- Assignment 7**    **Portfolio**
- Assignment 8**    **Final exam**

Assignments 1-6 would not be evaluated as students would refine these drafts for inclusion within their portfolio (Assignment 7), but students must submit all assignments

to pass the course. "Participation" marks would be given to motivate students to submit the assignments by the due dates. Moreover, a temporary grade would be assigned to Assignments 2, 3, 4, and 6 to motivate students to revise their work and prevent them from being surprised by a low final grade.

Corresponding to Gagne's general teaching model (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989), the assignments would build from simple to complex. For example, Assignment 2 would require students to critique the organization of another writer's argument; Assignment 3 would require students to critique the organization, content and communicative effectiveness of other writer's arguments; Assignment 4 would require students to write an argument and support it with examples (an argument they would already have drafted as part of a Lesson 8 exercise); and Assignment 6 would require students to compose an argument of their choice. To use Dowst's (1980) words, the assignments would "spiral around the central idea" of argumentation so that by the end of the course, students would be able to formulate an argument, support it with relevant evidence, acknowledge evidence to the contrary, evaluate the strength of their argument and its evidence, and revise their argument appropriately, skills they are called upon to use repeatedly in both composition and non-composition classrooms.

The assignments would move from personal writing (introductory letter) to academic discourse (argumentative essays), following the sequence recommended by Moffett and Britton et al., which seems based on Piagetian theory (cited in Stotksy, 1993). A gradual increase in difficulty is believed to deter student discouragement and help them build the skills they need (Gachuhi & Matiru, 1989) to write successfully. Furthermore, beginning with Assignment 5, students would begin to choose their own topics or submissions, following the recommendation of some distance educators that an effective course should gradually wean students from dependence upon the instructor and the course materials in order to help them reach the goal of self-managed learning (e.g., Kahl & Cropley, 1986).

Students would be required to attach brief *cover letters* to the assignments (Newkirk, 1990) in which they explain what they perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of the

paper. The cover letters could help students toward self-evaluation, an objective of the course (see objective 4) and a feature of effective composition instruction by correspondence (see Chapter IV). The letters would also promote didactic conversation with the instructor, who can respond to the students' comments and use them as a basis for his or her own. The exchange of letters would apply Holmberg's theory of didactic conversation (1983), as well as Murray's (1985) response theory of teaching writing, which invite students to comment on their writing and the instructor to respond to the students' comments. The previous chapter established didactic conversation between student and instructor as a feature of an effective correspondence section of Expository Writing.

### **Assignment 1 -- Introductory Letter [Diagnostic Paper]**

The first assignment would be a one-page letter from the students to the instructor in which they answer several questions concerning their interests, and experience with and attitudes toward writing. This letter would play the role of the diagnostic paper that is so popular within composition courses (e.g., Cassano, 1997; English Department, 1991; Lindemann, 1987; Long, 1988/89; O'Hare & Memering, 1990). The diagnostic paper provides instructors with a writing sample so that they can get a feel for student needs (Lindemann, 1987; Long 1988/89). This information would be useful, particularly when it comes to giving students adequate help at the beginning of the course when most students tend to withdraw and when contact with the instructor helps to deter withdrawals (Bááth, 1982). The assignment would also help to identify those students for whom an ESL course such as Writing English for Non-Native Speakers 26-103 may be preferable (Long, 1988/89 and C. Cassano, personal communication, August 1, 1996). As is customary, the diagnostic paper would not be evaluated, although students must submit the assignment to pass the course and would receive participation marks for submitting the assignment by the due date.

The paper would *not* be called *diagnostic* because the term suggests that the students' writing is diseased and in need of treatment by the instructor rather than that of a "normal

[student] going through the normal process of mastering the language” (Williams, 1996, p. 203). Assignment 1 would take the form of the letter, following the suggestion of Moffett and Britton et al. (cited in Stotsky, 1993) that students should begin with personal writing, a genre with which they seem comfortable. The assignment would also take the form of the letter in hopes of promoting didactic conversation between the instructor and student, a feature which Chapter IV concludes to be effective in a composition course delivered by correspondence. Ideally, the instructor would reply to the class in a letter which does not evaluate but responds to some of the comments made by students. In its handbook for distance instructors, Continuing Education recommends that instructors send a letter of introduction to their students. By encouraging instructor and students to get to know each other early in the course, the exchange of letters may help to prevent withdrawals. Some distance educators posit that getting to know the instructor promotes students’ integration into the “social system of the distance study centre” (Malley et al., 1976 in Bååth, 1982), and that a personal relationship between instructor and student can motivate students to work on the course (Holmberg, 1985).

### **Assignment 2 – Global Revision Exercise**

This assignment would require students to suggest global revisions to a brief student essay (inspired by Long 1988/89), and would be one of many instances within the course where students are required to critique a writing sample and make two or three suggestions that would most improve the sample. To complete Assignment 3, students would apply what they learned in Unit 1: they would analyze the paper to see whether it fulfils the promise made by the thesis, whether the body paragraphs support the thesis, whether the ideas are arranged logically, whether the paragraphs contain enough supporting detail or whether certain details are unnecessary or irrelevant and so on.

### **Assignment 3 — STAR Exercises**

Assignment 3 would require students to apply what they have learned in Lessons 6 and 7 by applying the STAR test to two or three short writing samples. Although students



would have studied only substantiation arguments by the time they submit this assignment, it is important to assess how well they understand the STAR test because the test can help them decide whether *any* of the three types of argument studied in the course is well reasoned. The STAR test forms a foundation for the remaining lessons on argumentation.

#### **Assignment 4 — Drawbridge Assignment**

This assignment would require students to revise and submit the evaluation argument they composed while completing the review exercise in Lesson 8. As students would submit Assignment 5 on the same day, it is efficient to choose an assignment upon which they would have already spent some time.

#### **Assignment 5 -- Entry for Class Magazine**

For this assignment, students would submit a brief sample of what they believe to be their best writing in the course to date, such as any answer to a lesson exercise or any assignment other than Assignment 4. The entry would be “published” in a magazine distributed to the class. To save in duplication costs, students would be advised to single space their assignments and double space between paragraphs for easy reading. For bonus marks, a student volunteer can duplicate the entries and mail them to classmates, using envelopes and address labels provided by the instructor (who, in turn, acquires them from Continuing Education). The instructor can ask students who are willing to compile the magazine to contact him or her during office hours. The assignment would give students practice revising their own work based on what they have learned in Units 1 to 3.

Many instructors believe that *publication* motivates students to revise their work as it is read by classmates (e.g., Judy, 1980). Moreover, as the magazine would be prepared for distribution to the class, the assignment would also allow students to “meet” their classmates, thus targeting the loneliness experienced by many distance students (Mackenzie, Christensen & Rigby, 1968; Scales, 1984). The magazine is a variation of an assignment required in a writing course offered by Simon Fraser University. The

correspondence course requires students to submit several journal-writing assignments to their instructor with their regular assignments so that they can be passed on to another student in the course. The exchange of journal assignments is designed to provide students with “some experience of the discussion, exchange, and collaboration” that occurs in the on-campus version of the course (Giltrow, 1995).

The magazine assignment would give those students who did not register in Continuing Education’s Distance Education Directory another opportunity to connect with their classmates. The assignment instructions would invite students to include information on how and when they can be contacted by classmates to discuss their writing. This would help promote didactic conversation among students, an objective of the course, as well as a feature of an effective writing course by correspondence (see Chapter IV). Although students would have more writing samples to select from and submit to the magazine later in the course, Assignment 5 would be due early in the course so that students can benefit from any contacts they make with classmates.

Although didactic conversation among students is seen by practitioners as an essential feature of Expository Writing (see Chapter IV), compulsory peer editing groups cannot yet be assigned within the University of Windsor distance program. Even if an instructor is willing to take the time to assign small groups based on locale, the students’ schedules may not allow them to contact each other through telephone, let alone meet in person. Moreover, peer editing groups through e-mail cannot be assigned because not all students in the course have the requisite computer hardware. The instructor can, however, set up a listserv or Web site so that those students who have e-mail access and wish to communicate with one another can do so easily. However, until program administrators judge that enough students have access to the necessary computer hardware for an on-line section of Expository Writing, the course writer and instructor can only encourage students to consult their classmates, and make it easier for them to do so by setting up a class listserv and preparing assignments like the class magazine described above.

## **Assignment 6 -- Argument**

For Assignment 6, students would compose a substantiation, evaluation or recommendation argument. Based on writing exercises completed in Units 1-3, students would select a topic that interests them and formulate a thesis. They would then determine the type of claim that they have composed and, from their conclusion, decide which type of evidence most effectively supports their thesis. In so doing, students would apply what they have learned about the three different types of arguments in Unit 3.

If the instructor returns Assignment 6 by post, students may not receive it in time to make the suggested revisions before their portfolio is due, so instructors should encourage students to contact them for a telephone consultation or, when possible, by fax or e-mail.

## **Assignment 7 — The Portfolio**

Following the example of the on-campus course coordinator (Cassano, 1997), Assignment 7 would require students to submit a portfolio (folder) of all their assignments and all working drafts of the assignments that were written since the assignments were last submitted to the instructor. In a cover letter, students would identify the two best assignments that they have written. These two assignments would be evaluated by the instructor. To ensure that student revise all their assignments rather than just the two required for grading, the instructor would deduct marks for missing or unrevised work. Students would give their completed portfolios to their examination invigilators who, in turn, would send the portfolios and examinations to the instructor for evaluation.

Deferred grading is advocated by many writing instructors who believe that it motivates students to revise their work (Bernthai & Ludwig, 1986; Lindemann, 1987; Newkirk, 1996; Williams, 1996). As established in Chapter IV, deferred grading is particularly useful for a correspondence course in which the slow return of assignments by mail delays the delivery of written comments to students.

## **Assignment 8 — Final Examination**

A final examination is unique to the proposed correspondence section of Expository Writing. The large on-campus section incorporates two in-class essay midterms (Cassano, 1997), but it is not possible to administer these in the correspondence section because it is costly for the University of Windsor to arrange invigilated examination sites. The final exam, however, would be invigilated, and would give students a chance to demonstrate what they have learned during the course. Following the recommendation of distance program administrators at the University of Windsor (Continuing Education, 1997b), the course materials would stipulate that students must pass the final exam to pass the course. This should counter any concern of instructors that students may not be doing their own work.

Examination questions would ask students to demonstrate what they have learned, possibly by requiring them to analyze a writing sample for its strengths and weaknesses, and supporting their arguments with references to the sample, course materials, and their personal writing experience. The exam could also ask students to agree or disagree with a position taken in a short quotation based on what they have read and experienced during the course. (For a sample examination question, see section 14.4 on p. 347.) Such questions require students to respond critically to the writing of others, an objective of the course and an activity promoted throughout the course. Such questions also require students to take a position and support it with evidence, another objective of the course. As is customary with all University of Windsor courses, a practice final exam would be included in the course materials (Continuing Education, 1997b). The practice exam would give students an opportunity to apply what they learned about essay exams in Lesson 14, as well as provide a model examination for instructors.

## **Conclusion**

Based largely on the suggestions of practitioners, this chapter provides a rationale for the course objectives, schedule and content that appears in the appended *Expository Writing 01-26-100-91 Course Guide*. Because argumentation is a common element within the traditional modes of discourse and is prevalent within the university community, the appended course focuses on preparing students to recognize, critique, formulate, support and revise different types of arguments. The appended materials incorporate the features of an effective composition course offered by correspondence that were identified in Chapter IV:

- *The lessons follow the traditional sequence of instruction.* Each lesson introduces a topic; invites students to explore this topic through carefully-structured activities; presents students with opportunities to practise what they have learned through exercises and assignments; and provides feedback on student progress through revision aids, model answers and instructor comments on returned assignments.
  
- *The course promotes self-managed learning.* Students are invited to adapt the lesson schedule to suit their personal schedule and writing needs, and are provided with revision aids and answer guidelines so that they can assess their own writing and revise it accordingly. A model of the writing process is introduced and explored throughout the course to help students better manage their personal writing process. As many distance educators believe that students need to be weaned to self-managed learning from dependence upon the instructor or course materials, the appended materials gradually build in difficulty. For example, most of the lessons in Unit 2 conclude with revision checklists that will help students evaluate written arguments more effectively. Each checklist incorporates items from the checklist that precedes it; in this way, each lesson reviews and builds upon the ideas explored in the preceding lesson. As another example, the proposed assignments gradually increase in difficulty: Students would begin by writing a letter (a familiar genre) and then move on to complete some short exercises before writing entire essays. Moreover, students would evaluate particular

aspects of an argument provided by the instructor before writing and evaluating an argument on a topic assigned by the instructor and, eventually, writing and evaluating an argument of their own choice.

Because each student learns differently, the materials employ different media and activities to reach students with different learning styles. For example, the icons, tables and illustrations used in the materials would appeal to those students who are visual learners. Activities such as proofreading by folding a page into a fan (see section 13.6 on p. 331) or cutting apart essays and paragraphs to rearrange their sequence (see section 5.1 on p. 184) might appeal to those students who are kinesthetic learners. Revising by reading a draft into a tape recorder or exploring punctuation choices by completing a pre-recorded dictation (see section 13.6 on p. 331 and sections 11.1-11.3 on pp. 300-302) could appeal to those students are auditory learners.

- *The course promotes didactic conversation between instructor and student.* The first assignment would initiate the conversation by inviting students to write a letter of introduction to the instructor. The remaining assignments would continue this conversation as students would attach cover letters to the assignments indicating what they perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of their work and instructors would respond and point out areas that students should revise. To motivate students to read and apply the instructor's suggestions, grading would be deferred until the end of the course. Each lesson reminds students to contact the instructor when they experience difficulty.
- *The course encourages didactic conversation between student and student.* In the lessons and assignments, students evaluate and make recommendations for essays written by other students; students would exchange drafts through the class magazine; and the materials advise students to contact their classmates to discuss course questions and exchange drafts. When the course eventually includes a compulsory computer component, the instructor could set up peer conferencing groups via electronic mail.

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## APPENDIX A

### **EXPOSITORY WRITING**

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### **01-26-100-91 Course Guide**

**Course Writer: Natasha Wiebe**

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## READER

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# **COURSE MANUAL**

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## **01-26-100-91**

### **Read this First**

Welcome to Expository Writing (01-26-100-91). This credit course is designed for study at a distance from the University of Windsor campus and is to be completed within a single 13-week semester.

This chapter will introduce you to the course and tell you how to use the materials you've received. You should finish reading this chapter before beginning Lesson 1.

The course package, including this course guide, has been sent to you with a packing slip. Check this slip to ensure that you have all of the required materials.

The Distance Education Handbook and Instructor and Assignment Information page in your course package include information on instructor and classmate assistance, study hints, assignments and grading. You might wish to scan the handbook and Information page before reading further in this chapter. It's a good idea to record the assignment due dates on your course schedule and personal calendar.

### **Course Objectives**

Expository writing means “informational” or “explanatory” writing. This course will help you inform or explain things clearly to your reader. It will also teach you to use information and explanation to persuade readers to take your point of view.

When you have completed this course, you should be able to:

1. describe and practice the process by which good writing is produced. This process includes generating ideas, revising, editing and proofreading;
2. follow the conventions of writing in the university community, such as organizing your writing around a thesis, supporting your arguments with evidence, and using language that is appropriate for a university audience;
3. read critically the drafts of others, and make suggestions for improving their writing at both the global and local levels;
4. revise your writing, at both the global and local levels, with help from the instructor, other readers, and course revision aids.

## What You Need

There is no prerequisite for this course. However, you will need the following materials to complete it successfully.

### Course guide (binder)

The course guide is the backbone of the course. It includes the course manual chapter (which you are reading currently), lessons 1-14, a reader, a textbook key, and an assignment file. The Table of Contents at the beginning of the course guide will help you locate these components.

### Audiocassette

Your package should include an audiocassette which we will use in Lesson 11.

### Textbook

The package should also include *The Student Writer: Editor and Critic*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed., 1996, McGraw Hill) by Barbara Fine Clouse.

## Recommended Course Schedule

You should plan to spend at least 9-12 hours a week on the lessons in this course guide, with additional time for assignments. The following course schedule shows which lessons you should complete each week of the semester, and should help you plan your study time effectively.

So that you have a complete overview of the course, I suggest that you insert the assignment due dates listed on the Instructor and Assignment Information page at the appropriate places in the course schedule.

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## How to Proceed

If you're feeling a bit overwhelmed at this point, it may be because you have just read an overview of 13 weeks of work. Don't panic! Take one week at a time. To follow are some suggestions to get you started on the course.

### The unit guides

I've grouped the lessons into four units. After reading this chapter, you should read the unit guide that follows it ("Unit 1 Guide: Getting Started"). Much like the chapters in a novel flow into each other, each lesson in the course leads into the next one. The unit guides explain how the lessons relate to one another.

### The lessons

After reading the first unit guide, move on to Lesson 1. In the lesson notes, I introduce and discuss a particular topic, much like an instructor would discuss the topic in the classroom.

When you've completed Lesson 1, you should move on to the next lesson, and so on. When working on the lessons, **keep in mind the weekly schedule** I proposed earlier in this chapter.

### Read with pen in hand

You should work through each lesson with a pen or pencil in hand. Frequently, I will ask to complete exercises or answer questions that will help you explore or

experience the ideas that I'm introducing. You may have discovered that you can't learn the latest software package by reading the user's manual — you have to *use* the software. The same applies to writing. Although reading can help you become a better writer, you can't improve your writing by reading about it — you have to *write*.

I recommend that you write your responses to the lesson questions and exercises in a separate notebook. Alternatively, you could write your responses on three-ring paper and insert them at the appropriate places in this course guide. Your responses to the exercises will come in handy when preparing assignments and for the final exam. The lesson exercises will not be graded, so you shouldn't send them to your instructor, although when you have questions about an exercise, you may wish to contact the instructor to discuss them.

### **The Textbook Key**

The lesson notes will often refer you to the "Textbook Key" near the back of this course guide. In the Textbook Key, I ask you to read certain sections of the text and discuss how these readings relate to the lessons. I also ask you to complete certain textbook exercises. You can think of the Textbook Key as the "bridge" between the lessons and the textbook.

### **Your assignments**

The assignments you must submit for grading are included in the Assignment File in this course guide. The Instructor and Assignment Information page will tell you:

- which assignments you should send to your instructor,
- how they will be graded,
- how you should send the assignments to your instructor (e.g., by mail, fax, e-mail),
- when the assignments are due. If the instructor has asked you to mail your assignments to him or her, keep in mind that the due dates listed on the Instructor and Assignment Information page are the days on which your assignments should be **postmarked**.

Your instructor will be pleased to answer your questions concerning the assignments.

### **Exams**

If your instructor chooses to include a midterm or final exam as part of the course, he or she will say so on the Instructor and Assignment Information page. The



Division of Continuing Education will send you information on the date, time and site of the final exam later in the semester.

## Study Tips

Here are some study tips to help you complete the course successfully:

1. *Find the study time that works best for you.* Are you sharper in the morning, afternoon or evening? Can you fit in an hour before the kids get up in the morning, or can you carve out a couple of hours after supper?<sup>1</sup>
2. *Take small bites.* Complete each lesson and assignment in a series of study blocks rather than at one long sitting. Try to make yourself unavailable at these times, just as though you were in a classroom on campus.<sup>2</sup>
3. *Find your own space.* Set up a permanent work area. You'll need a desk or table with good lighting where you can spread out and work. If there's a door you can close, so much the better.
4. *Enjoy side trips.* Although I encourage you to complete the lessons in the sequence set out in the Course Schedule, you might find yourself with a particular aspect of writing that is not covered in the lesson you are working through at the moment. If this is the case, refer to the relevant sections of the *other* lessons for help — use the objectives listed at the beginning of each lesson as an index. You should also refer to the textbook for help. Its table of contents and index will allow you to identify the portions that can help solve your writing problem.
5. *Ask for help.* Just because you're not in the same room as the instructor doesn't mean you're on your own. To learn how you can reach the instructor, see the Instructor and Assignment Information page. The Distance Education Handbook explains how the student directory can help you can reach your classmates.

## On-Line Support for Distance Students

At the Network for Ontario Distance Educators' (NODE) Learner Support Site (<http://node.on.ca/support/>), you will find:

- The **reference shelf**: A collection of online reference sources for basic research.
- The **virtual librarian**: How to find, evaluate, and use electronic information.
- The **study buddy**: Help with time management, study strategies, essay-writing, and other learning and writing skills.
- The **technology toolkit**: The basics of electronic tools such as e-mail, ftp, and telnet.

In addition, the University of Windsor has several sites linked to its home page (<http://www.uwindsor.ca>) that may prove helpful to you:

- The Student Self Service is a Office of the Registrar site that allows you to confirm your registration and to request degree audits, grade reports or transcripts, among other things.
- The Leddy Library site provides access to various public and university library catalogues, databases, electronic journals, and tutorials on using the Internet.
- Programs of Study will lead you to information about the various academic departments, programs and faculty members.
- Calendars and Admissions is linked to on-line versions of the university's undergraduate and graduate calendars.
- New and Coming Events will keep you up to date on university happenings.
- Don't forget the Continuing Education site (Lifelong Learning)! Among other things, it provides access to an on-line version of our distance education brochure and to Canadian distance education information in general.

## Your Instructor

The name, address, telephone number and available hours of your instructor are listed on the Instructor and Assignment Information page. Many students like to keep the Information page at the front of their course guides so that they can find it easily.

Your instructor, who is an expert in teaching writing, should be contacted for any assistance that you require related to the content of this course. You should call your instructor with any questions related to the

- course subject matter
- practice exercises and answer guidelines
- assignments
- final grades

Answering questions is part of the instructor's job, so you shouldn't feel as though you are "interrupting" the instructor when you call him or her. Remember that you're responsible for the cost of all telephone calls. If you prefer to fax or e-mail to the telephone, you should check the Instructor and Assignment Information page to see whether your instructor can accept messages sent in these ways.

## Division of Continuing Education

The Division of Continuing Education of the University of Windsor is responsible for administering courses by distance delivery. You may wish to contact this office for assistance with such issues as

- locating materials that are missing from your course package,
- adding or withdrawing from a course,
- changing your name or address on the university's student information system.

If your instructor chooses to include a final exam as part of the course requirements (see the Instructor and Assignment Information page), Continuing Education will send you information on the date, time and site of the final examination later in the semester.

See the Distance Education Handbook for Continuing Education's office hours, phone numbers, fax number, e-mail address and Web site.

## Your Classmates

Upon request, the Division will send you a copy of the Distance Education Directory for students. Each semester the Division compiles a directory of the phone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses, and course numbers of participating distance students. By contacting students who live in your area you can discuss an idea or assignment **without incurring long-distance costs**. For more information on the student directory, see the Distance Education Handbook included in your course package.

As a distance student, one alternative to classroom discussion is to build a connection with another distance student. I recommend **exchanging assignments** with a classmate so that you can benefit from each other's suggestions *before* submitting the assignments for grading. Faxing or e-mailing assignments will be a lot quicker than exchanging assignments by post. Increase your chance of success in the course working with a fellow student!

## Where To Go From Here

You're ready to begin Lesson 1 if you have:

- read this chapter;
- confirmed that your package includes the materials listed on the packing slip;
- skimmed the Distance Education Handbook;
- read the Instructor and Assignment Information page;

- copied the assignment due dates from the Instructor and Assignment Information page to your course schedule and personal calendar;
- scheduled several study “blocks” during the first week of the semester to work on Lesson 1.

Best wishes for a successful semester! Don't forget to contact your instructor whenever you have questions about the course.

# UNIT 1 GUIDE

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## GETTING STARTED

This unit contains Lessons 1 to 5. “Getting Started” is an apt title for this group of lessons because each lesson deals with beginnings. The first lesson introduces some ideas and terminology that will be developed in subsequent lessons. The second lesson suggests ways to find ideas and provides hints for getting your “writing juices flowing.” Lessons 3 to 5 introduce models of the essay and the paragraph so that you will have a foundation to build upon in the remainder in the course.

### **Objectives**

Upon completing the lessons in this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the process of writing;
- apply two or three techniques that will help you find ideas about which to write;
- apply two or three strategies for starting to write;
- compare the structure of the paragraph to that of the essay;
- decide which revisions to make to the structure of a text so that it communicates more effectively to the reader (e.g., placement of thesis, sequence and length of paragraphs).



# LESSON 1

## COURSE INTRODUCTION: WHAT YOU DO WHEN YOU WRITE

You cannot say, "First I should always do x, then y, and then z. There is really no "always" in writing. Every writer's process is unique for every paper.<sup>1</sup>

### Before You Begin

Before you begin this lesson, you should complete the following steps:

- Read the introductory chapter (Course Manual) in this course guide.
- Join the Distance Education Directory for Students by completing and mailing the registration form in the Distance Education Handbook.
- Read the Unit 1 guide that precedes this lesson.

### Pick up a Pen

To begin this lesson, I'd like you to list quickly every word or brief phrase that comes to mind when you see the word *writing*. Don't stop to think or to worry about spelling; write quickly and jot down whatever comes to your mind related to *writing*. Keep listing words or brief phrases until you can't think of any more (or set a timer for three to four minutes and stop writing when it rings).

Are you finished? Great! Place your list in a place where you can find it easily. We'll return to the list later in the lesson.

### Introduction

Not long ago, I camped in Algonquin Park, Ontario, with my spouse and some friends. Our camp site was deep in the interior of the park and accessible only by water. Since most of us were novice boaters, I assumed that our host had planned a short canoe trip to our camp site. Imagine my horror when we didn't reach the site until *three hours* after we first dipped our paddles into the lake. The trip back was not nearly as grueling because I knew what to expect and had prepared myself accordingly.

Rest assured that I am not going to let you embark on this course without first telling you what you can expect. Since you have already read the Course Manual, you should be familiar with our itinerary (course schedule) and destination (course goals). This lesson will acquaint you with the vocabulary that we will use and the ideas that we will explore during our 13 weeks together.

## Objective

Each lesson in this course begins with a list of objectives or activities you should be able to perform upon completing the lesson. The objectives will help you decide which ideas discussed in the lessons and corresponding textbook readings are most important.

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to give an example of each of the following without referring to the lesson or textbook.

claim          text          audience  
code          purpose      planning  
drafting      revising

## 1.1 Remember Your List?

Return to the list you composed at the beginning of the lesson. What patterns do you see in the list? In other words, can you identify a few ideas to which many of the words in the list relate? For example, some words and phrases may relate to your opinion of writing, others may describe a certain type of writing (like the journal entry or the essay), and yet others may suggest certain habits you follow when you write (such as writing on your computer or using a favourite pen).

*Hint:* If you're finding it difficult to identify patterns in your list, try grouping the words that seem to belong together. (Some words might not fit into a group -- that's okay.) Then, when you've finished grouping the words, decide which idea holds each group together.

## 1.2 An Example

Here's a list of the words that Marc thought of when he saw the word *writing*:

journal	fire	the end	<i>Analects</i>
school	Laurence	the beginning	tablets
beauty	enough	lower	Moses
Twain	stuck	leave	autumn
Huck	block	Whitman	pages
lasting	words	help	work
book	flowing	healing	precise
the book	painful	communication	precis
other	the truth	endless memory	essay
nothing	songs	fun-filled script	lamplight
separation	allowance	hieroglyphics	a way to live
distance	poetic licence	China	eternally



Which patterns do you see in Marc's list? He found the following:

•**Pattern 1. Writing is beautiful, enjoyable, and even therapeutic.**

The words which helped Marc identify this pattern include poetic licence, flowing, help, healing, beauty, journal, songs, flowing, fun-filled, autumn [a season Marc finds particularly beautiful], and lamplight [Marc finds the image of someone reading by lamplight to be beautiful].

•**Pattern 2. School writing is hard work.**

block, stuck, painful, precise, precis, essay, school, the beginning [started a writing assignment is particularly difficult for Marc].

•**Pattern 3. The written word speaks to others in all times.**

time, communication, endless memory, a way to live, the truth, eternally, separation, distance [between the writer and the reader], Mark Twain, Huck [a favourite character from Twain's books], Walt Whitman, Margaret Laurence, Confucius' *Analects*, Moses and the tablets upon which he wrote the 10 commandments.

You may not have found the same patterns in Marc's list as Marc did. You have different experiences than Marc, and so you'll see different things in his list than he did. Words that have a positive or negative connotation for Marc may not have the same connotation for you. The important thing is that you are able to find the patterns in Marc's list, and can explain clearly why you came up with the patterns that you did. Finding connecting ideas and supporting an opinion are skills that you will practise throughout the course (and your university education).

### **1.3 Back to Your Patterns**

If you haven't identified the patterns in your list yet, do this now.

What do the patterns suggest about your attitude toward the act of writing? (I recommend that you jot down your ideas; they may come in handy later in the course.)

From the patterns in his list, Marc discovered that he had a love/hate relationship with writing. An avid reader, Marc appreciates what he calls "the beauty of the written word" (see Pattern 3 above). Occasionally, he feels inspired to record his thoughts or feelings in a journal entry or song lyrics (Pattern 1), activities which he enjoys, and which help him relax and even resolve personal problems. On the other hand, Marc dislikes the writing he is required to do, such as essays for university classes (see Pattern 2). Here's a snippet from an interview with Marc:

**Interviewer:** You identified patterns from your list...

**Marc:** Right.

**Interviewer:** ...what do [the patterns] suggest about how you feel toward the act of writing...?

**Marc:** Uh, [writing is] hard work, as I said. It's really difficult to *begin* writing, for me to get a beginning...unless I'm flooded with emotion from some event, or from [a TV or movie] scene I've just seen that's very moving or beautiful,...or some music I've heard. Then I can write out a few lines and it's very natural. But if I sit down to write knowing that I *must* write something...or that I *should*...it makes it very difficult to get a beginning, because...there's so many thoughts being considered or processed (or whatever the word is) at one time...to try to put the most important ones on paper, y'know, to make it sound good and precise -- it's very, very difficult.

## 1.4 Solving Writing Problems

How do Marc's attitudes toward writing relate to your own? For example, do you find the writing you are required to do in your university courses to be difficult? If so, take heart! -- this course will introduce strategies that you can turn to when encountering specific writing problems, such as "getting started," something Marc finds particularly challenging. After taking this course, you may still find writing to be difficult (as do many professional writers!), but hopefully it will be less stressful since you will have some problem-solving techniques to rely on.

## 1.5 Writing to Learn

Marc finds the act of writing to be enjoyable and even therapeutic. Do you identify with this? Perhaps you've resolved a troublesome issue you while writing in your journal or in a letter to a friend, much like the "Eyes Opened" solved a problem while writing Ann Landers (see Exhibit 1.1). You may be interested to learn that many experienced writers and some researchers argue that writing exceeds merely telling what you know; they believe that writing is a means of finding new connections and new insights about what you know! Have you ever written something that took a different direction or meaning than you expected? "That's not what I planned to say!"; "I didn't know I thought that!"

By inviting you to complete exercises throughout the lessons, I'm hoping to help you experience how writing can help you discover what you think. For example, like Marc, you may have been surprised by what the patterns exercise (Section 1.3) revealed about your attitudes toward writing. Or perhaps the exercise helped you to clarify and articulate some feelings of which you were vaguely aware.

Recognizing that writing is a way to discover how you think and feel can help to make it enjoyable! Donald Murray is a former editor for *Time*, a Pulitzer Prize winner for his *Boston Herald* editorials, and a college writing instructor. He

argues, “This is the writer’s addiction: we write because we surprise ourselves, educate ourselves, entertain ourselves.” “Why write?... To be surprised.... ‘Writing is how you discover what you think.’”

**Exhibit 1.1. Writing to learn.**

DEAR ANN: I’m a 26-year-old woman and I feel like a fool asking you this question, but — should I marry the guy or not? Jerry is 30, but sometimes he acts like 14. We have gone together nearly a year. He was married for three years but never talks about it. My parents haven’t said anything either for or against him, but I know deep down they don’t like him much.

Jerry is a salesman and makes good money but he has lost his wallet three times since I’ve known him and I’ve had to help him meet the payments on his car.

The thing that bothers me most, I think, is that I have the feeling he doesn’t trust me. After every date he telephones. He says it’s to “say an extra goodnight” but I’m sure he is checking to see if I had a late date with someone else....

Now on the plus side: Jerry is very good-looking and appeals to me physically. Well — that does it. I have been sitting here with this pen in my hand for 15 minutes trying to think of something else good to say about him and nothing comes to mind.

Don’t bother to answer this. You have helped me more than you will ever know.

— Eyes Opened<sup>2</sup>

## 1.6 A Word about Argument

You may not be convinced by the claim that writing is a way of learning, let alone by the claim that, because it is a way to learn, writing can be fun! That’s not important at this point. What you *should* recognize is that this course will help you to critique claims (like the ones above) as well as compose and support your own claims effectively. This is important because, no matter which program of study you may be enrolled in, many of your writing assignments will require you to take a position (state a claim) and justify your position with appropriate evidence. For example, in a case analysis, you must make recommendations and justify why your recommendations are appropriate; and in many essay test questions, you must take a point of view and explain why it is viable. Sometimes, taking a position will require you to critique the position of another person, whether you’re refuting the results of someone’s research (in a lab report), or disagreeing with a critic’s interpretation of a particular literary work (in an essay). Strengthening your argumentation skills should be useful for you outside the university as well, since many of the writing tasks you face at home or work involve “selling” a particular point of view, whether in a letter to the editor, a letter of recommendation, or a business report.

## 1.7 How do You Write?

Like the “patterns” exercise (section 1.1 - 1.3), this next exercise will give you an opportunity to discover more about the way you write. Without this self awareness, it may be difficult for you to choose the techniques presented in this course that will best solve the particular writing problems you face. Awareness of the activities you complete while writing will also help you better express a writing difficulty to the instructor so that he or she can help you overcome that difficulty.

1. I'd like you to divide a piece of a paper into two columns. Choose one writing task you face regularly in your personal life (e.g., a note to your spouse or children, a letter or e-mail message to a friend, a journal entry). Jot down the name of the task at the top of the left-hand column.
2. Now, in the same column, jot down some words or phrases that describe how you usually complete the task and what the finished piece of writing usually looks like. Here are some questions that might help you get started:
  - Where do you usually complete the task?
  - Are there certain “rituals” you follow before beginning to write (e.g., organizing your desk drawers; arranging writing materials just so; making some tea)?
  - Do you rely on certain strategies to help you complete the task (e.g., preparing a written outline; discussing ideas with a friend)?
  - How long does it usually take you to complete the task (e.g., 15 minutes; several hours over several days)?
  - What does the finished piece of writing usually look like (e.g., written in ink on the back of a used envelope; typed on bond paper; developed to fit a five-part format)?
3. Now, choose a second writing task that you face regularly at work or in your university courses (e.g., business letter, business report, lab report, case analysis, short story). Jot down the name of the task at the top of the right-hand column.
4. In the same column, jot down some words or phrases that describe how you usually complete the task and what the finished piece of writing usually looks like.

## 1.8 How I Write

For the above exercise, I chose an e-mail letter to a friend as my first task, and the research paper as my second. I wrote down my thoughts in paragraphs, although you probably wrote yours in point form.

### *Task 1*

**Writing an e-mail message to a friend...Let's see, I usually write it on my computer at work when I “feel” like it, and while I'm taking my break and drinking herbal tea.**

The letter is usually brief and quite chatty. I like newsy messages that recreate experiences for my readers.

### *Task 2*

Now the research paper, that's a different story. There's a lot more involved in this than in writing an e-mail message. After deciding on a topic, (1) I gather information at the library, (2) read the stuff and make notes, (3) sketch a plan of where I want the paper to go, (3) write the paper, (4) rewrite it again and again till I'm satisfied or I run out of time, (5) ask a friend to tell me what he or she thinks, and (6) proofread it. Working in two-hour blocks on week nights is best for me, although I often get breakthroughs on Saturday mornings when I'm the only one awake. I do most of my work in my pajamas in front of the computer at home (with my grey tabby snuggled up in her basket by my side). I procrastinate and try to convince myself that I don't *really* need to write that night, but once I get started I usually become engrossed in what I'm doing. Once I get through the research stage and actually put something on paper (geez, it's tough to get going), I have fun! I like revising what I've written, but I hate gathering the ideas and putting them on paper for the first time — it takes time to clarify them and sometimes I panic thinking they'll never "come together."

## **1.9 The Writer's Choices**

The outcome of each task you identified in section 1.7 was a piece of writing, which we will call a text. However, you probably noticed some marked differences in how you produced each text and what the finished texts looked like. What accounts for these differences?

### **Audience**

You have probably noticed that you write differently depending on *whom* you're writing for, that is, depending on your audience. For example, if you're writing to a friend just to say hello, you'll probably dash off a quick note and not worry too much about spelling, punctuation, clarity of ideas, and so on. On the other hand, if you're preparing an assignment or report upon which a grade or a promotion hinges, you'll likely spend time researching and refining your ideas, and when the paper is finished, you'll probably check it for errors. For most assignments in this course, your audience will be your instructor and your classmates.

### **Code**

Your audience or intended readers will affect *how* you express yourself; that is, your audience influences the kind of language you use and how you organize your writing. For example, because the audience of a personal letter is a close friend, you may hand write the letter, use the language of everyday speech, and not overly concern yourself with sentence structure and punctuation. With simply a word or phrase, you may be able to remind your friend of a private joke, whereas someone

else would require a full explanation. On the other hand, because the audience of a business letter may be a client whom you don't know well and on whom you'd like to make a good impression, it is likely that the business letter would be more formal than the personal letter, refraining from using slang and rarely using the reader's first name. You'd probably pay attention to spelling, punctuation and the like. You'd also follow the conventions of the business letter by typing your paper on letterhead, using a signature block, and so on.

This course will introduce you to the code that is expected in the university community. **Code** refers to the *language* of a piece of writing. It encompasses:

1. conventions for organizing sentences, paragraphs and essays (we will explore some of these conventions in Lessons 3, 4, 5, 11 and 12).
2. conventions for using punctuation marks, such as commas, periods, exclamation points, and brackets (Lesson 11).
3. formatting customs, such as the use of margin spacing, italics, numerals, capital letters, footnotes, and the like (Lesson 13).<sup>3</sup>

### **Purpose**

The purpose or goal of a writing task is another factor that affects how you write. For example, say the purpose of your task is to review the research in a certain academic area. Before you can write the text, you must take the time to track down and read the relevant research materials, identify their main points, and plan how you will structure your paper. On the other hand, writing a letter to a friend usually doesn't require a writing plan or a trip to the library. Since this course focuses on equipping you to argue effectively in writing, the purpose of some of your assignments may be to convince or persuade your reader to accept a particular point of view.

## **1.10 A Model of the Writing Process**

Experienced writers and researchers have identified a series of activities that writers often pass through to produce a text. To help us make sense of these activities, I have chosen to group some of the activities into three categories: planning, drafting and revising. The textbook author may take a slightly different approach.

### **1. Planning activities**

- collecting ideas (from personal experience, research, discussion with friends, etc.)
- selecting a topic
- identifying the most useful ideas
- establishing a purpose and identifying an audience
- choosing a central idea or claim

- organizing ideas into a writing plan or outline

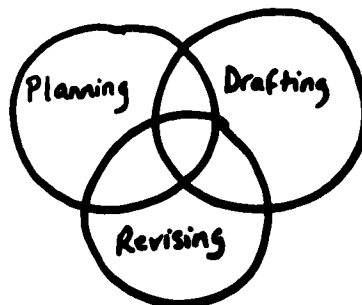
## 2. Drafting activities

- preparing self to begin writing (raiding the refrigerator, arranging materials on desk, planning a work schedule, and so on)
- writing quickly the first draft to see what you know and think about the topic
- scanning the first draft to make minor alterations or to write notes about major changes to make later

## 3. Revising activities (which often occur in a series of drafts)

- modifying the central idea or claims
- clarifying and expanding supporting ideas
- ensuring there is adequate support for the central idea/claim and supporting ideas
- checking that ideas and paragraphs are arranged logically
- reading line by line to ensure that punctuation and spelling (etc.) are correct
- checking that the final draft adheres to the applicable formatting conventions (e.g., margin widths, title page)
- asking someone to read the final draft and make corrections
- proofreading the finished writing and correcting errors

**Figure 1.1. A model of the writing process.**



In short, **planning** is a series of activities writers use to gather and organize the information they need to write. **Drafting** refers to the act of writing. The writer often revises portions of each draft, usually moving gradually from broad changes to the structure and sequence of the draft to line-by-line changes.

Can you relate to this model of the writing process? Does it reflect your writing experiences? Take a look at the writing tasks you analyzed for section 1.7 of this lesson. How do the activities that you listed relate to the above model?

## 1.11 A Few Notes

You should recognize a few things about the model of the writing process:

1. *You do not complete every activity in the model for every writing task.* Some tasks, like the research paper, require much planning before you can begin. On the other hand, the personal letter requires little or no planning or revision. As one composition expert puts it, “There is really no ‘always’ in writing. Every writer’s process is unique for every paper.”<sup>4</sup>
2. *The writing process is recursive.* Research suggests that writing is full of back and forward movements between different activities.<sup>5</sup> Writing a text from the first sentence to the last *can* happen — such as when you write a letter to a friend, a brief paper on subject that you’re very familiar with, or an answer to an essay question. However, for many university assignments, you’ll probably jump back and forth between planning, drafting and revising activities, rather than starting with planning and proceeding directly to drafting and then to revising. For example, you may be happy with the way you’ve explained a certain example, although the rest of your paper requires revision. You may find that after you’ve written a draft that there is a critical question you need to answer, but you’re not sure how to answer it. Consequently, for this section of the paper, you may need to do some more planning -- that is, to conduct some more research, or discuss the question with a friend. Recognizing that it’s not usually possible to write a paper from start to finish may alleviate some frustration for you. For instance, if a certain idea won’t come together, you may need to simply skip to the next idea and worry about the first one later!

## Conclusion

This lesson invited you to explore the way you write, and introduced you to some ideas that we will investigate and some vocabulary that we will use throughout the course.

The next lesson focuses on the planning activities of the writing process. It will present you with some strategies for finding writing topics and ideas, and for organizing these ideas.



## **Assigned Reading**

These lesson notes have introduced some ideas that we will explore throughout the course. The textbook will help you to learn more about these ideas from a different perspective. Turn to the Textbook Key near the back of this course guide, and follow the instructions for Lesson 1.

## Notes

1. O'Hare, F. & Memering, D. (1990). *The Writer's Work* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

2. Excerpt taken from *The Miami Herald*, July 22, 1978.

2 Lindemann, E. (1987). *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*. (2nd ed.) New York: Oxford University Press.

4. O'Hare F. & Memering, D. (1990). *The Writer's Work*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

5. Hillocks, G. (1986a). *Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching*. Urbana, Illinois: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communications Skills and the National Conference on Research in English.

# **LESSON 2**

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## **GETTING STARTED WRITING**

Planning takes the place of the many drafts that are usually necessary without adequate planning.<sup>1</sup>

### **Reminder**

Remember to set aside time to work on your assignments each week so that you will be able to submit them by the due dates.

### **Introduction**

This lesson will introduce some strategies to help you collect and organize the information that you need to write a paper. Some of these same strategies can help you to restart your writing if you become “blocked.” If you’re having trouble beginning an assignment, or find that your ideas have dried up while writing, refer to this lesson and choose a strategy or two to help you solve the problem.

### **Objectives**

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- distinguish planning from drafting, and subject from topic;
- identify one or two difficulties you often face when starting an assignment;
- choose at least one strategy from the lesson (or textbook) that could help you overcome these difficulties.

## 2.1 Quiz

What does it mean when someone says that they've chosen a "topic" for their paper, or that they're not sure what "subject" to write about? Sometimes people use these terms interchangeably, but they have different meanings in this course. If you're unsure of the difference between the two terms, try the following exercise.

*To do:* Fill in the blanks with the appropriate letter. Compare your answers to those provided at the end of the lesson.

T — Topic

S — Subject

- \_\_1. Cancer
- \_\_2. The University of Windsor distance education program
- \_\_3. How political and military leaders used religious language to justify the Persian Gulf War
- \_\_4. The role of the queen and the queen mother in Israelite and Judahite monarchy
- \_\_5. The Underground Railroad

## 2.2 Finding Ideas to Write About

Return to section 1.7 of Lesson 1, in which you chose two writing tasks and described how complete them. Did you need to gather some information before you could begin either task? If so, how did you find this information?

Certain writing tasks require you to collect ideas before you begin the first draft. This isn't always necessary. If you're writing a letter to a friend, or an editorial on a very familiar topic, you probably won't need to spend time gathering information. On the other hand, writing a research paper usually requires some information gathering, as does writing on an unfamiliar topic.

*Where* do you find ideas? There are two sources you can tap: (1) your opinions and experiences, and (2) the opinions, experiences and research of others. In this lesson, we'll look at both these sources and the strategies you can use to investigate them.

## 2.3 Experience Inventory

Let's start by exploring that remarkable storehouse of ideas: your mind. This exercise will help you take a sampling of your interests, opinions, experiences, and areas of expertise. The exercise will also demonstrate how you can use these things to find a topic or an idea.

1. Complete the following sentences:
  - i. My favourite movies are....
  - ii. My favourite books/magazines include....
  - iii. My most memorable experience in the past year was...because....
  - iv. When I have free time, I enjoy....
  - v. People tend to come to me for suggestions about....
  - vi. My education and work experience have prepared me to work as....
  - vii. My ideal job would be....
  - viii. I am frustrated by....
  - ix. I am very interested in/curious about....
  
2. Now, look for connections or patterns in your responses. You can consider these connections to be “subjects” for a potential paper.

### Example

Here’s an inventory that was completed by Talia.

- i. My favourite movies are *The Usual Suspects* and *The Last Supper* (about some graduate students who try to answer the question, “If you travelled back in time and met Hitler before he came to power, would you kill him?”).
- ii. My favourite magazine is *Reader’s Digest* (I like how positive it is, and there’s lots of interesting reading on a variety of subjects).  
 My favourite books include Anne Rice’s *The Vampire Lestat*, Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Robertson Davies’ *Fifth Business*, and Elie Wiesel’s *Night* [an account of his year in two Nazi concentration camps].
- iii. My most memorable experience in the last year was visiting Cuba — it was the first time I travelled overseas and explored a culture that differed significantly from my own.
- iv. When I have free time (*what* free time?!), I enjoy:
 

reading	watching TV or a movie
dancing	listening to CDs
dining out!	performing with my band
redecorating	hosting a dinner party
refinishing furniture	
- v. People tend to come to me for suggestions on:
 

designing resumes	writing cover letters
personal matters	improving a writing assignment
interior decorating	

- vi. My education and work experience have prepared me to work as an instructor, academic counsellor, and employment counsellor.
- vii. My ideal job would entail working only four days a week! This would give me time to devote to my hobbies. (Because of personal responsibilities, the weekends fly by so quickly!) I'd like to divide my work between teaching and counselling.
- viii. I am frustrated by:
  - the fact that life is zipping by so quickly.
  - how difficult it is to save money.
  - people who see issues as either black or white. Life's not that simple!
  - people who assume that I am deficient somehow because I don't share their values and beliefs.
- ix. I am very interested in World War II history, and the paranormal and the afterlife (*is there another dimension?*).

What patterns do you see in Talia's responses? Here are the connections that Talia identified:

- interior decorating (see items iv and v)
- counselling (items v, vi, vii)
- time constraints (items iv and vii)
- World War II history (items i, ii, and ix)
- paranormal (items ii and ix)
- individual/cultural differences (items iii and viii)

Each of these patterns is a *subject* that Talia could explore in a paper. Talia could narrow the subjects into topics by using some techniques that we will explore in the next two sections. By the way, as part of her requirements for a University of Windsor religious studies course, Talia wrote a research paper that allowed her to combine her interests in other cultures and the afterlife: her paper explored the Jewish belief in an afterlife as expressed in several significant religious texts.

## 2.4 Picking Your Brain for Ideas

Hopefully, the "experience inventory" you took in section 2.3 demonstrated how your interests, experiences and skills can become subjects for a paper. This section will introduce some techniques for extracting a topic from a subject:

- listing
- branching
- freewriting
- response notes

- exploratory draft
- asking questions.

Writers use these invention techniques to stimulate their brains so that they can recall what they know about a subject. (“Invention” is derived from the Latin word *invenire*, which means “to find” or “to come upon.”<sup>2</sup>) The results help them find topics about which to write. If you have chosen a topic already, the same techniques can help you generate ideas to develop your topic.

### **Listing**

You’ve already experienced how this particular invention technique can help you generate topics for an assignment. Remember the patterns exercise you completed in Lesson 1 (sections 1.1-1.3)? I asked you to list the words and short phrases that came to mind when you saw the word *writing*. You then looked for patterns among the words, and used the patterns to discover your attitude toward the act of writing. From the patterns, you probably could write a short paper that explained your view of writing and why you feel this way. In other words, I gave you a subject (*writing*) to explore through listing, and the results led to a topic (*your attitude toward the act of writing*). Listing is also useful for getting examples or specific information about a topic.

### **Branching**

Branching is another invention technique that you can use to find a topic. Write the subject (e.g., writing) in the middle of a blank page, then draw lines out to other words that seem to grow from it (e.g., school, writer’s block, poetry). Allow your mind to make connections by writing down ideas as they come to you, connecting each new word with a line or arrow to the word that triggered it. Keeping branching out until the page is filled with branches (maybe 10 minutes). When you’ve finished, sit back and see what patterns you can find. Perhaps you can develop one of these into a topic.

If you have already chosen an assignment topic, branching can help you find ideas to develop that topic. Simply write the topic in the middle of a blank page (e.g., my attitude toward university writing), and proceed as described above.

### **Freewriting**

If you have chosen a subject on which to write, but have not yet decided which aspect of that subject (topic) to explore, freewriting may be useful. Write your subject (e.g., mutual funds, foreign films) at the top of a page. Then, in sentences and paragraphs, begin to write everything that comes to your mind on the subject. Write continuously for 5-10 minutes (you can set a timer), or until you run out of steam. Don’t let your pen stop moving! If you can’t think of anything to write, write “nothing” or “I can’t think of anything to write,” until another thought comes to you. The key is to write without stopping — don’t pause to analyze your ideas, rephrase what you’ve written, or correct spelling and punctuation. Freewriting sets you “free” to discover ideas by removing inhibitions such as worries about punctuation and spelling.<sup>3</sup> When you finish writing, go back to the

what you've written, and mark any patterns you find — perhaps they can help you decide on a topic. If you've already chosen a topic, you can use freewriting to help you discover ideas for developing that topic.

### **Response notes**

In this course (and in other courses, too!), you might find it helpful to “converse” in writing with me and with your textbook author. Jot down brief responses to what we say in a separate notebook (some people would call this a *journal*), or in the margins of the lessons and textbook. For example, you might write statements along these lines:

- “No way! — I disagree because.....”
- “Yeah, this makes sense! I remember when....”
- “Another example of this is....”
- “This reminds me of a point made in Lesson X....”

Not only will the written “dialogue” help keep your mind from wandering as you read, but it will also help you discover what you think, what interests you, what surprises you, which of your experiences support or refute course ideas, and so on. You can use the notes to generate topics or ideas for an assignment — scan the notes for recurring ideas or questions, or something that surprises you.

*Study tip:* Your notes might come in handy when studying for the final exam. The notes will “bring back” moments you experienced during the course, much like seeing a photograph can help you recall moments from the past. You might even be able to recycle some ideas and examples in an answer on the exam!

### **Exploratory draft**

Some writers find it useful to simply sit down and write a draft on their subject or topic. The draft shows them what they already know and what they need to find out. If you decide to try this invention technique, remember to write quickly and for short period of time. You might find yourself writing some things that you didn't expect to — after all, as you may remember from Lesson 1, writing can help you discover what you think! Don't worry about spelling or punctuation and the like; simply explore your subject through writing. Then, stand back to see what connects.

### **Asking questions**

This invention technique is based on the ancient art of good speechmaking (rhetoric). It invites you to pose certain questions and answer them as completely as possible before beginning to write. The experience inventory in section 2.3 provides an example of how you can use questions to find a topic.

Asking questions about a topic can also help you generate ideas for your writing assignments. For example, you could ask:



- What is it I want my reader to know (think, believe) about the topic? Or, in other words, where do I stand on this issue, and where do I want my readers to stand on the issue?
- To fully inform or convince my reader, do I need to answer *when, where, how, who* or *why*? (These are the questions that reporters try to answer at the beginning of their news reports.)<sup>4</sup>

Note that the first question deals with finding your *purpose* in writing an assignment, and that both questions focus on your reader or *audience*. You probably recall from Lesson 1 that the writer’s purpose and audience are two factors that shape a piece of writing.

## 2.5 Tips for using Invention Techniques

1. *Experiment!* Don’t hesitate to experiment with the invention techniques discussed in this lesson (or any variation of them)! Some may be more appealing to you than others — for example, if you learn best through pictures, you may find branching to be more appealing than freewriting. But don’t let your preferences stop you from trying out other techniques. A technique that doesn’t seem to be your “style” might encourage you to think in a different way than you’re used to and, as a result, help you come up with different ideas. In fact, you might want to try out *several* invention strategies for a writing assignment because different strategies can help you come up with different ideas.
2. *What surprises and connects?* You probably won’t use every piece of information you record using the above techniques. How do you decide which items to explore further? One way is to identify the patterns in what you’ve written, just as you did for the experience inventory in section 2.3 and for the patterns exercise in Lesson 1. The connections may point the way to ideas for a paper. You might also find it helpful to look at those points that surprise you — they may suggest a “fresh” or interesting idea that you might enjoy exploring further.
3. *What contradicts?* If you’re having trouble choosing a topic, try looking for a problem in the material you’ve gathered. In other words, look for two statements that contradict each other. Resolving this problem can help you find a topic for your paper.<sup>5</sup>
4. *Work with a seed.* When you think about a topic, are you struck by a particular word, phrase, image, idea or example connected with it? If so, you may have happened upon a “seed” from which ideas can grow. You can use some of the above techniques — listing, branching, freewriting — to nourish your seed and generate ideas for an assignment.

## 2.6 Gathering Ideas from Others

As we discussed in section 2.4, your mind is one source of ideas for your papers. I suggested several invention techniques that can help you recall information from

your memory and use this information to discover a topic or ideas: listing, branching, freewriting, response notes, an exploratory draft, and asking questions.

Sometimes, however, a writing assignment will require you to beef up what you know with what others know, particularly if it is a research paper, or a paper on an unfamiliar topic. Here are some invention techniques that may help you find ideas from external sources:

- observation
- discussion or debate
- interviews
- research.

Let's look at these techniques more closely.

### **Observation**

Watching TV and films, and reading books, magazines and newspapers can give you ideas to write about. In particular, you might find it helpful to watch what people are doing and listen to what they are saying. Is there a certain event or issue that has everyone's attention, including your own? For example, is there a strike at your workplace? Listening to your colleagues discuss the strike, attending meetings, reading editorials, and following the news can help you decide which position you take on the issue. It can also help you to decide which counter positions (positions opposite to yours) you should address if you explore the issue in an assignment.

### **Discussion or debate**

Discuss your topic with a classmate, a colleague, a friend. They may bring up ideas that hadn't occurred to you. Conversing with them can also help you find the weaknesses in your point of view so that you can bolster these weaknesses in your writing. If your topic has several points of view, you could stage a debate with some friends in order to clarify the options and choices you must consider. In fact, from your debate, you can write a brief written dialogue, and work this dialogue into a paper.

### **Interviews**

On occasion, it may be useful to collect information from people through interviews. For example, if you're writing a paper on a Canadian celebrity who grew up in your home town, you might find it useful to interview some people who knew the person well.

It might be helpful to prepare a few questions ahead of time that you can ask. But don't feel restricted to these questions! Former journalist Donald Murray gives an amusing example to show the importance of flexibility:

**I spend time preparing these questions, although I won't follow them rigidly. When the President says, "I just shot my wife," I do not turn to question three about the budget. Good interviewers listen — listen carefully and**

follow up with questions spun out of what they have just heard.

## Research

Probably the most common source of ideas for your university research papers will be the ideas of others found in the library or on the Internet. It may be difficult for you to find time to spend at a local library. If this is the case, check to see whether your local university or public library provide Internet access to their computerized card catalogues and databases of periodicals. (For example, see <http://www.uwindsor.ca/> and click on **Library**.) If they do, you can decide in the convenience of your home or office which sources you'd like to explore, and visit the library when it is possible for you.

You can also search for information on the Internet, which may be preferable if you live in a area that is far from a library. (See the **virtual librarian** at <http://node.on.ca/support/> for electronic search tips.) If you begin work on the assignment well in advance of the due date, you might be able to order relevant literature from organizations who have published information on the Internet.

## 2.7 Which Invention Techniques Should I Use?

I discussed several invention techniques in this lesson:

Discover what <i>you</i> know...	Discover what <i>others</i> know...
listing	observation
branching	discussion
freewriting	debate
response notes	interviews
exploratory draft	research
asking questions	

If you're confused about which invention techniques to use in which circumstances, this exercise might clear things up for you.

### To do

Several writing scenarios are listed below. What is the problem facing the writer in each scenario? Which invention techniques would you suggest to help the writer solve the problem? Why? Complete the exercise; then, compare your answers to the guidelines I provide at the end of the lesson.

1. I'm required to write a short play about a childhood experience, but I can't decide what to write about!
2. I've decided to write a research paper on the resistance movement during World War II. This is a pretty big area to write about — I think *every* country

involved in the war had resistance fighters! How can I narrow down my subject?

3. My spouse doesn't understand why I enrol in distance education courses. Jean thinks I'm crazy — because I work full-time and we have two very active kids, Jean thinks I have enough to do. I want to write a paper that explains why pursuing my education is important to me. I've got several ideas floating about, but I'm not sure how to organize them in a paper.
4. Soon I will begin to read the book that I chose for my book review. I'm supposed to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the book in my review. How can I find these strengths and weaknesses? I'm feeling overwhelmed about critiquing the book — the author obviously knows what she's talking about, or the book wouldn't have been published in the first place!

## 2.8 Organizing Ideas

One way to know you're ready to begin your first draft is when you can see an order in the material you've collected. To follow are some strategies for discovering this order; that is, for organizing your ideas into a map that you can follow while writing.

As you write your paper, you may stop to reorganize your ideas several times. You may find that your "maps" or outlines become more specific or detailed each time. On the other hand, you may be so familiar with your topic, or have devoted so much time to planning your draft, that your original outline will require no revision at all!

### Columns

You can divide a piece of paper into three columns, and label them "beginning," "middle," and "end." Write the ideas you've collected in the appropriate columns.

### Find beginning and ending

Some writers suggest you work on the beginning or ending of your paper first. Knowing your starting and ending point can help you find a "trail" through the material you've gathered. (We'll explore introductions and conclusions in Lesson 4.)

### Scratch outline

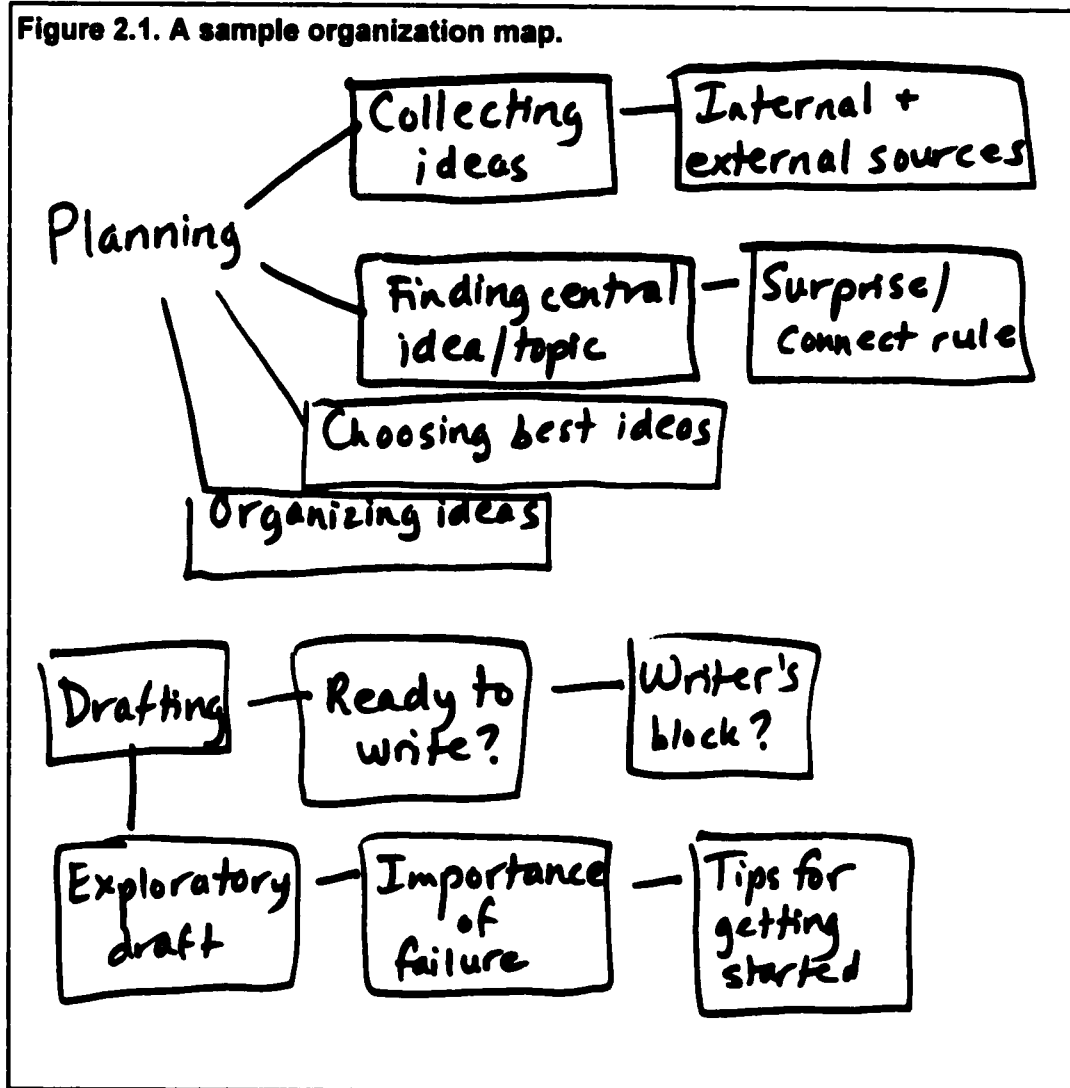
List a few main points you want to explore in order what to explore them. For example, for this lesson, I listed:

selecting a topic
finding ideas
beginning to write

## Sketch

You may prefer to draw a organization map that you'd like to follow, rather than to create a list. For example, Figure 2.1 depicts a map I came up with when planning this lesson (your maps may look different).

Figure 2.1. A sample organization map.



*Note:* Did you notice that the content and sequence of this lesson varies from that reflected in the scratch outline above and in the organization map (Figure 2.1)? I drafted several plans as I worked through drafts of this lesson. Sometimes you end up on a different (often better) route than the one you intended.

## Questions

Another way of organizing the ideas you've collected is to list the questions you want your paper to answer (the number of questions will vary, depending on the

breadth of your topic — it could be four, five, six questions...). Then, jot down answers to the questions. Your paper can present and answer each question.

### **Frame**

Some writers like to “frame in” their paper by

- writing an introduction
- listing the main points they will address
- writing a conclusion.

I’ll discuss essay frame or structure further in Lesson 3.

## **2.9 The First Draft**

How do you know you’re ready to begin the first draft? Donald Murray believes that, in most cases, a writer should be able to answer certain questions before starting a first draft.

1. Do I have enough specific, accurate information to build a piece of writing that will satisfy the reader?
2. Does the information focus on a single, significant meaning? (Remember the *thesis*? More on this in Lesson 3.)
3. Do I see an order in the material that will deliver the information to the reader?

Keep in mind that the first draft is often a failure. It takes a while to find and hone your ideas.

## **2.10 Tricks for Starting Writing**

Here are some tips that may help you get started writing. I suggest that you select a few that seem useful and give them a try.

1. *Habit.* If you try to write a little bit each day, you may find that it becomes “natural” to you. It might not be as hard to sit down and start working because you’ll have become accustomed to doing it. Part of establishing your writing habit may include writing at the same time and in the same place — I prefer writing in the early evenings in my home office. My two cats usually join me.

*Study tip:* By the way, this trick also applies to studying through distance education. I recommend you set aside regular times to work on your course each week, and make yourself unavailable during those times, just as though you were in a classroom on campus.

2. *Tools.* Donald Murray encourages writers to “indulge” in tools: “You are practicing a craft, and the texture of the paper, the feel of the pen make a difference. Writers are always seeking the magic pen. One reason that word processors are so popular with writers is that they are marvelous tools, grown-up toys with which to write.”

3. **Travelling office.** You may have chosen to take this course by distance education so that you can fit it into your busy schedule. To accommodate your schedule, try travelling with a clipboard, pen, and the draft that you're working on. This way you can jot down a sudden inspiration, or grab a few moments to write while on the bus, in the car pool, or waiting for your child to finish team practice or a music lesson. Try keeping a cassette recorder or notebook in your car — you may get a brainstorm while driving to work that you can record or jot down at a traffic light.
4. **Write a letter.** Some writers find it helpful to start a piece of writing as though they were writing a letter, saying “Dear So-and-So” and then writing the draft.
5. **Ghostwrite.** Some people find it easier to get going when they put someone else's name on the draft (but remember to put *your* name on the copy you submit to the instructor!).
6. **Experiment.** Consider your draft to be an experiment. Experiments often fail, “but they show what doesn't work, which is important to know, and what may work, which is also important to know.”
7. **Freewrite.** Get your writing juices flowing by freewriting. You can also use freewriting to clear your mind if you can't concentrate when sitting down to work on an assignment. Write about the things that are distracting you (say, for 5-10 minutes).  
*Tip:* If your ideas dry up when writing a draft, freewriting and other invention techniques, like branching and listing, might come in handy.
8. **Dictate.** You might express yourself more easily in speech than in writing — after all, we have more experience with speech! Dictate your ideas, a paragraph, or even a draft into a cassette recorder. Later, you can transcribe what you've recorded and revise it appropriately.
9. **Write backwards.** Start at the end of an assignment. Once you've polished a conclusion, you might know where and how to begin.
10. **Quit.** If you become frustrated when planning or writing an assignment, sometimes it's helpful to leave the assignment overnight. When you return to your work, you might see things in new ways. Sometimes, when you've set a draft aside, your mind will continue to chew on the problem and come to a solution. (Have you ever forgotten a person's name and, several days later, remembered it suddenly?) In fact, at least twice while writing this lesson, I awoke with some ideas that helped me to work through sections where I had become stuck. Ideas need time to germinate. This is one reason why I recommend you stay on top of your assignment due dates and begin the assignments well before they are due.

## Conclusion

This lesson introduced some ways to discover and organize ideas in a writing assignment (planning). It also offered some hints for starting to write and keeping

writing (drafting). Some writers believe that the more time you spend on planning, the fewer drafts you'll have to write. In fact, some professional writers have been observed to spend *most* of their time on planning activities before the first draft!

Don't feel compelled to work through the suggestions in this lesson each time you're beginning an assignment. Instead, refer to the lesson when you're having difficulty beginning an assignment or your writing stalls after a few pages.

## **Assigned Reading**

The assigned reading will develop some ideas introduced in this lesson. Turn to the Textbook Key near the back of the course guide, and follow the instructions for Lesson 2.



## Answer Guidelines for Lesson 2

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### Answer Guidelines for 2.1

A **subject** is a broad area that you wish to write about (e.g., cancer). A **topic** is a specific aspect of a subject (e.g., five things that are believed to prevent cancer). When you think of *subject*, think “broad”; when you think of *topic*, think “narrow” or “focused.”

1. **Subject** — *Cancer*. Someone who started to write a paper on cancer would be researching and writing for a long time, because there is a *lot* of information available on the subject! To make the writing assignment achievable, he or she should limit themselves by focusing on a specific aspect of cancer. Perhaps the writer might decide to write about topics such as the success of some cancer treatments over others, the benefits of hospices, or the most common forms of cancer in his or her geographical area. (*Note*: This lesson will suggest some strategies that will you decide on a topic.)
2. **Topic** — *How political and military leaders used religious language to justify the Persian Gulf War*. You probably agree that this is a topic because it focuses on a specific aspect of the Persian Gulf War (or on a specific aspect of religious language, depending how you look at it).
3. **Subject** — *The University of Windsor distance education program*. Say you’ve decided to write on the subject of the University of Windsor distance program. Which particular part of the program would you focus on? In other words, which topic would you pick? How about the primary reasons why students enrol in the program; the most significant obstacles students face when trying to complete a course; or ways to improve the course guides?
4. **Topic** — *The role of the queen and the queen mother in Israelite and Judahite monarchy*. What could be the *subject* from which this topic was derived? I would say that it is Israelite and Judahite monarchy, or the queen and queen mother. (Incidentally, as an undergraduate, I actually wrote a paper on this topic.)
5. **Subject** — *The Underground Railroad*. It might be difficult to tackle this subject in a single paper! You’d probably want to explain what the Underground Railroad was and the significance of the railroad metaphor. You might also wish to introduce the main groups of people who were involved (the plantation owners, the slaves, the abolitionists, “guides” like Harriet Tubman, etc.). And you probably wouldn’t want to overlook the places where the escaped slaves settled, especially if you live near Windsor or Dresden, Ontario. And, of course, there’s always...well, you get the idea. To shorten the time spent on research, you could choose *one* aspect (a topic) of the Underground Railroad to write about.

## Answer Guidelines for 2.7

1. *I'm required to write a short play about a childhood experience, but I can't decide what to write about!*

The challenge facing this writer is to select a particular childhood experience to explore in a play. I would suggest that the writer rely on the invention techniques that would help him or her recall memories. For example, he or she could ask questions like, "What was my most embarrassing childhood experience?" and "What is my happiest memory?", and explore these questions through listing, branching, freewriting or an exploratory draft. Concentrating on the points that are surprising or appear more than once in the material the writer has gathered may point toward a particular experience that could work well in a play.

As the play is to be about a personal experience (that is, drawn from memory), it would be easy to overlook the invention techniques dealing with external sources: observation, discussion/debate, interviews and research. However, trying out the "impact" of certain experiences on his or her friends *could* help the writer select an experience; and interviewing a parent or older sibling could help the writer remember some details from an experience, especially if he or she was quite young when it occurred.

2. *I've decided to write a research paper on the resistance movement during World War II. This is a pretty big area to write about — I think every country involved in the war had resistance fighters! How can I narrow down my subject?*

In this case, the writer's problem is narrowing their subject or, in other words, finding a topic. To find a topic, I would suggest that the writer identify an aspect of the resistance movement that most interests him or her, or an aspect about which the writer wishes to learn more. Such topics could include the role of female resistance fighters; the Polish fighters' treatment of the Jews who fought beside them; or a comparison of Israel's attitudes toward the resistance fighters to that of the camp survivors. If the writer is finding it difficult to think of something specific that interests him or her, I would suggest that he or she try freewriting, listing, and/or branching in effort to find that "golden nugget." (You may have suggested discussing the topic with classmates, writing an exploratory draft or, if the writer knows a former resistance fighter, interviewing this person for ideas.) If the writer has taken response notes during the course, and some of the notes relate to the resistance movement, they might help him or her find a particular angle on the subject. Whatever technique the writer chooses, he or she might find it useful to sit back, look at the material they've gathered, and ask, "What surprises me? What connects? What contradicts?"

You may be getting the sense that *all* the invention techniques would work in this situation. They might! It's up to the individual writer to discover what works for him or her. However, I would probably recommend the writer defer most of the research until *after* he or she has identified a topic. Waiting until he or she has narrowed down the subject would probably save the writer some research time.

3. *My spouse doesn't understand why I enrol in distance education courses. Jean thinks I'm crazy — because I work full-time and we have two very active kids, Jean thinks I have enough to do. I want to write a paper that explains why pursuing my education is important to me. I've got several ideas floating about, but I'm not sure how to organize them in a paper.*

The writer's problem is organizing his or her ideas. As the writer already has chosen a topic and has formulated some supporting ideas, I would probably suggest that he or she compose an exploratory draft to see where the writing takes him or her. Asking questions, such as "What message do I want to convey to my reader?", might also help the writer organize his or her ideas. (Later in the lesson, I will present some strategies for organizing ideas into a "map" that you can follow when writing your drafts.)

4. *Soon I will begin to read the book that I chose for my book review. I'm supposed to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the book in my review. How can I find these strengths and weaknesses? I'm feeling overwhelmed about critiquing the book — the author obviously knows what she's talking about, or the book wouldn't have been published in the first place!*

In this instance, the writer has two challenges: (1) finding strengths and weaknesses in the book, and (2) overcoming the erroneous notion that the printed word is infallible. To meet the first challenge, I would suggest that the writer keep response notes while reading the book, recording reactions to the author's statements in a separate notebook or in the margins of the book (e.g., "Yeah! I agree because...."; and "Wait a sec! Are you saying that...? That doesn't make sense because..."). Later, when the writer sits down to write the book review, surprising entries or recurring patterns in the notes could help identify his or her likes and dislikes about the book.

The writer's second challenge is to overcome being intimidated by the author or, more specifically, the fallacy that ideas which have been published are without fault. Freewriting (maybe the first few times she sits down to read the book) could help her work through her feelings. Carrying on a written dialogue with the author through response notes might also help to change the writer's perspective. Through note-taking, it is likely that the writer will discover points with which he or she disagrees, or will find contradictions in what the author is saying. I'll discuss some more strategies for critiquing the claims (viewpoints) of other writers in Unit 2.

## **Notes**

1. This quote is taken from page 18 of Donald Murray's *A Writer Teaches Writing* (2nd ed., 1985, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company). Murray is the source for my discussion of branching, the exploratory draft, and the "surprise and connect" principle. Also adapted from Murray are the methods for organizing ideas found in section 2.8, and the tricks for starting writing found in section 2.10.

2. O'Hare & Memering, 1990. I also used O'Hare and Memering's text as a source for my discussion of branching.

3. Sources for my discussion of freewriting include Green & Norton's *Essay Essentials* (1995, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Harcourt, Brace & Company), and Leki's *Academic Writing: Techniques and Tasks* (1989, St. Martin's Press).

4. These questions are adapted from Thompson, J. (1990). *English 155: Basic Composition Study Guide*. Athabasca University.

5. Coe, R.M. (October 1981). *College Composition and Communication* 32, 272-277. "If not to narrow, then how to focus: Two techniques for focusing."

## LESSON 3

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# THE ESSAY & THE THESIS

### Warning!

This lesson requires you to jump back and forth between the lesson, the Textbook Key, and the textbook. I suggest that you use post-it notes or paper clips to mark where you leave off in each resource so that you can return to your place easily.

Remember to set aside time to work on your assignments so that you will be able to submit them by the due dates.

### Introduction

The following three sentences are taken from three different kinds of texts. Can you guess what the three texts are (e.g., poem, lab report)?

1. *Once upon a time, there was a fairy princess who could spin cloth made of gold.*
2. *When the play is examined carefully, it becomes obvious that Hamlet is pretending to have had a nervous breakdown.*
3. *Fifteen-year-old Billy Tamai has confessed to being the hi-tech intruder who has harassed his family for months.*

The first sentence is taken from a fairy tale. The second sentence is taken from an essay (or, specifically, a type of essay called a “literary analysis”). The third sentence is taken from a newspaper article.

You probably scored at least two out of three on this little quiz. You may not have been aware of it, but there were certain clues in the sentences that helped you decide which type of text they were taken from. For example, in the case of the fairy tale, the clue may have been the phrase, “Once upon a time” or the character of the fairy princess.

During this lesson, I’m going to present several characteristics of the essay. Familiarity with these characteristics will help you to identify an essay when you encounter one and, eventually, help you compose essays of your own and suggest improvements for your essays and the essays of others.

The essay is a written form which has been used by university professors and their students for decades. In an essay, the writer usually presents an opinion and then supports his or her opinion with proof. In this lesson, I will compare the structure of an essay to that of a sandwich. Can you predict the points of comparison that I will make? (By the way, if I have distracted by mentioning food, you might want to grab a snack before reading on — I’m going to need your full attention!)

## Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- select a sample essay from the course materials, and identify the characteristics that make it an essay;
- explain how the thesis is useful for you as a reader;
- use the clues provided in this lesson to find the thesis in an essay;
- decide whether the structure of an essay fulfils the “promise” made by its thesis;
- compose a thesis.

### 3.1 Short Detour

Please turn to the Instructions for Lesson 3 in the Textbook Key, and complete steps 1-5. Then, resume work in this lesson.

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### 3.2 The Traditional Essay Structure

To follow are some characteristics of the essay<sup>1</sup> taught in many secondary and postsecondary schools. We will explore this model and variations of it during the remainder of this course. The model will be useful for you as you prepare essays for your university courses.

- The essay has an **introductory paragraph** that states the central idea of the entire paper and provides background information about this idea.
- The central idea of the essay is called a **thesis**, and it often appears as the last sentence of the introduction.
- Each “**body**” **paragraph** lying between the introduction and conclusion presents a main point that helps to prove the thesis.
- The essay has a **concluding paragraph**. The paragraph often restates the thesis. Sometimes, it summarizes all the main points made in the paper. It often ends with a look toward the implications or significance of the discussion in the paper.

### 3.3 What is a Thesis?

One characteristic of the essay is the thesis. If you are uncertain of what a thesis is, some of the following words and phrases may help clarify things for you:

- main point
- central idea
- controlling idea (idea that everything else in the essay relates to)<sup>2</sup>
- focus
- point of view

- answer to a problem
- argument
- claim
- opinion of the writer
- similar to the hypothesis of a scientific experiment; something to be proven.

"Theses" is the plural form of "thesis." You write one *thesis*, and two *theses*.

### 3.4 Topic, Thesis or Theme?

If you are wondering what the difference is between a topic, thesis and theme, I suggest that you read this section.

- A **thesis** is usually an *explicit* point made in academic writing such as textbook chapters or essays. In *most* academic texts, the writer states clearly near the beginning of the text the point that he or she is trying to make. The thesis is a statement about a **topic** that the writer believes to be true and intends to support and explain in his or her text, such as "The textbook in our course is causing real difficulty for many students" or "Students are failing to grasp the basic principles in our course because the textbook tries to build on knowledge most students don't have."<sup>3</sup>
- Imaginative or creative texts like short stories or poems usually do not have theses. Instead, they express their points *indirectly* through such means as characters, plot, setting, imagery or sentence structure. The indirect point made by a piece of creative writing is called a **theme**. If you have taken a literature course, you may be familiar with the methods that scholars use to extract the theme(s) from a text.

### 3.5 A Cheeseburger, A Gyros, and A Bagel with Cream Cheese...

Most sandwiches have a filling which is held together by bread. Similarly, the bulk of most essays you write at the university will be held together by an introduction and conclusion (see Figure 3.1.).

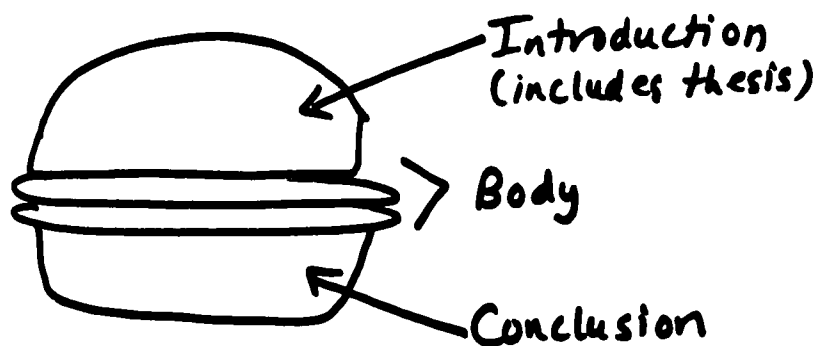
Although a cheeseburger, gyros, and bagel with cream cheese all have a filling held together by bread, the type of bread and fillings are very different. In the same way, most of your essays will have a body held together by an introduction and conclusion, but the structure of these three parts may vary. This course will help you decide which structures you should use under which writing circumstances. For example, your introduction might consist of two or three paragraphs rather than just one, and your conclusion may consist of a single sentence tacked on to the last paragraph of the essay body. The different choices available to you will become clearer as you progress through this course but, for now, here are two examples to think about that are related to the placement of the thesis:

- i. Many scholars in the university community spend a large part of their career researching issues and publishing the results so that other scholars can read and respond to them. Since reading a thesis can help busy scholars decide quickly whether a research paper (a type of essay) is relevant to their personal research interests, it is helpful for them if the thesis appears in the introductory paragraph where they can find it easily. These readers want the thesis to be stated clearly and the evidence laid out logically; they don't want to have to "hunt" for the main point and supporting ideas.
- ii. Writers who publish essays in magazines and newspapers often leave their theses until end of their texts. Since they are competing for readers' attention with photos, advertisements and other articles, they may try to catch the reader's eye by starting with a controversial statement or a colourful example. They often maintain suspense throughout their articles by revealing unexpected theses at the end. Sometimes they merely imply their theses, never stating them directly.<sup>4</sup> For example, see this paragraph:

A restaurant in New England serves what the menu calls "Maine lobster." But the lobster had actually been a resident of the New Jersey shore. Another restaurant advertises "home made apple pies," but the chef does not live in the kitchen where he baked them. Often the "butter" on the menu is margarine, the "freshly whipped cream" a vegetable substitute, and the "scrambled eggs" are made from powdered eggs.<sup>5</sup>

It was probably fairly easy for you to draw out the writer's main point from this paragraph: Some restaurant menus misrepresent the food actually served.

**Figure 3.1. The sandwich model.**



The basic structure of the essay can be likened to that of a sandwich.



### 3.6 Keeping Your Promise

Say you encounter this thesis in a paper:

**Keeping response notes can help the student concentrate on what he or she is reading as well as generate ideas for assignments.**

What expectation does this thesis raise for you? In other words, after reading this thesis, what would you expect the writer to *do* in his or her essay?

You may have expected the writer to explain what he or she means by “response notes,” especially if you’re unfamiliar with the term. You may also have expected that the writer to examine the two benefits of response notes expressed in the thesis, perhaps in the sequence that they appear in the thesis: (1) response notes can help the student concentrate on what he or she is reading, and (2) response notes can lead to ideas for assignments.

You can consider a thesis to be a “**promise statement**.”<sup>6</sup> In a thesis, the writer makes a promise to the reader of the ideas that he or she will cover in the paper. If a writer is unpredictable too often or develops the essay in ways other than he or she suggested in thesis, he or she risks losing the reader — you may give up reading in confusion or frustration.

### 3.7 Your Turn

To follow are four theses. What “promise” does each thesis make? How might the writer fulfill your expectations? Compare your answers to those provided at the end of the lesson.

1. A married couple that fails to deal with their differences in religious beliefs will have marital difficulties and may even divorce.
2. Although many of my generation consider premarital celibacy to be “out of style,” I believe that sex is best when saved for marriage.
3. The author seems not to believe that women are equal to men, for the novel portrays its female characters as either far above man or far beneath him, but never beside him as his equal.
4. There are many differences between newspaper articles and essays.

### 3.8 The Thesis: A Reader’s Friend

Have you ever watched a movie twice and marvelled at how much more detail you caught the second time than you did the first time? During the first viewing, your mind probably worked at keeping the different characters and the plot straight. The second time you watched the movie, you already were familiar with these details, so you were able to focus on other things.

Just as familiarity with the plot of a movie can help you catch details that might otherwise slip your attention, so familiarity with the **thesis** of a academic text can

help you catch important details that you might have missed otherwise. Accordingly, when completing the assigned readings for a course, it will be helpful for you to first identify the thesis of each reading. Once you know the thesis, you will be able to predict the structure that the writer will follow in the chapter or article, and it will be easy for you to recognize the ideas that support the thesis. When gathering sources for a research essay, identifying the thesis of a chapter or article can help you decide whether it is relevant to your research topic. This will help keep you from wasting time reading non-relevant material.

### 3.9 Elementary, My Dear Watson....

*How* can you detect the thesis in a piece of writing? See if you can answer this question *before* reading clues listed below.

#### Clues

1. *Check the introductory paragraph(s).* The thesis is often expressed toward the beginning of a text, especially if it is written for a university audience.
2. *Check the conclusion.* Writers often restate their theses in their conclusions. Some writers, especially those publishing essays in a magazine or newspaper, express their theses for first time in their conclusions.
3. *The title may hint at or even restate the writer's thesis.* You can probably guess what the thesis is from this title: "Holding to My 'Quaint Honour': An Argument for Premarital Celibacy." The title may be particularly helpful when you read an essay in which a thesis is implied (usually essays published in magazine or newspapers).
4. *Check the first sentence of each paragraph in the body of the essay.* (Remember, the **body** of an essay is the paragraphs lying between the introduction and conclusion.) Often, the writer will begin a paragraph by showing the relationship between the paragraph and his or her thesis, as the writer does in this sentence:

Another practical reason for premarital celibacy

[restatement of thesis]

is that it is the best method of birth control.

[point to be discussed in paragraph]

More about this in the next lesson.

### 3.10 Another Detour

Turn to the instructions for Lesson 3 in the Textbook Key, and complete steps 6-8 before continuing in this lesson.

## 3.11 How do I Compose a Thesis?

You've been given a writing assignment on a certain topic, say, "communication between instructors and distance education students at the University of Windsor." It's up to you to come up with a thesis. How do you do this? This section describes one method for building a thesis.

### 1. Find a problem

Try identifying a problem *within* the topic — in other words, try to find a key issue or conflict that you and your reader care about.<sup>7</sup> For example, if your topic is communication between the instructors and distance education students at the University of Windsor, you might define the problem as, "Distance students hesitate to call their instructors for help." If a problem that interests you doesn't come to mind readily, you can identify one by using some of the prewriting techniques we explored in Lesson 2:

- listing
- branching
- freewriting
- response notes
- exploratory draft
- asking questions.

### 2. Find a "tentative" thesis

After defining a problem, you can then turn the problem into a thesis.

Your thesis might simply assert that the problem exists:

**Distance students hesitate to call their instructors for help and this makes studying at a distance more difficult than it needs to be.**

Alternatively, your thesis might assert a hypothesis or a new understanding of the problem:

**Distance students hesitate to call their instructors for help because they feel that they are interrupting their instructors.**

Finally, your thesis might assert a solution to a problem:

**In order to encourage distance students to call them when they need assistance, instructors should initiate telephone contact in a distance course.**

**E-mail correspondence with the distance instructor can help students overcome their hesitancy to contact the instructor.**

### 3. Start writing and revise your thesis later!

Many writers begin their essay with a little more than a sense of the problem and a "rough" thesis. Their first paragraph may say nothing more elegant than "This essay is going to argue that...(rough thesis)..." This lets them write their first draft,

learning as they go. Then, in the next draft, and the next, they reorganize the essay for the reader by revising their thesis based on what they discovered as they wrote.

### 3.12 Give it a Try!

Apply the method discussed in section 3.11, and come up with a “rough” thesis for a university assignment. If you don’t have an assignment to work on, try composing a thesis for two of the following topics:

- distance education students and study habits
- working relationship with a supervisor
- disciplining children
- taking vacations

### Conclusion

*When the play is examined carefully, it becomes obvious that Hamlet is pretending to have had a nervous breakdown.*

Did you recognize this sentence from the lesson introduction? The sentence is taken from a student essay. What clue(s) does it give to indicate that it is taken from an essay? Can you predict *where* the sentence might appear in an essay?

You might argue that the sentence “gives away” the fact it is from an essay because it talks about examining the play *Hamlet*, and scholars use the essay as one way to discuss their research. (Perhaps you reasoned that few people would write about Hamlet *unless* they were writing an essay. There might be some truth to this, but it isn’t the best argument you could make!) You might have said that the sentence gives away the fact it is from an essay because most essays state and prove opinions, and the sentence states an opinion about Hamlet’s mental state and “promises” that subsequent sentences will explain how the play shows that Hamlet is pretending to have had a nervous breakdown. In fact, this sentence could very well be the thesis of an essay. As the thesis, it would probably appear in the introductory paragraph of the essay, maybe in the last sentence of that paragraph.

In this lesson, I reviewed the traditional structure of the essay that we will explore further in the course. I also explained how the thesis is useful for you as a reader, provided some clues to help you find the thesis of a essay or other academic texts, and discussed a method for composing a thesis.

In future lessons, you will learn how to write an essay that supports your thesis with adequate proof. In the next lesson, we will explore the structure of the paragraph, especially the introductory and concluding paragraphs.

## Review Exercise

This exercise will test your knowledge of the traditional essay model.

1. Turn to the Reader in this course guide, and read Sample A, “Unscrambling Exercise.”
2. The paragraphs in Sample A have been scrambled. Rearrange them in what you think is a logical sequence. (*Hint:* Section 3.2 might prove helpful as you complete this exercise. Also, you might find it helpful to cut up Sample A into paragraph “blocks” and experiment with different sequences by rearranging the paragraphs on the desk in front of you.)
3. What difficulties did you experience when rearranging the paragraphs? Why?
4. Compare your answers to 2) and 3) to the guidelines provided at the end of this lesson.

## More Review Exercises & Assigned Reading

Please turn to the Instructions for Lesson 3 in the Textbook Key, and complete steps 9 to 16.

## Answer Guidelines for Lesson 3

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### Answer Guidelines for 3.7

1. *A married couple that fails to deal with their differences in religious beliefs will have marital difficulties and may even divorce.*

In this thesis, the writer “promises” to explain how unresolved differences in religious beliefs can lead to marital problems and even divorce. The writer might discuss the marital problems that result from unresolved religious differences before discussing divorce, since this is the sequence suggested by the thesis. He or she would also discuss what a couple can do “deal” with their religious differences.

2. *Although many of my generation consider premarital celibacy to be “out of style,” I believe that sex is best when saved for marriage.*

This thesis promises that the writer would identify and support reasons why he or she believes sex is best when saved for marriage. It also suggests that the writer might first explain why he or she thinks premarital celibacy isn’t popular with his or her peers.

3. *The author seems not to believe that women are equal to men, for the novel portrays its female characters as either far above man or far beneath him, but never beside him as his equal.*

After reading this thesis, I would expect the writer to give some examples of how women characters are portrayed as superior to men in the novel, and examples of how they are portrayed as inferior. The writer would then probably explain why this suggests that the author does not believe that women are equal to men.

4. *There are many differences between newspaper articles and essays.*

This thesis isn’t a very good one, because it makes only a vague promise to the reader. Upon reading it, you may have responded, “So what?” As readers, we would probably be more interested if we knew how many points of contrast we might expect to find, what aspects of article- and essay-writing we would be reading about, and why we should bother to learn about the differences. If you find that you receive a “So what?” reaction when rereading your thesis or showing it to others, you should reexamine the material you have gathered to find a message that readers might be interested in.<sup>8</sup>

### Answer guidelines for unscrambling exercise

1. Here’s one possible way to reorder the paragraphs:
  - Paragraph 4 could be paragraph 1 because it contains the thesis: “Newspaper and magazines are [1] simply cheaper, [2] more convenient and [3] more enjoyable than using the Internet.”
  - Paragraph 1 could be paragraph 2 because it discusses cost, the first point raised in the thesis.

- Paragraph 5 could be paragraph 3 because it discusses convenience, the second point raised in the thesis.
  - Paragraph 3 could be paragraph 4 because it discusses enjoyment, the last point raised in the thesis.
  - Paragraph 2 could be paragraph 5. It discusses accessibility, a point which is not raised in the thesis but should be.
2. You may have decided that paragraph 4 was the introductory paragraph, as it contains what seems to be a thesis sentence: “Newspapers and magazines are simply cheaper, more convenient and more enjoyable than using the the Internet.” Although this sentence doesn’t appear at the end of the paragraph, the traditional place for the thesis, we know that it is the thesis because it raises points discussed in the body paragraphs. Alternatively, you may have decided that paragraph 4 would make a good conclusion, as it sums up the entire essay. Either way, according to the writing conventions of the university, the essay could be improved by including both an introductory and concluding paragraph.

You may have experienced difficulty when deciding on the sequence of the body paragraphs. The thesis statement promises that the essay will discuss three points:

- Newspapers and magazines are simply cheaper [point 1], more convenient [point 2] and more enjoyable [point 3] than using the Internet.

Accordingly, you may have decided that the body paragraphs should follow this sequence: the first body paragraph should discuss point 1, the second body paragraph should discuss point 3, and so on. However, Sample A includes a paragraph which discusses a point *not* raised in the thesis, that unlike computer technology, newspapers and magazines are easily accessible to most people (see par. 2). Accordingly, the thesis could be improved by being rewritten in the following way:

- **Newspapers and magazines are simply cheaper, more convenient, more enjoyable, and more accessible than using the Internet.**

►Please turn to the Instructions for Lesson 3 in the Textbook Key, and complete steps 9 to 15.

## **Notes**

1. Leki, 1989.

2. Green & Norton, 1995.

3. The definition of topic and thesis and the supporting examples are adapted from Flower.

4. Stewart, K.L., Bullock, C. & Allen, M.E. (1994). *Essay Writing for Canadian Students with Readings*. (3rd ed.). Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada.

5. Example taken from Fahnestock, J. & Secor, M. (1990). *A Rhetoric of Argument*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, p. 368.

6. Lindemann, 1987.

7. The following discussion is adapted from Flower, L. (1981). *Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

8. Lindemann, 1987.



# LESSON 4

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## PARAGRAPHING

### Reminder

Remember to set aside time to work on your assignments each week so that you will be able to submit them by the due dates listed on the Instructor and Assignment Information page.

### Introduction

Have you ever climbed a long, winding staircase and had to stop for breath? You probably welcomed the landings as a place to catch a quick rest. The paragraph breaks act much the same way as the landings on a long staircase — they give your eyes and your mind a brief rest from what you are reading.

This lesson will help you decide when to begin a new paragraph. It will also provide you with some ideas for improving the introductory and concluding paragraphs of an essay.

### Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- explain how paragraphs are useful for the reader;
- list some things that might help you decide when to begin a new paragraph;
- suggest places for paragraph breaks in a writing sample and justify your suggestions;
- suggest improvements for an introductory and concluding paragraph in a writing sample.

### 4.1 Quick Review

In the last lesson we discussed the thesis, how it is important for the reader and the writer, and ways to identify the thesis in a text. Turn to the Reader near the back of this course guide and remove Sample B (“Dinner with Dr. Death”) and Sample C (“Opportunity to Discover”). Place the samples nearby so that you can refer to them easily.

Now, try to identify the thesis of each sample before continuing in this lesson. (Both samples deal with controversial issues that evoke emotional responses in many people. Keep in mind that I’m asking you to simply find the theses of the samples, not to agree with the theses.) *Hint:* If you experience difficulty identifying the theses, see section 3.9 of Lesson 3 which provides some clues for finding the thesis in a text.

## 4.2 Sample B, “Dinner with Dr. Death”

You might have argued that the thesis of Sample B is the last sentence of the first paragraph:

1. The end of the introductory paragraph is the traditional place for the thesis.
2. The body paragraphs of Sample B echo the thesis, reiterating the argument that assisted suicide constitutes murder.
3. The concluding paragraph restates the thesis of the essay, that Dr. Kevorkian’s assisted suicides are actually murders. In particular, note the sentence, “If I were able to spend an hour with Dr. Kevorkian I would like to ask one question, ‘How can you live, knowing how many you have killed?’” The question implies that Dr. Kevorkian’s conscience should be guilty since he has killed people (rather than helping to end their suffering, as Dr. Kevorkian would argue).

Alternatively, you might have argued that the thesis is something along these lines: “I would like to ask Dr. Kovarkian what his views on assisted suicide are during dinner.” If you made this argument, perhaps you took the title of the essay, “Dinner with Dr. Death” as your main clue. Keep in mind that most academic essays have an argument or a point of view that they want to sell to the reader. The writer of Sample B has a definite opinion — assisted suicide is murder — that he or she repeats in every paragraph of the essay. The repetition should have helped you decide that the thesis of the essay is “Dr. Kevorkian’s assisted suicides are murder.”

### Remark

By the way, did you notice the problem in the wording of the thesis? The writer argues that Dr. Kevorkian’s *claims* of assisted suicides are murder (see the last sentence of paragraph 1). A claim (an argument) can’t be a murder. Instead, the writer should have said something like, “Dr. Kevorkian’s claims of assisted suicide have no ground because assisted suicide is murder,” or “Dr. Kevorkian’s ‘assisted suicides’ are actually murders.”

## 4.3 Sample C, “Opportunity to Discover”

You might have argued that the thesis of Sample C is the following sentence, which appears near the beginning of the essay:

**I would sit down with God and get him to answer the questions I am yearning to have answered, and also tell him the things that I believe He needs to know; that I do not always agree with or understand the way He does things, and that I believe He could improve His ways.**

You might have based your argument on the fact that most of the material following this sentence presents the different questions the writer would like to have answered by God and how the writer feels they should be answered. In sum,

the writer is saying, “God’s not doing a very good job; here’s what I think He should do differently.”

On the other hand, you might have argued that the thesis of Sample C is implied and can be expressed along these lines: “God does or permits things that I don’t understand, and I must accept this for now.” You might have based your argument on the last few lines of Sample C.

#### **4.4 Which Thesis was Easier to Find?**

Which thesis was easier to find, that of Sample B or that of Sample C? Why?

If you said Sample B, it may be partly because that sample was divided into paragraphs. Most of the clues for finding a thesis, discussed in section 3.9 of Lesson 3, are based on the paragraph. They suggest that the thesis is usually found at end of introductory paragraph, restated in the concluding paragraph, and may be hinted at in the first sentence of each body paragraph.

#### **4.5 Why Use Paragraphs?**

Why should we use paragraphs in a piece of writing? Hopefully, you’ve already experienced one reason — paragraphs make it easier for you to find the main ideas of a text. Readers have certain expectations about texts, and one expectation is that texts will be divided into paragraphs. Paragraphs highlight ideas by grouping together similar ideas into identifiable “chunks.”

Readers expect the first sentence of a paragraph to “orient” them to what follows. And they also expect the beginning and ending points of paragraph to say something that merits special attention.<sup>1</sup>

Paragraphs make a text more inviting. Which sample did you read first? If you said Sample B, it may be partly because it appears less overwhelming; the paragraph divisions may have made the text seem more “manageable” to you. Which sample did you find easiest to read? If you said Sample B, it may be partly because the paragraph divisions actually helped you read the essay. Just as you might pause for a moment on a landing to catch your breath while climbing a long, winding staircase, you may also appreciate the indentations of white space that give you a mental break between ideas.<sup>2</sup>

#### **4.6 Brain Teaser**

Return Sample B to the Reader, but leave Sample C in front of you.

Where would you insert paragraph breaks in Sample C? Why? Take a few minutes to mark possible paragraph breaks in Sample C now.

## 4.7 When Should I Begin a New Paragraph?

To see where the writer inserted paragraph breaks in the essay, refer to Sample D in the Reader.

How did *you* to decide where to insert paragraph breaks? You might have used some of the following arguments.

1. Earlier in the lesson (see section 4.3), you might have argued that the thesis of Sample C is:

I would sit down with God and get him to answer the questions I am yearning to have answered, and also tell him the things that I believe He needs to know; that I do not always agree with or understand the way He does things, and that I believe He could improve His ways.

In this case, you might have decided that the first paragraph of the sample would end after this sentence, since the thesis is often the last sentence of the first paragraph.

2. In Lesson 3, we learned that the thesis is a “promise statement” that suggests the structure of the essay. The thesis expressed in point 1 above suggests that the essay will present some questions and recommendations for God, so it seems logical that each body paragraph would centre around a question and recommendation. The writer follows this approach in Sample D. For example, paragraph 2 centres around the question of why people suffer and the writer’s proposed course of action — that God should find ways of doing things that don’t involve hurting people.
3. When reading Sample C, certain words or phrases may have signaled to you where a new paragraph should begin. These key words and phrases may have included those *italicized* below:
  - “*The main area* in which I question God’s actions...” (see paragraph 2 of Sample D).
  - “*Another* thing I wonder about God...” (see paragraph 3).
  - “*One more* area in which I am confused by God’s actions...” (see paragraph 4).

Each of the italicized words and phrases indicates that the writer is about to introduce a new point. In Sample D, the writer signals to the reader the introduction of each new point by beginning a new paragraph.

4. When reading Sample C, you may have identified some sentences that state the connection between the paragraph’s central idea and the thesis. These topic sentences signal the start of a new paragraph. In Sample D, the writer uses these topic sentences to begin the body paragraphs:
  - “The main area in which I question God’s actions is with suffering” (paragraph 2 of Sample D).

- “Another thing I wonder about God is if He actually guides our lives or just sits back and watches us like an interesting television show” (par. 3, Sample D).
  - “One more area in which I am confused by God’s actions is with prayer” (par. 4, Sample D).
5. You may have chosen to insert the final paragraph break in Sample C before the sentence that begins, “I guess the main thing I would say to God....” Perhaps you made this choice because you knew that the conclusion often sums up the main points of the essay, and the sentences that follow the sentence quoted above sum up the questions and recommendations concerning suffering, lack of guidance and unanswered prayer that are presented in the three body paragraphs.
- Alternatively, you might have decided, like the writer did in Sample D, to have *two* concluding paragraphs rather than one long one. If you made this choice, it may have been because you didn’t want to lose the reader’s attention with a long paragraph. Or, perhaps you wanted to draw attention to the “solution” given by the writer toward the end of the essay, rather than “burying” the solution in a long paragraph — the writer decides that he or she will wait for answers to his or her questions.

## 4.8 Scavenger Hunt

Wander around the house, and find two or three brief texts (magazine articles, newspaper articles, book chapters). Examine the texts and try to decide why the writer inserted paragraph breaks where he or she did. Then, compare your conclusions to the following section.

## 4.9 Other Reasons for Beginning a New Paragraph

In the case of the texts you found around the house, you might have decided that the writer began a new paragraph to<sup>3</sup>:

1. emphasize a point.
2. signal a change in ideas.
3. signal a change in speaker when the text includes dialogue (conversation).
4. restate a point.
5. provide additional support for an idea.
6. present “manageable” chunks of information to the reader.

## 4.10 How Long Should My Paragraphs Be?

Have you noticed that paragraph length differs with different types of texts? Newspaper articles tend to have short paragraphs, partly because they are printed in columns, which can make a single sentence look like a long paragraph. If you write essays by hand, however, you probably find that those paragraphs that look

long on the page shrink embarrassingly when you keyboard them! The convention for e-mail and Web pages is that the writer use shorter paragraphs on screen than in printed copy, because it is difficult to read long paragraphs on screen. The convention for academic essays is paragraphs of at least five sentences.

You may have encountered some single-sentence paragraphs when reading. These are useful for emphasizing a very important point. Single-sentence paragraphs are not used as frequently in academic writing as they are in newspapers and magazines.

## **Conclusion**

This lesson explained how paragraphs are useful for the reader and suggested some places for paragraph breaks in a text. The Textbook Key for this lesson will ask you to explore two types of paragraphs: the introductory paragraph and the concluding paragraph.

## **Review Exercise**

Remove Sample E from the reader. Then, complete the following steps.

1. The instructor who graded this paper felt that the writer should have broken up paragraph 2, 3 and 4 into several smaller paragraphs. Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. If you agree, where would you insert the paragraph breaks? Why? (*Hint: Look at sections 4.7 and 4.9 in this lesson for clues.*)
3. Compare your work to the answer guidelines that follow.

## **Answer Guidelines for Review Exercise**

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You might have argued that the paragraphs need to be broken up into chunks that are more inviting for the reader. One way to break up the long paragraphs in Sample E (pars. 2, 3, and 4) is to begin a new paragraph each time the writer introduces the example of Deborah. For instance, in paragraph 3, the writer introduces the “concrete concept,” and eventually goes on to demonstrate how Deborah Blau’s language is characterized by the concrete concept. A new paragraph could have been begun with the sentence, “In *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, we see this phenomenon in Deborah Blau.”

See the paragraph symbols (¶) that have been inserted in Sample G for some places where the writer could have begun new paragraphs. Keep in mind that this is only one approach. You might have argued convincingly that it would be better to begin new paragraphs in places other than those I suggest.

### **Assigned Reading & More Review Exercises**

Turn to the Textbook Key, and complete the instructions for Lesson 4.

## **Notes**

1. Eden, R. & Mitchell, R. (December 1996). Paragraphing for the Reader. *College Composition and Communication*, 37 416-30.
2. Staircase analogy adapted from Heffernan, J.A.W. & Lincoln, J.E. (1994). *Writing: A College Handbook*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
3. Lindemann, 1987.



## LESSON 5

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# BUILDING A PARAGRAPH

### Reminder

Remember to set aside time to work on your assignments so that you will be able to submit them by the due dates listed on the Instructor and Assignment Information page.

### Brain Teaser

To follow are four sentences. Try to arrange them in a logical sequence so that they create a well-constructed paragraph.<sup>1</sup>

1. Either you throw everything into a suitcase, burdening yourself with unnecessary clothes, or you pack so sparingly that you don't have enough variety.
2. We've pulled together a list of basic clothes plus some tips, and if you plan well you should wear everything and not feel bored.
3. You don't have to make either mistake if you think through the kind of vacation you're likely to be doing most.
4. If you're like most travelers, you make one of two mistakes when you pack.

### Introduction

Did you arrange the four sentences in this sequence: four, one, three, two? If so, I'm not surprised. From the reading that you have done over the years, you've acquired expectations about what a paragraph should look like.

This lesson will review the structure of the paragraph. It will also give you practice identifying the topic sentence of a paragraph and evaluating how well it is supported by the remaining sentences in the paragraph.

## Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- find the structure of a paragraph by rearranging sentences in a logical sequence;
- identify the topic sentence of a paragraph;
- describe several ways to sequence detail in a paragraph;
- decide whether a paragraph contains enough supporting detail or whether certain details are unnecessary or irrelevant.

### 5.1 Unscrambling Challenge

To follow are three paragraphs. The sentences in the paragraphs have been scrambled. Arrange the sentences in a logical sequence.<sup>2</sup>

*≪ Hint:* You might find it easier to complete this exercise if you use scissors to cut out each sentence from each paragraph. Then, try to arrange the sentences in a logical sequence on the table in front of you. Another option is to keyboard each paragraph into a word processing program, and use the cut-and-paste features to rearrange the sentences.

### ✂ Scrambled Paragraph 1

[1] Besides, who in today's society would not want to look attractive and sexy?  
[2] She believes Judith *should* want the dress. [3] When Judith turns down the dress stating, "One surely ought to stay in character," Betty is surprised and slightly offended, even though she knows the dress does not suit Judith's character. [4] By giving Judith this dress, she is trying to transform her into what she believes Judith should be and is trampling on her individuality. [5] In "Our Friend Judith," one incident that really showed me that Judith's friends were threatening her individuality is when Betty bought her the Dior dress.

### ✂ Scrambled Paragraph 2

[1] His only weakness is Kryptonite which is toxic to him. [2] He has no particular weaknesses, but he can be beaten senseless by someone stronger than him.  
[3] Superman is superior to Spiderman because he has a vast array of powers. [4] He has the proportionate strength, speed and agility of a spider. [5] Spiderman's powers are far less omnipotent. [6] We all know he has super strength, super speed, can fly, freeze things with his breath, burn things with his heat vision and is completely invulnerable. [7] He also has a "spider sense" which warns him of danger.  
[8] What is less commonly known is that he has a superintellect, is smarter than any human on Earth, can breathe in outer space, doesn't need food because he gets his nourishment from the rays of the sun and can travel through time; he flies so fast that he breaks the very fabric of time.



### Scrambled Paragraph 3

[1]After it has developed, it is then a person, too. [2]People reason that if a child becomes sick and requires an organ or bone marrow transplant, the child's clone would be the perfect match. [3]No one should be grown just for parts. [4]One argument for cloning humans is that it will benefit children. [5]This cloned embryo can then be used as insurance against disease. [6]In order to achieve this, the cloned embryo would have to be implanted and allowed to fully develop. [7]To use this person in order to benefit someone else is not right. [8]They suggest that parents plan ahead and keep a clone of their child's embryo. [9]This, however, is morally and ethically unacceptable.



## 5.2 Finding Paragraph Structure

Compare your unscrambled paragraphs to the ones provided at the end of the lesson in the answer guidelines for section 5.1. Which version of each paragraph is better, yours or the one provided? Why?

When unscrambling the paragraphs, how did you know what sentences to place first? How did you know what sentences to place last? There were certain clues that helped you decide how to order the sentences, whether or not you were aware of the clues:

### 1. Topic sentence

When unscrambling a paragraph, you may have looked for a key sentence that expressed the main idea of the paragraph. You may have decided to place this sentence at or near the beginning of the paragraph. The sentence is called the *topic sentence*. The topic sentence is common to academic writing<sup>3</sup>, but not to non-academic texts.<sup>4</sup>

The topic sentence usually relates the paragraph to the thesis of the essay. For example, if a thesis is “Animal testing is unethical,” a topic sentence might begin “*One reason* animal testing is unethical is that....” As a result, to find the topic sentence in the scrambled paragraphs, you might have looked for certain key words and phrases such as “First/Second/Third” or “One characteristic/reason/argument/etc....”

You can consider the topic sentence to be the “thesis” of a body paragraph. Note that the “topic” of a paragraph can be implied, just as a thesis can be implied. Moreover, just as sometimes a thesis can be more than one sentence in length, so can there be topic sentences in a paragraph.

### 2. Sequence

When unscrambling the paragraphs, you probably were aware that most of the sentences would provide detail to support the topic sentence (that is, to build on the main idea). Certain key words and phrases may have helped you arrange these sentences in a logical order, such as in order of *time* (from what happened first to what happened last), or *significance* (from what is least important to what is most important).

### 3. Concluding sentence

When unscrambling a paragraph, you may have discovered a sentence that seemed to summarize or restate the main idea of the paragraph, or even point the way to the next paragraph. This sentence is called the *concluding sentence* and it appears in *some* paragraphs of academic texts. For example, sentence 2 in the lesson introduction is a concluding sentence. It suggests that the next paragraph will provide “a list of basic clothes plus some tips.”

## 5.3 Unraveling the Mystery

During this exercise, you will identify the clues that may have helped you unscramble Paragraphs 1-3.

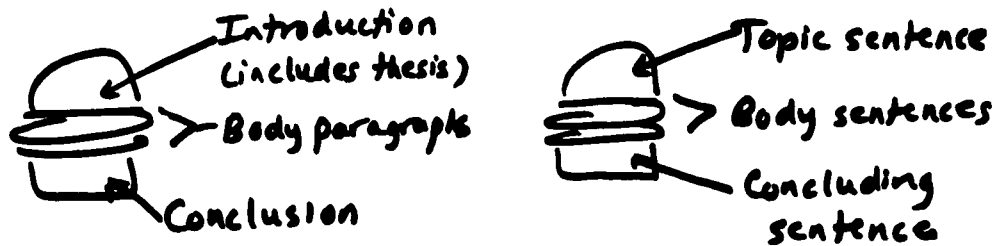
1. Underline the *most important* sentence in each unscrambled paragraph (the topic sentence).
2. Double underline the concluding sentence of each unscrambled paragraph (if there is one).
3. For each unscrambled paragraph, describe the sequence that the supporting detail follows (e.g., chronological order).
4. Compare your answers to those provided at the end of the lesson.

## 5.4 That Reminds Me!

Have you noticed some similarities between the structure of the essay and the structure of a paragraph? The sandwich model discussed in Lesson 3 applies not only to the structure of the traditional essay, but also to that of the paragraph:

- *Top layer of bread* — the essay usually includes an introductory paragraph with a thesis; the beginning of the paragraph usually includes a topic sentence.
- *Filling* — the essay includes several body paragraphs; the paragraph includes sentences that provide supporting detail for the topic sentence,
- *Bottom layer of bread* — the essay includes a concluding paragraph; the paragraph sometimes includes a concluding sentence.

Figure 5.1. Comparison of essay structure to paragraph structure.





## 5.5 Paragraph Practice

This exercise<sup>5</sup> will help you to identify and develop the main idea in a paragraph. Complete the following steps.

1. Write a paragraph around this topic sentence: *One practical reason for sexual abstinence is that it eliminates some of the stress of dating.* (You might not agree with the claim made by this sentence. That's okay — writing the paragraph will give you experience in dealing with an “opposing viewpoint” which I will discuss in Unit 2.)
2. Compare your paragraph to the one provided in the answer guidelines for section 5.5 at the end of this lessons.
3. Answer these questions, and then compare your responses to the guidelines provided at the end of the lesson.
4. (a) Which paragraph makes it clearer to the reader what the topic sentence is? How?  
(b) Where is the topic sentence located in each paragraph? Why?  
(c) Which paragraph stays on topic better? How do you know?  
(d) If you were told that part of each paragraph needs rewriting, which parts would you rewrite? Why?

## 5.6 Revising for Details

**I've been to great parties before, but never like this. The place was amazing and packed with guests. I met some interesting folks, and we listened to terrific music. The food was wonderful. I didn't want the party to end.**

Does the above paragraph include enough detail? In other words, does this paragraph convey adequately why the writer thought the party was so enjoyable? What made the party different to others that he or she had attended? What made the setting so “amazing?” — Did the party take place in a warehouse, a club or a gazebo by a river? What made the guests so interesting — were they rock musicians, professional writers or foreign diplomats? The writer says they listened to “terrific” music — does he or she mean live or recorded music? Was it Beethoven, the Beatles or the Black Crowes? And the food was “wonderful” — were the hosts serving meat or vegetarian fare? Caviar or chicken wings?<sup>6</sup>

## To do

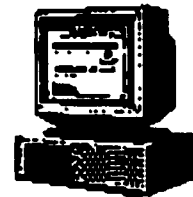
This exercise will give you practice developing a paragraph provides too little detail.

1. Suggest added details for the above paragraph. Mark the paragraph with a pencil as though someone else were going to retype it for you. Don't just start over, writing your own paragraph — revise this one. Add extra words and sentences to help the reader feel and see and hear.<sup>7</sup>
2. Rewrite the paragraph — that is, prepare a “clean” copy from your revised copy.
3. Compare your paragraph to the one provided in the answer guidelines for section 5.6 at the end of the lesson. Which paragraph does a better job of helping the reader “see and feel and hear”? Why?

### Revising with a computer

Writing in a word processing program (like Corel WordPerfect or Microsoft Word) has several advantages:

- You can *delete text* easily. If you decide you shouldn't have deleted a word, sentence or paragraph, you can “undelete” it just as easily.
- You can *move text* to another part of a document, and if you don't like it there, move it back again!
- You can *view several documents* at the same time, which is helpful for cross referencing -- say, while writing a draft you wish to refer to an outline you had prepared previously.
- You can use a “search” feature to *search for errors* you've made consistently and to replace them with corrections.
- You can use tools such as a thesaurus, spelling checker and grammar checker to help you *edit* your work.



## 5.7 Which of These Don't Belong?

### Exercise 1

This exercise will help you identify details that are unnecessary or irrelevant to the main idea of the paragraph.

Which of the following sentences doesn't belong?<sup>8</sup> How do you know? Compare your response to the answer guidelines provided at the end of the lesson.

1. She is one of a number of writing teachers who call course journals "seedbeds," a place where ideas take root, grow and develop.
2. I found that my Chaucer class journal helped me commit what I had read and learned to memory.
3. When we reread our responses to the poem and our answers to the questions posed by the professor, my classmates and I were able to pinpoint some issues which we had unconsciously identified as important to us.
4. Early in the semester, our professor asked us to read a particular poem about university life and to write our responses to the poem in our journals.
5. The reason that course journals help students to remember is twofold: first, the act of writing helps them remember what they have written; and second, the fact that they are writing their own responses to class materials helps to seal it into their memories.
6. In reviewing our journal entries, my classmates and I discovered that they became a source of ideas for our assignments.
7. When I realized that my response to the poem resulted from my feeling that students are treated as "second class citizens" at the university, I wrote an essay that discussed discrimination toward students.

## Exercise 2

Here's another exercise to give you practice identifying unnecessary details in a paragraph.

Which of the following sentences doesn't belong? Compare your response to the answer guidelines. (If you are studying History, Communications, Political Science or Linguistics, you may find the paragraph particularly interesting.)

[1]The Persian Gulf War is not only being likened to a video game, but also to a T.V. mini-series or movie. [2]How many times have you overheard "I'm going home to watch the war" recently? [3]And were you relieved when President Bush assured his nation that the war, much like your favourite TV show, was "right on schedule" (Detroit Free Press, 1991)? [4]The Allied and Iraqi soldiers have become actors and actresses of a real-life "drama" (Laitner, 1991). [5]So have the terrorists, to an extent, for their recent bombings in Turkey and Lebanon have been trumpeted by such newspaper headlines as "Outside the Gulf War Theater, Other Sideshow Conflicts Heat Up" (Yemma, 1991). [6]So far, American pilots have been complimented by the Pentagon on their "performance" in the Iraqi "theatre of war." [7](The expression "theatre of war" is particularly popular with the press these days.) [8]At times, the action in the Middle East seems like nothing more than a giant Western with "good guys" and "bad guys" battling it out in the desert, for in speaking of possible Iraqi mistreatment of Allied POWs, an Allied soldier interviewed by CBC responded that such mistreatment "gives credence to who the good guys are and who the bad guys are." [9]An American navy cook identified the "good guys" (for those who were still unsure) after describing the meal he fed to the Allies' first Iraqi POWs: "It was good meat loaf. [10]That's how America is . . . . We're the good guys" (Tamayo, 1991).

## 5.8 Have I Included Enough Detail?

### 1. Read Paragraph A:

[1]Cloning may give a lot of people false hope. [2]For instance, if a couple lost their child in an accident, could they clone the child and have the child all over again, thereby resurrecting the dead? [3]The answer is "no." [4]Our behaviour and personalities are greatly, albeit not solely, affected by our environment. [5]If a couple clones their oldest and most obedient child, they may be "dismayed to find that the resulting twin, now lower in the family hierarchy, grows up to be Che Guevara" (Wright, 1997). [6]What kind of psychological problems would arise from the other children from learning that their parents decided to clone their oldest sibling instead of themselves?

2. Underline every statement that is presented as true (every claim) in the paragraph. Then, {bracket off the specific details} that support each claim. I've identified the first claim and supporting detail for you in Paragraph A above.
3. Look at the bracketed material and ask yourself whether the writer is supporting each claim with enough detail. (We'll discuss this further in Lesson 7.) In cases where not enough detail is provided, jot down some added details. Make your changes directly to the paragraph with a pencil as though someone else were going to retype it for you.
4. Identify the purpose of the paragraph. (*Hint*: What's the message of the topic sentence?) Now, ask yourself whether the information in the paragraph advances this purpose. If you can't justify the inclusion of certain details, then they might not be necessary.<sup>9</sup>
5. Rewrite the paragraph — that is, make a clean copy from your revised copy. Use your creative licence to make up information when necessary; I don't expect you to research cloning.
6. Compare your responses to the answer guidelines provided at the end of the lesson.

## 5.9 Sidebar: What's That Stuff in Brackets?

Are you wondering about the names and dates that appear in brackets in Paragraph A above? For instance, *Yemma, 1991* means that in a 1991 publication, an individual with the surname Yemma used the expression enclosed in "quotation marks" in the paragraph. Paragraph A is an excerpt from an essay, and the writer provides full details about Yemma's publication in a bibliography at the end of the essay:

Yemma, J. (1991, January 24). Outside the gulf war theater, other sideshow conflicts heat up. *The Detroit Free Press*, page unknown.

The writer of Paragraph A cited her sources according to the guidelines described in a style manual called the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. This manual is most used mostly by writers and students in psychology, the other

behavioural and social sciences, nursing, criminology, and human resource areas. Another popular style manual is the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* which has different guidelines for citing sources. The Assignment File may contain information on how you should cite quotations and ideas from other sources in your essays.

## **Conclusion**

This lesson reviewed the structure of the paragraph in academic texts (remember the sandwich model?). It also gave you practice in identifying the main idea in a paragraph and evaluating how well the main idea is supported by the detail that follows.

## **Assigned Reading & Review Exercises**

Turn to the Textbook Key and complete the instructions for Lesson 5.

## Answer Guidelines for Lesson 5

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### Answer Guidelines for 5.1

#### Unscrambled Paragraph 1

[5]In “Our Friend Judith,” one incident that really showed me that Judith’s friends were threatening her individuality is when Betty bought her the Dior dress. [3]When Judith turns down the dress stating, “One surely ought to stay in character,” Betty is surprised and slightly offended, even though she knows the dress does not suit Judith’s character. [2]She believes Judith should want the dress. [1]Besides, who in today’s society would not want to look attractive and sexy? [4]By giving Judith this dress, Betty is trying to transform her into what she believes Judith should be and is trampling on her individuality.

#### Unscrambled Paragraph 2

[3]Superman is superior to Spiderman because he has a vast array of powers. [6]We all know he has super strength, super speed, can fly, freeze things with his breath, burn things with his heat vision and is completely invulnerable. [8]What is less commonly known is that he has a superintellect, is smarter than any human on Earth, can breath in outer space, doesn’t need food because he gets his nourishment from the rays of the sun and can travel through time; he flies so fast that he breaks the very fabric of time. [1]His only weakness is Kryptonite which is toxic to him. [5]Spiderman’s powers are far less omnipotent. [4]He has the proportionate strength, speed and agility of a spider. [7]He also has a “spider sense” which warns him of danger. [2]He has no particular weaknesses, but he can be beaten senseless by someone stronger than him.

#### Unscrambled Paragraph 3

[4]One argument for cloning humans is that it will benefit children. [2]People reason that if a child becomes sick and requires an organ or bone marrow transplant, the child’s clone would be the perfect match. [8]They suggest that parents plan ahead and keep a clone of their child’s embryo. [5]This cloned embryo can then be used as insurance against disease. [9]This, however, is morally and ethically unacceptable. [6]In order to achieve this, the cloned embryo would have to be implanted and allowed to fully develop. [1]After it has developed, it is then a person, too. [7]To use this person in order to benefit someone else is not right. [3]No one should be grown just for parts.

## Answer Guidelines for 5.3

1. & 2.

### Paragraph 1

In "Our Friend Judith," one incident that really showed me that Judith's friends were threatening her individuality is when Betty bought her the Dior dress. When Judith turns down the dress stating, "One surely ought to stay in character," Betty is surprised and slightly offended, even though she knows the dress does not suit Judith's character. She believes Judith should want the dress. Besides, who in today's society would not want to look attractive and sexy? By giving Judith this dress, Betty is trying to transform her into what she believes Judith should be and is trampling on her individuality.

*Note:* We know that the last sentence is a concluding sentence because it restates the topic sentence.

### Paragraph 2

Superman is superior to Spiderman because he has a vast array of powers. We all know he has super strength, super speed, can fly, freeze things with his breath, burn things with his heat vision and is completely invulnerable. What is less commonly known is that he has a superintellect, he is smarter than any human on Earth, can breath in outer space, doesn't need food because he gets his nourishment from the rays of the sun and can travel through time; he flies so fast that he breaks the very fabric of time. His only weakness is Kryptonite which is toxic to him. Spiderman's powers are far less omnipotent. He has the proportionate strength, speed and agility of a spider. He also has a "spider sense" which warns him of danger. He has no particular weaknesses, but he can be beaten senseless by someone stronger than him.

### Paragraph 3

One argument for cloning humans is that it will benefit children. People reason that if a child becomes sick and requires an organ or bone marrow transplant, the child's clone would be the perfect match. They suggest that parents plan ahead and keep a clone of their child's embryo. This cloned embryo can then be used as insurance against disease. This, however, is morally and ethically unacceptable. In order to achieve this, the cloned embryo would have to be implanted and allowed to fully develop. After it has developed, it is then a person, too. To use this person in order to benefit someone else is not right. No one should be grown just for parts.

*Note:* The topic sentence for this paragraph appears in the middle of the paragraph. We know that this is the topic sentence because the main idea of the paragraph is that cloning humans as insurance against disease in children is wrong.



The last sentence is a concluding sentence because it summarizes the main idea of the paragraph.

3. The first half of paragraph 1 is arranged in **chronological order**: Betty gives Judith the Dior dress; Judith turns down the dress; Betty and the other friend are offended.

The details of paragraph 2 are arranged around a **comparison/contrast**. The first half of the paragraph describes Superman's powers; the second half contrasts Spiderman's inferior powers.

The details of paragraph 3 are arranged in order of **significance**. The writer begins by introducing an argument for cloning, explains this argument, then shows why this argument is wrong. The writer ends with a very important statement (a "clincher") that summarizes the main idea of the entire paragraph: "No one should be grown just for parts." You could also say that the details of paragraph 2 are arranged in a "**acknowledgement/refutation**" sequence — the writer acknowledges an argument that he or she doesn't agree with, and then refutes this argument (explains why it is a poor one). More on dealing with "opposing viewpoints" in Unit 2.

## **Answer Guidelines for 5.5**

### **Exercise 1**

2. Here's a paragraph written by a University of Windsor student:

*One practical reason for sexual abstinence is that it eliminates some of the stress of dating. A friend of mine is a nurse at Detroit's Henry Ford Hospital; she tells me that condoms fails 30% of the time. In the era of the AIDS scare, chastity ensures 100% protection from sexually transmitted diseases. Chastity is also the best method of birth control. This past summer, I worked for a social agency which deals with crisis pregnancies. I witnessed the confusion and hurt of the pregnant teenager firsthand. A 15 year old girl isn't prepared to be a mother. She needs to know that the "safest" sex in dating is no sex at all.*

►Return to section 5.5 and resume work at item 3.

3. (a) In answering this question, you might have considered things like the placement of the key sentence — for example, readers tend to pay attention to things that appear at the beginning or end of a paragraph.
3. (b) The topic sentence in the paragraph I have provided is located at the beginning of the paragraph, which is where the key sentence or topic sentence is often located. Readers pay attention to the opening sentences as these sentences tend to orient them to what follows. Where did you place your sentence in the paragraph? Why?
3. (c) Does the paragraph I have provided stay on topic? The key or topic sentence suggests that the paragraph will explain how sexual abstinence eliminates some

of the stress of dating. However, are condom failures, sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies examples of date *stress*? No — they're examples of problems associated with sexual activity. Examples of "dating stress" might include one partner badgering the other to have sex, or the worry that you might be pregnant or have contracted a STD from your dating partner. Did your paragraph do a better job of staying on topic than the one I provided?

3. (d) There are at least two ways to revise the paragraph that I have provided. One way would be to rewrite the topic sentence so that it follows logically from the examples. For example, a topic sentence that suits the paragraph as it stands might be "One practical reason for sexual abstinence is that it safeguards you from sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies."

Another way to revise the paragraph would be to rewrite the examples so that they support the topic sentence as it stands (some suitable examples appear in 3.c. above).

How would you revise the paragraph that *you* wrote? Why?

## Answer Guidelines for 5.6

Here's how one student revised the paragraph in section 5.6:

**I've been to great parties before, but never like this. The weekend event took place far from the smoggy city, deep in the colourful autumn woods of northern Ontario. On Friday night, we relaxed by roasting marshmallows over a crackling bonfire while bright stars glowed in a velvet sky and the nearby creek bubbled merrily. In the wee hours of the morning, we unrolled our 37 sleeping bags side by side on the cottage floor so that it looked like a gigantic patchwork quilt. The next day, Eliana and Marc entertained us with stories of backpacking across Europe as we sipped homemade raspberry wine, warmed our toes by the hearth, and listened to vintage blues. But the highlight of the party had to be the last meal we shared. All day Sunday, chickens stuffed with lemons and garlic roasted on an outdoor spit, and their aroma teased our growling stomachs. Dave, a chef, baked several homemade cherry and apple pies, while my sister and I roasted new potatoes in the glowing coals beneath the chickens. Is it any wonder that I didn't want the party to end?**

## Answer Guidelines for 5.7

### Exercise 1

Sentences 2 and 5 don't belong, because they are related to the idea that "course journals help students remember course material." The remaining sentences belong in a single paragraph because they relate to the idea that "course journals are a seedbed of ideas for assignments."

### Exercise 2

Sentence 5 doesn't belong. The purpose of the paragraph seems to be to convince the reader that politicians, the military and the press have trivialized the Gulf War by likening it to a TV mini-series or movie. (You may have found it difficult to identify the purpose of the paragraph as it is implied rather than stated clearly.) However, the focus of sentence 5 is on terrorism rather than the Gulf War. Although the sentence compares the Persian Gulf setting to a theatre, this point is also made in sentences 6 and 7. As a result, sentence 5 is unnecessary, and it could easily be deleted from the paragraph.

You might feel that sentence 7 and/or the phrase in brackets in sentence 9 are unnecessary. You might argue that because this material is set out in brackets, the writer doesn't consider it to be too important, and it's not essential to the paragraph.

## Answer Guidelines for 5.8

2. [1]Cloning may give a lot of people false hope. {[2]For instance, if a couple lost their child in an accident, could they clone the child and have the child all over again, thereby resurrecting the dead? [3]The answer is "no."} [4]Our behaviour and personalities are greatly, albeit not solely, affected by our environment. {[5]If a couple clones their oldest and most obedient child, they may be "dismayed to find that the resulting twin, now lower in the family hierarchy, grows up to be Che Guevara" (Wright, 1997).} [6]What kind of psychological problems would arise from the other children from learning that their parents decided to clone their oldest sibling instead of themselves?
3. Sentence 5 does not support strongly the claim made by sentence 4 — it doesn't provide proof that behaviour and personalities are affected by the environment; it just gives an example that presupposes the claim is true. In your revisions, you might have included some evidence that "proves" behaviour and personalities are affected by the environment.
4. The purpose of the paragraph seems to be to convince the reader that cloning gives people false hope. The last sentence doesn't advance this purpose, as it describes how cloning can result in family problems rather than describing how it gives people false hope.

## **Notes**

1. Source of exercise: Koch, C. & Brazil, J.M. (1978). *Strategies for Teaching the Composition Process*. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, pp.72-73.

2. Exercise suggested by Koch & Brazil, 1978.

3. Popken, R.L. (April 1987). A study of topic sentence use in academic writing. *Written Communication* 4 (2), 209-28. (From ERIC abstracts.)

4. Braddock, R. (Winter 1974). The frequency and placement of topic sentences in expository prose. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 8, 287-302.

5. This exercise is suggested by Scardamalia, M., Bereiter, C. & Fillion, B. (1981). *Writing for Results: A Source Book of Consequential Composing Activities*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

6. Thanks to C. Cassano, University of Windsor, for inspiring this exercise.

7. Instructions adapted from O'Hare & Memering, 1990.

8. Exercise suggested by Scardamalia, Bereiter & Fillion, 1981.

9. Steps 2-5 adapted from Clouse, 1996, p.46.

## UNIT 2 GUIDE

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# THE ARGUMENT & GLOBAL REVISIONS

During this unit, you will learn to identify and compose different types of arguments (texts that argue a particular viewpoint). This unit will also introduce some techniques to help you improve or suggest improvements for a written argument. For example, when examining a argument, you will check to see that the writer

- presents his or her claims clearly;
- arranges his or her ideas in a logical sequence;
- supports his or her claims logically and with sufficient evidence;
- uses examples that are typical of the issue being argued about rather than exceptions to the rule;
- uses information that is accurate and identifies the ideas that he or she has borrowed from other sources;
- uses examples that are relevant to the issue being argued about;
- acknowledges opposing ideas and minimizes the weaknesses of his or her point of view;
- shows respect to those who may disagree with his or her perspective.

The changes that would result from working through the above list are called **global revisions**. The global features of a text include content, organization, and communicative effectiveness. We'll explore the "local" features of a text in the next unit, which provides some suggestions for reviewing your drafts sentence by sentence and making the appropriate corrections to spelling, punctuation and the like.

## Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define *argument* as it is used in the university community;
- identify and compose a substantiation, evaluation or recommendation argument;
- refute opposing viewpoints respectfully;
- apply the STAR test to determine whether a claim is acceptably strong;
- use the criteria provided in Lessons 6-8 to revise your written argument or suggest revisions for the argument of another;
- differentiate between global and local revisions.

### Food for thought

Beginning writers almost never believe that good writing is rewriting. They think if they attend enough seminars, sign up for enough workshops, read enough self-help books, and *think* enough, when they sit down to write, all the words flowing onto paper or into the word processor will be golden. Worse yet, they believe those words are inviolate; and woe to anyone who suggests that something could be improved!....But remember, revising serves one purpose: to make your writing readily accessible to the reader. Readers should not have to struggle to follow the development of your [essay] or reread passages to see what you are driving at."  
(Bodie & Brock Thoene, *Writer to Writer*, Bethany House Publishers, 1990)

## LESSON 6

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# ARGUMENT & ACCOMMODATION

### Reminders

- Did you read the Unit 2 guide before beginning this lesson?
- Check to see when your next assignment is due, and set aside time to work on it so that you will be able to submit it to the instructor by the due date.

### Introduction

*Your claims are indefensible.*

*He attacked every weak point in my argument.*

*Her criticisms were right on target.*

*I demolished his argument.*

*I've never won an argument with her.*

*You disagree? Okay, shoot!*

*If you use that strategy, he'll wipe you out.*

*She shot down all of my arguments.*

As the above sentences illustrate, in our everyday language, we talk about argument in terms of war. We can win or lose arguments; we see the person we are arguing with as an opponent; we can win or lose ground; we have strategies; if we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack.<sup>1</sup>

We will look at argument a bit differently in this course. We won't view an argument as a conflict in which you take the right side of the issue, your opponent takes the wrong side, and your purpose is to win. Rather, we will view argument as a situation in which you consider seriously and fairly the views that differ from your own and, as a result, decide whether you should alter your view. The goal of academic argument is to make a good decision about what to believe, not to win a victory.<sup>2</sup> In the arguments that you write for this course, you will seek to persuade your readers to take your point of view, but you will also acknowledge the strengths of their perspective and adjust your position accordingly.

This lesson will introduce you to three types of arguments that you will learn in this course: the substantiation argument, the evaluation argument, and the recommendation argument. It will also emphasize the importance of addressing your audience respectfully and acknowledging their points of view.

## Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- differentiate among *argument*, *claim*, *thesis* and *topic sentence*;
- identify the audience and purpose of an argumentative essay;
- explain whether a claim is a substantiation, evaluation or recommendation claim;
- decide whether a writer accommodates his or her audience;
- describe at least two ways to handle opposing viewpoints in an argumentative essay;
- explain why emotional appeals must be used carefully in an argument.

## 6.1 Claims

*Distance education courses are not inferior to on-campus courses; they are just different.*

The above sentence is a **claim**; it is a statement or assertion presented as true. During this and subsequent lessons, you will learn to identify and evaluate the claims made in a piece of writing. The claims that we will focus on will be those made by the thesis and topic sentences of an essay.

A text that sets out to prove or support a claim is called an **argument**. An effective argument provides evidence to support the claim that it puts forward.

### Words that we will use interchangeably...

Claim	Argument
Thesis	Essay
	Argumentative essay



## 6.2 Three Types of Claims

Most claims that you encounter in argumentative writing can be grouped into one of the following categories.

### 1. Substantiation claims

This type of claim substantiates something; it proves that something is true or that something has caused something else. Substantiation claims often promise the reader that the argument as a whole will (1) define something, (2) categorize or compare, or (3) show cause and effect. They do *not* judge the value of something; that is, they don't argue something is good or bad, right or wrong, etc.

*Examples:*

- Much of contemporary rock music is sexually explicit. (This claim promises that the argument will *define* sexually explicit.)
- The one thing that television commercials have in common is the way they try to persuade you to buy a product. (This claim promises that the argument will *compare* several examples of television commercials.)
- Environmental pollutants may explain the unusually high cancer rate in the Windsor area. (This claim promises that the argument will present examples of how pollutants *cause* cancer. Note that the claim sets out to prove a cause-and-effect relationship, not to evaluate the pollutants as “bad” or undesirable.)

### 2. Evaluation claims

This type of claim evaluates something. An evaluation claim states something as right/wrong, better/worse, good/bad, desirable/undesirable, valuable/worthless, moral/immoral, or effective/ineffective, and so on.

*Examples:*

- Casino gambling is good for Windsor's economy.
- Expository Writing 26-100 is a fantastic course.
- Macs are better than IBM PCs.

### 3. Recommendation claims

This type of claim recommends or proposes something. A recommendation claim claims that something should or should not be done (or ought to/must/needs to be done).

*Examples:*

- You should place a small checkmark next to important passages in your textbook rather than colouring the pages with highlighter.

- People ought to buy synthetic furs rather than real ones.

## 6.3 Three Types of Arguments

When a substantiation claim is the thesis of an argumentative essay, we call that essay a *substantiation argument*. We'll explore substantiation arguments in Lesson 7. In Lesson 8, we'll explore *evaluation arguments* (essays with evaluation claims as their theses), and in Lesson 9 we'll explore *recommendation arguments* (essays with recommendation claims as their theses).

By the end of this unit, it should be clear that, once you know what type of thesis (claim) you have composed, you will be able to decide what type of evidence you need to support it, how you should organize your ideas, and what criteria you should use to evaluate and improve your argument.<sup>3</sup>

## 6.4 Brain Teaser

Can you match each claim with the appropriate category?

### *Categories*

S - Substantiation claim

E - Evaluation claim

R - Recommendation claim

### *Claims*

- \_\_1. E-mail is a better way to stay in touch with friends than post or telephone.
- \_\_2. There are few differences between Canadians and Americans.
- \_\_3. To save money, the University of Windsor should plant and maintain perennials rather than purchasing and planting hundreds of annuals each spring.
- \_\_4. The movies of the golden age of Hollywood are superior to those made by contemporary film makers.
- \_\_5. The thesis of an argumentative essay can take one of three forms.

Compare your answers to those provided at the end of the lesson.

## 6.5 To Help You Remember

A "substantiation" argument is so named because it has a substantiation claim for a thesis. A recommendation argument has a recommendation claim for a thesis, and an evaluation argument has an evaluation claim for a thesis.

Substantiation arguments often answer the questions, *What is this thing?* or *What consequences does this thing have?*

Recommendation arguments answer the question, *What should (or should not) be done about this thing?*

Evaluation arguments answer the question, *Is this thing good or bad?*

## 6.6 Audience and Purpose

The purpose of most argumentative texts is to convince the reader of the writer's point of view. Turn to the Reader, and read Sample F, entitled "Dear Ann...."

Then, answer the following questions.

1. For the purpose of this exercise, assume that Enough Already's thesis is "Men's viciousness has caused many social problems." What type of claim is made by this thesis (substantiation, evaluation or recommendation)? Explain.
2. What is Enough Already's purpose in writing the letter?
3. Who is Enough Already's intended audience (assume that she hoped to have her letter published)? How do you think the audience would respond to her argument? Why?

## 6.7 Discussion

1. *What type of claim is it (substantiation, evaluation or recommendation)? Explain.*

This thesis is a substantiation claim because it promises to show cause (male viciousness) and effect (social problems such as crime, aggressive driving, and war). It answers the question, "What consequences does male viciousness have?"

If you think the thesis "Male viciousness has caused many social problems" is an evaluation claim, maybe this explanation will help to clarify things for you: This thesis does not label male viciousness as "bad," which is what an evaluation claim would do. The writer does not set out to prove that male viciousness is bad; rather, she assumes that it is and that her audience would think so, too. Instead, the thesis promises to show cause and effect, that is, to prove that the male trait of viciousness has adverse social consequences. This is a substantiation claim.

2. *What is Enough Already's purpose in writing the letter?*

You might have argued that Enough Already's purpose in writing Ann Landers was simply to vent her frustration with men or perhaps to discover what Ann thinks about her opinions (see par. 5). For purposes of this exercise, however,

you should have viewed Enough Already's letter as a piece of argumentative writing. As stated in section 6.6 of this lesson, the purpose of most argumentative texts is to convince the intended audience of the writer's point of view.

3. *Who is Enough Already's intended audience (assume that she hoped to have her letter published)? How do you think the audience would respond to her argument? Why?*

The audience of an argumentative text is usually those who hold a different view than the writer (there's no point trying to convince somebody who already agrees with you!). How likely is Enough Already to convince her opponents that men are vicious and the cause of many social problems? Note that Enough Already assumes that what is true for some men is true for all of them. For example, she writes, "What is wrong with men?" (par. 1) and "Driving with a man is enough to make you a nervous wreck" (par. 2) rather than "What is wrong with *some* men?" and "Driving with *some* men is enough to make you a nervous wreck." By lumping all of her male readers together with criminals (par. 1) and bullies (par. 2), she probably alienated them long before she called them "bozos" (par. 5)!

Enough Already may have offended her female readers as well, for most of her female readers would be close to men who do not beat their wives and children, murder their girlfriends, torture animals, or attack strangers at intersections. Furthermore, her female opponents might be offended that Enough Already assumes they share her point of view simply because they are women: "Unfortunately, until we come up with some answers, we [women] have to live with these bozos [men]" (par. 5). The only readers likely to be sympathetic to Enough Already's argument would be those who agree with her already — and as they don't need convincing, we shouldn't consider them to be part of her audience.

## 6.8 Accommodating Your Audience

There are two points I'd like to draw from my discussion of Enough Already's letter: You're more likely to convince an audience that your viewpoint is credible if you (1) show respect for them and (2) acknowledge their opposing points of view.

### **Be respectful**

As O'Hare and Memering point out in their textbook, *The Writer's Work*, "Any word or tone or hint that your readers are less intelligent, less well-informed, less honourable, or even less 'right' than you are will most likely alienate them and thus prevent them from even hearing, let alone considering, your point of view." In

other words, calling members of your audience “bozos” probably won’t win them over to your side!

### **Acknowledge opposing points of view**

Another way to win over your reader is to show that you’re treating the issue fairly. You can do this by mentioning some of their points of view. Although your essay should demonstrate why you think your stance is the most credible, you can help to overcome the readers’ resistance to your opinion by acknowledging a strong point from their sides of the issue. Don’t ignore evidence that opposes your position. For example, Enough Already wrote that “Women don’t do things like [punch strangers in the face].” Having witnessed a few fist fights between women, I can disprove this statement easily!

You can structure your thesis in such a way that it allows you to acknowledge the opposition’s point of view — and then refute (disprove) it. For example, let’s consider Enough Already’s thesis that “Male viciousness has caused many social problems.” Her letter to Ann Landers ignores the facts that *not* all men are vicious and that some women *are*. To be fair to her audience, Enough Already could revise her thesis to read,

*Although some women are aggressive, men are mostly responsible for crime and war because they are genetically predisposed to be aggressive.*

(I’m *not* saying that this thesis is a good one, but it *is* markedly better than Enough Already’s original one.) We’ll call this structure the **although/because thesis structure**.<sup>5</sup> It doesn’t matter whether your thesis is a substantiation, evaluation or recommendation claim — all three claims can be written in the although/because form.

## **6.9 Pet Peeves**

This section invites you to explore different sides of the same issue.

Below, I have listed a pet peeve and two reasons why it bothers me so much.

**Peeve:** I dislike it when friends excuse hurtful comments by saying, “It’s the truth; I’m just being honest.”

**Reasons:**

1. It’s difficult to maintain a friendship with someone who is tactless.
2. Excusing hurtful comments as “honest” is a cop-out. Some things are better left unsaid.

Write a brief passage that tries to persuade me to adopt a more favourable opinion of the aforementioned people. Use the reasons I have listed above, turning them around, proving that they’re false, etc.<sup>6</sup>

Here’s the way one student tried to persuade me to change my point of view:

Most people know what's it like to find out that a friend has been talking behind their back or has repressed something that has been bothering him or her until it's too late for the friendship to be mended. It's better to approach the person with whom you're at odds and let them know. This is called assertiveness and honesty, and it is preferable to backbiting or repressing ill feelings. If someone can tell you when they're upset or displeased with you, or even that they don't like your new hair style, you can be comfortable knowing that they aren't talking behind your back, that everything is "on the table." Sure, it's unnecessary for a friend to volunteer that they, say, dislike the sweater you have on, but it's better to have a friend who speaks too freely than a friend who says negative things to others about you or doesn't express their feelings at all!

Did the student address both reasons I gave for disliking people who "say what they mean"? Do you think the student has misinterpreted either of my reasons? Has he or she introduced an irrelevant argument? Is there any way the student could improve the passage?

### **Another example**

Here's another example of a pet peeve. This time, *you* write a brief passage that tries to persuade the writer to adopt a more favourable opinion. Use the reasons the writer has listed, turning them around, proving that they're false, etc. When you're finished, compare your passage to the sample provided.

**Peeve:** I dislike it when people dye their hair a different colour.

**Reasons:**

1. It's dishonest — people shouldn't try to fool others.
2. People should be happy with the appearance that nature has given them.

Here's the way that one student tried to persuade the writer to change his or her point of view:

Although properly dyed hair looks completely natural, people do not dye their hair to fool others. They dye their hair to look and feel better. Some people want to look as young as possible; other people have prematurely grey hair which makes them look older than they are. Yet others dye their hair for a change, for excitement. This is no different from getting a new haircut or buying a new outfit. It is not dishonest to want to look and feel your best, and it doesn't mean that you have low self esteem if you decide to change the colour of your hair.

Has the student addressed both of the writer's reasons for disliking hair dyeing? Has the student misinterpreted one of the reasons, or introduced an irrelevant argument? Is there any way the student could have strengthened his or her response? How does the student's argument compare to *your* argument?

## **Your turn**

This pet peeve exercise required you to explore alternative perspectives. This is important because you should acknowledge your audience's point of view in your written arguments. Doing so will help convince them that you've considered the issue fairly. By respectfully refuting the audience's viewpoints, you may be able to persuade them that your perspective is the most credible. Sometimes, considering the strengths of your audience's perspective will cause you to modify your own!

Now, list two or three of *your* pet peeves, and give at least two reasons for each of them. Then, write a brief passage that sees an opposite side of each issue (or give your list to a friend or family member and ask them to try to persuade you to adopt a more favourable opinion). When taking an opposite side to an issue, you don't have to hold the favourable opinion that you are arguing.

When you've finished writing the passage, check to see that you have:

- acknowledged both reasons.
- refuted the two reasons rather than introducing a new argument.

## **Conclusion**

This lesson introduced the three types of arguments that we will explore in this course, as well as the importance of treating your audience respectfully and acknowledging their points of view.

The next lesson will explore substantiation arguments, one of the three types of arguments introduced in this lesson.

## **Assigned Reading**

Complete to the Instructions for Lesson 6 in the Textbook Key.

## Answer Guidelines for 6.4

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1. *E-mail is a better way to stay in touch with friends than post or telephone.*

This is an evaluation claim (E) because it makes a judgment about the *value* of e-mail — it states e-mail is *better* than post or telephone.

2. *There are few differences between Canadians and Americans.*

We know that this is a substantiation claim (S) because it *compares* Canadians to Americans. It would be an evaluation claim if it made a value judgement about the lack of differences between Canadians and Americans, say, “It is *unfortunate* that there are few differences between Canadians and Americans,” (that is, it’s “bad” for a Canadian to be indistinguishable from an American).

3. *To save money, the University of Windsor should plant and maintain perennials rather than purchasing and planting hundreds of annuals each spring.*

We know that this is a recommendation claim (R) because it uses the word *should*; it makes a recommendation to the University of Windsor.

4. *The movies of the golden age of Hollywood are superior to those made by contemporary film makers.*

You probably noted that this claim *compares* two things. Perhaps this made you conclude erroneously that it was a substantiation claim. On the other hand, you may have noted the word *superior* and concluded correctly that the claim is an evaluation claim (E) -- it makes a judgement about the *value* of the movies. A claim that compares two things (or classifies, defines, or shows cause and effect) is a substantiation claim *only* if it refrains from making a value judgement.

5. *The thesis of an argumentative essay can take one of three forms.*

This is a substantiation claim (S) because it sets out to prove something is true and promises to do so through *categorizing* theses in one of three categories.



## Notes

1. Discussion of argument as war taken from Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M., (1980), *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
2. Discussion of argument adapted from Fulkerson, R. (1996), *Teaching the Argument in Writing*, Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, pp.16-17.
3. Fulkerson, 1996.
4. Fahnestock, J. & Secor, M. (1993, February). Teaching argument: A theory of types. *College Composition and Communication* 34(1), pp. 20-30.
5. Carey. (1988). Preparing the Way to Writing An Argumentative-Persuasion Essay. In M.S. Bordner. *Strategies in Composition: Ideas that Work in the Classroom*. Project funded jointly by the Ohio Board of Regents, participating high schools, and Clark Technical College, Springfield, Ohio. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 294 181), p. 4.
6. This exercise and the following hair-dye example were adapted from Scardamalia et al., 1981.



# LESSON 7

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## SUBSTANTIATION ARGUMENTS

### Reminder

Check to see when your next assignment is due, and set aside time to work on it so that you will be able to submit it to the instructor by the due date.

### Introduction

In the last lesson, I introduced you to three types of claims that we will encounter in this course: substantiation, evaluation and recommendation claims. When an argumentative text has a substantiation claim as its thesis, we call the text a *substantiation argument*. This lesson introduces some criteria that you can use to improve a substantiation argument.

### Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

outline some guidelines for deciding how many examples are *sufficient* in an argument;

- decide whether an example is *typical* of the issue being argued about rather than an extreme case;
- list some ways a writer can convince the audience that his or her examples are *accurate*;
- determine whether the examples in a paragraph are *relevant* to the topic sentence and whether the topic sentences are relevant to the thesis of an argument;
- apply the STAR test to an argument and, based on your results, recommend the revisions that should be made to the argument;
- write a substantiation argument that meets the STAR criteria.

## 7.1 Hide and Go Seek

Hunt out the substantiation claims that are hiding in the following list. How did you decide whether a claim was a substantiation claim? Compare your answers to those provided at the end of the lesson.

1. Due to conflicts with their work schedules, more full-time on-campus students are enrolling in distance courses.
2. Doctors should not prescribe antibiotics to patients with viral infections.
3. Researchers and experienced writers report that the process of writing includes several overlapping stages.
4. An argument is a text that establishes or supports a particular viewpoint.
5. Her piano playing is poor because it is mechanical and without emotion.

## 7.2 The STAR Test

The STAR test can help you decide whether a substantiation argument is well reasoned. You can evaluate a substantiation claim and its supporting evidence against the following four criteria.<sup>1</sup> (You can also evaluate recommendation and evaluation claims against these criteria.)

As you should remember from Lesson 6, a *claim* is a statement presented as true. Most theses are claims, as are topic sentences. In addition to the topic sentence, there may be more than one claim in a paragraph, but in this lesson we'll focus on topic sentences when applying the STAR test.

### ● STAR Test

<b>S -- Sufficiency</b>	<b>Is there enough evidence to justify the claim?</b>
<b>T -- Typicality</b>	<b>Is the evidence typical of the issue being argued about?</b>
<b>A -- Accuracy</b>	<b>Is the information used as evidence true?</b>
<b>R -- Relevance</b>	<b>Is the claim relevant to the evidence?</b>

Right now these questions might not mean much to you, so let's apply them to an example.

## 7.3 Case in Point

In *Hunting with the Moon*, the husband-and-wife team of Dereck and Beverly Joubert, creators of eight acclaimed wildlife documentaries, turn their patient attentions to the habits of the lions who inhabit the southern African Republic of Botswana. The Jouberts have come to believe that each lion can feel the equivalent of compassion, fear, sadness, hatred and anger. They write of the lioness who ministers tenderly to her dying cub, the lion who specializes in hyena hunting, the touching respect one pride accords a wizened elder (Adapted from a book review in *People* magazine, 10/13/97).

### Analysis

**Claim (topic sentence):** The topic sentence is the second sentence of the example. It suggests that lions can feel the equivalent of the human emotions of compassion, fear, sadness, hatred and anger. We know that the topic sentence is a substantiation claim because it promises that the paragraph will prove or substantiate that lions can feel particular human emotions.

**Sufficiency:** In the last sentence of the sample, the writer gives three examples. Is this enough evidence to justify the writer's claim that lions can feel the equivalent of particular human emotions? The sample is a very short one, so three examples seems a reasonable number. In fact, I find three examples to be a good rule of thumb.

Keep in mind that this “three examples” guideline is a suggestion; it's not chiselled in stone! If an audience has little personal knowledge of the issue being argued about, you'll probably need more examples to convince them than you would for an audience that has a lot of background knowledge. You must give as much support as seems necessary for an audience to accept your argument, yet limit the evidence to keep your argument readable. In some cases, to keep your essay a reasonable length, you might decide to substitute statistical counts for specific examples, or mentioning additional authorities in footnotes.<sup>2</sup>

**Typicality:** Are the examples given by the writer typical of lion “emotion” rather than examples of “emotion” exhibited by only a few lions? Without reading the Jouberts' book for ourselves, we can't answer this question, so we cannot apply the criterion of typicality to this example.

**Accuracy:** Are the examples true? As the writer is reviewing the Jouberts' book for *People*, an entertainment magazine with a good reputation, it is reasonably safe to assume the examples are accurate. We know the name of the book from which the writer has taken the three examples so that we can trace them if we have doubts.

**Relevance:** Are the examples relevant to the topic sentence? In other words, do the examples prove the writer’s claim that lions can feel the equivalent of human emotions of compassion, fear, sadness, hatred and anger?

- The first example is relevant to the topic sentence because it demonstrates compassion, an emotion that is cited in the topic sentence.
- The second example is not relevant to the topic sentence because it does not illustrate any of the four emotions cited in the topic sentence. In fact, it is unclear what “emotion” the lion feels at all — maybe the lion feels “hatred” for the hyenas or “pride” in his hunting speciality?
- The third example is not relevant to the topic sentence because the emotion of respect is not cited in the topic sentence. (Note that *pride* in this last example refers to a company of lions rather than an emotion.)

**Conclusion and recommendations:** The topic sentence (claim) is not acceptably strong because two of the three examples are not relevant to the topic sentence. However, this could easily be rectified. First, the writer could revise the topic sentence along these lines (see *italicized* words):

The Jouberts have come to believe that each lion can feel the equivalent of compassion, fear, sadness, hatred and anger and the like.

OR

The Jouberts have come to believe that each lion can feel the equivalent of human emotions such as compassion, fear, sadness, hatred and anger.

Once the above revisions are made, the third example (respect for elder) would support the topic sentence.

The writer should also clarify which emotion is exemplified by the second example (the lion who hunts hyenas). For instance, he or she could write, “a lion who *proudly* specializes in hyena hunting” or “a lion who, *from hatred*, specializes in hyena hunting.”

## 7.4 STAR Search

Now it’s your turn to try applying the STAR test. Analyze each of the following paragraphs in the same manner that I analyzed the paragraph in section 7.3 above. In other words, for each paragraph:

1. Identify the central claim (the topic sentence). How do we know that it is a substantiation claim?
2. Apply the STAR test to determine whether the claim is acceptably strong.
3. From your conclusions, recommend ways that the paragraph could be improved.

Compare your answers to those provided at the end of the lesson.

### **Paragraph A**

Young adults place great importance on their physical appearance. Advertisers realize this and use it to their advantage. Television commercials directed toward young adults usually feature an extremely pretty girl or good-looking guy. One example of this is the commercial for Noxema face cream. A pretty girl is working at the drive-through window of a fast-food restaurant, and a good-looking guy returns repeatedly before he can work up the courage to ask her on a date. The actors' physical appearances do not have anything to do with the product being sold. This use of sex appeal is meant to influence potential buyers. Advertisers know that young adults will be more attracted to the good-looking person than an ordinary-looking person. Television advertisers use sex appeal on a regular basis to influence young adults to buy their products.

### **Paragraph B**

Cleaning a room involves more than just lightly dusting or sweeping the floor with a broom. In order to remove the dirt and grime, you need to use a little elbow grease, of which my brother could use a little when he cleans! The state of cleanliness of our two bedrooms is drastically different. In my bedroom, you feel as if they are in an enchanted magical paradise, where an ocean breeze can be heard through my meditation music playing softly in the background. In my brother's bedroom, you feel as though you are in a sweaty locker room, where the sound of terror and horror can be heard from the bass guitar and drums in the background. The rooms are two extremes and to think that only a wall divides heaven from hell.

### **Paragraph C**

Because of several food allergies, it is very difficult for me to order dishes that I can eat when dining in a restaurant. For example, at the popular McDonald's, I can eat only the cherry pie, the Filet o' Fish (but hold the cheese), and the salad (but not with a creamy dressing). Luckily, many restaurants list vegetarian dishes on their menus, so I'm able to order around my meat allergies, but my milk allergy makes dining out very challenging! I've often asked a server whether a certain dish is prepared with milk, butter or margarine and been assured that it does not. Soon after I've eaten the dish, however, my body clearly tells me that the server was mistaken. I once asked a baker's assistant to check the ingredients pasted on a tub of muffin batter to see whether the muffins had milk or butter in them. Although she reported that the batter was milk-free, I asked to see the ingredient list

myself. There was "milk" and "butter," printed clearly! I've tried ordering ahead at restaurants so that the chef can prepare me a special milk-free meal, but it is disconcerting how little they know about the ingredients in the dishes that they prepare. No butter, no margarine, I said to the chef of a well-known dining establishment. Margarine doesn't have milk in it, he replied. For dessert, this same chef suggested sorbet which, like margarine, usually contains milk ingredients. I'm surprised that restaurants don't cater to the large population of people who must or choose to follow milk-free diets.

## 7.5 Remember Enough Already?

You've practised applying the STAR test to one-paragraph examples. Now, let's apply the STAR test to a text that is several paragraphs in length.

Turn to the Reader and reread Sample F ("Dear Ann...") which we first examined in Lesson 6. For the purpose of this exercise, let's consider Enough Already's thesis (claim) to be "Male viciousness has caused many social problems." To decide whether this thesis is acceptably strong, we need to apply the STAR test.

### Sufficiency

Does Enough Already provide *enough* evidence to justify her thesis that male viciousness has caused many social problems? Enough Already gives several examples:

1. examples of male criminal behaviour taken from her daily reading (probably a newspaper) -- paragraph 1.
2. her personal observations of male drivers -- par. 2.
3. an example from an unknown authority (maybe a TV show, class reading or lecture) -- par. 3.

Is this *enough* evidence to support her thesis? Remember, we're looking at the *quantity* of the examples, not the quality of them. She does meet the "three examples" guideline, but as her claim is such a controversial one, you might have found it more convincing if she had provided more examples.

### Typicality

Is the viciousness described by Enough Already *typical* of men?

- Look at the first set of examples in paragraph 1. Is the criminal behaviour described in the daily newspaper *typical* of men? The writer implies that it is characteristic of *all* men ("What is wrong with men?"), but doesn't prove that this is true or even that it is true for the majority of men. All we can conclude



from her examples is that *some* men commit criminal acts -- but so do some women, for that matter.

- The second example suggests that men, in general, are aggressive drivers (par. 2). We know that Enough Already is referring to men in general because she concludes her example with “Women don’t do things like [punch other drivers in the face]”, implying that, conversely, all men do. Do Enough Already’s observations of several men waving fists at other drivers and one man punching another driver prove that this behaviour is *typical* of men? No. It suggests that such behaviour is true of *some* men, but whether a majority or minority, we don’t know.

### **Accuracy**

Is the information used by Enough Already as evidence *true*?

- With regard to Enough Already’s first example, we can agree from experience that it is possible to read daily about violent criminal acts performed by men. But, can’t we read about violent acts performed by women, too? Is Enough Already suppressing evidence that women are also capable of violence? Enough Already could improve this example by reading, say, the *Globe and Mail* every day for a week, and comparing the number of reports of violent crimes by male perpetrators to the number of reports by female perpetrators. If there are more reports on violent crimes perpetrated by males, she could suggest that “men are more likely to commit violent crimes than women.”
- Enough Already’s second example of vicious male drivers is taken from her personal observations. As it is a first-hand account, we’re inclined to believe that it is true, but we’d be less inclined if, say, “a friend of a friend” witnessed the altercation at the red light. However, Enough Already undercuts her example by stating that “Women [drivers] don’t do things like [male drivers do].” An issue is rarely black and white; women drivers have been known to behave inappropriately!
- Example 3 is problematic, however, for it is presented as a “fact,” but we have no idea where Enough Already got the information. Enough Already is more likely to convince us that the fact is true if she mentions her source and her source is a reliable one, such as a current criminology textbook rather than a friend who “heard it somewhere.”

### **Relevance**

Is Enough Already’s thesis relevant to the evidence? In other words, does Enough Already’s thesis follow logically from her examples? Enough Already’s thesis is that male viciousness is responsible for many social problems. The first two examples

suggest that *some* men are vicious, but Enough Already's claim is that *all* men are vicious. Thus, the thesis is not relevant to the first two examples.

Let's assume that the third example is accurate. It suggests that many men are involved in criminal activity and therefore go to prison, but it does not state whether this activity is violent or aggressive (fraud, for example, doesn't necessarily involve aggression). Thus, Enough Already's claim that male viciousness is responsible for many social ills is *not* strongly supported by the example that male prisons are full. How could Enough Already improve the example? By including statistics that suggest that *most* male prisoners are incarcerated for violent crimes.

### Conclusion and recommendations

After applying STAR test, we must conclude that Enough Already's thesis is *not* acceptably strong. She erroneously assumes that what is true of some men and women is true of all men and women, and not one example supports her thesis! How would you suggest that she improve her argument?

Enough Already should revise the sentences that suggest erroneously that what is true of some men and women is true of all. She should also modify her thesis to suit her examples: "*Although* some women are vicious, many social problems are caused by men *because* they are more likely to be vicious." Note that this recommended thesis is written in the although/because form, which would allow Enough Already to acknowledge opposing points of view.

**REMEMBER...**

*One criterion* → *Two or more criteria*

*One thesis* → *Two or more theses*

## 7.6 Your Turn: Applying the STAR Test

To follow is an adaptation of an anonymous e-mail message that was sent to all students, staff and faculty at an Ontario university during a strike over proposed wage cuts for part-time food and maintenance employees. The e-mail responds to some claims that were supposedly made by the striking union. Read the e-mail message, then answer the questions that follow.

**To: Everyone at the University of XYZ**

**Subject: Something important**

**ATTENTION STUDENTS, STAFF, AND FACULTY!!!**

**The University belongs to the students and we will not stand to have our academic year jeopardized by ANYONE!!!**

**We will not tolerate being bullied by Union X any longer!**

**Remember we are 14,000 strong!**

**Union X lies:**

1. **At \$13+/hour, Union X's part-time employees are the lowest paid on campus -- WRONG!**

**Library students \$6.85**

**Computer Centre students \$7.50 to \$8.00**

**Teaching Assistants \$7.00 to \$10.00 depending on faculty**

**People doing the same jobs as Union X workers at other universities receive at MOST \$8/hour!**

2. **Students support Union X -- WRONG!**

**We don't even tolerate the strike -- look at the various student clean-ups that were organized to pick up garbage scattered by the strikers in order to pressure the Board of Health to close down the university!**

3. **Students are responsible for the vandalism on campus -- WRONG!**

**Union X's members have been witnessed egging buildings, drinking on the picket line, throwing nails in driveways, threatening death to students, throwing large amounts of garbage on campus, putting up signs saying that classes are cancelled, and calling in a bomb threat.**

### **To do**

For the purpose of this exercise, let's assume that the thesis of the e-message is "Striker behaviour is placing the academic year in jeopardy." (This thesis is drawn from the first few sentences of the e-mail as well as from paragraphs 2 and 3.)

1. Who is the writer's audience?
2. To help convince the audience, does the writer treat them with respect and acknowledge their opposing points of view?

3. Is the thesis an acceptably strong one? Why or why not? (To answer these questions, you should apply the STAR criteria to EACH of the three “sub-claims” that are boldfaced in the e-mail message.)

## 7.7 Discussion

1. *Who is the writer’s audience?*

The writer addressed the e-mail to all students, staff and faculty at the university. This suggests that the audience is all students, staff and faculty who disagree that striker behaviour is placing the academic year in jeopardy.

2. *To help convince the audience, does the writer treat them with respect and acknowledge their points of view?*

The writer says that the union is “bullying” students. He or she also presents three of the union’s viewpoints as “lies” to be exposed. Being called “bullies” and “liars” would not be taken too kindly by those who support the union; it’s not likely that the writer’s audience would be receptive to the message. The writer is more likely to convince his or her audience if he or she approaches them with respect. For instance, the writer could argue that, to pressure management to settle, a faction of the union is harassing non-strikers and presenting misleading information to win public support.

3. *Is the thesis an acceptably strong one? Why or why not? (To answer these questions, you should apply the STAR criteria to EACH of the writer’s three sub-claims.)*

According to the STAR test, “The behaviour of strikers is jeopardizing the students’ academic year” is *not* an acceptably strong thesis. Although, in general, the writer offers sufficient examples, the examples erroneously present the strikers as “bad” and the students as “good” by suggesting that the behaviour of *some* strikers (vandalism; see sub-claim 3) and students (opposition to strike; see sub-claim 2) is typical of *all* strikers and students. Furthermore, the thesis does not follow logically from the three sub-claims (relevance) -- not one of the three sub-claims proves that the union’s behaviour is jeopardizing the academic year. Moreover, the accuracy of the examples is hard to accept, particularly because most of the examples for the third sub-claim are not relevant to the sub-claim (e.g., drinking and threats are not considered vandalism) and because the e-mail message as a whole is poorly reasoned.

*Hint:* If you need clarification of any points expressed in the above summary, see section 7.8 (“Sample Analysis”). It applies the STAR criteria to each of the three sub-claims in the e-mail message. The above summary was composed from the conclusions and recommendations made in section 7.8.

4. *What three recommendations would you make to the writer to improve his or her argument MOST? Here’s my list.*
- (I) To make the audience more receptive to his or her argument, the writer should avoid name calling (“bullies,” “liars”).
  - (ii) The writer should correct the fallacy that what is true for some strikers or students is true for all. Not all strikers would be vandals. Not all students would be unsupportive of the strikers.
  - (iii) The writer should revise the (implied) thesis so that it follows logically from the sub-claims. For example, “Although most strikers seem to be following the guidelines for strike conduct in their collective agreement, a minority is presenting misleading information to win public support as well as behaving inappropriately.”

## 7.8 Sample Analysis

If you had difficulty applying the STAR test to the e-mail message, this section might be helpful. It applies the STAR test to each of the three sub-claims. The summary in section 7.7 (question 3) was composed from the conclusions and recommendations made in this section.

If after reading this section, you still have questions regarding the STAR test in general or the e-mail example in particular, discuss them with the instructor.

### Sub-claim 1

*Sub-claim (implied):* Students are the lowest-paid employees on campus, not Union X’s part-time employees.

*Sufficiency:* The writer provides four examples to prove that students are the lowest-paid employees on campus, which is a reasonable number. (The last example is irrelevant, but remember that here we are looking at the *number* of examples, not the content of the examples.)

*Typicality:* We could be confident that the examples are typical rather than extreme if we knew the answers to the following questions: Are the wages cited by

the writer typical of student wages or are they the *lowest* wages paid students on campus? Are there any students doing the same job as Union X members? If so, how much do they earn?

**Accuracy:** We have to trust the writer that his or her quotes of student wages are true. We'd be more likely to trust the evidence if the writer provided a means for us to verify the facts. For example, he or she could easily have mentioned the source of the wage information, whether it's his or her experience (e.g., "I am a student employed on campus, and I earn...") or an authority ("The Cashier's Office indicates that part-time student employees earn..."). By the way, does the fact that the message was anonymous affect your decision to "trust" the writer?

**Relevance:** The last example of wages at other universities is irrelevant, as the sub-claim concerns employees on a particular campus, not those at other campuses. With regard to the remaining three examples, is it fair to compare non-unionized, temporary student workers to unionized, permanent staff members? The union workers are solely employees, whereas the other workers have the primary relationship of students and a secondary relationship of employees. They don't get to be employees unless they are students. Thus, the examples are not relevant to the sub-claim.

**Conclusion and recommendations:** The writer's examples are not relevant to the sub-claim, and therefore the sub-claim is not acceptably strong. The writer could salvage the sub-claim by giving examples of part-time *non-student* employees on campus who are paid less than part-time Union X employees (*if* these employees exist).

## **Sub-claim 2**

**Sub-claim:** Students don't support Union X.

**Sufficiency:** The writer gives only one example to demonstrate that students do not support Union X. The sub-claim would be more convincing if the writer gave a few more examples.

**Typicality:** The writer argues that, contrary to the claims of Union X, students do *not* support Union X. The writer uses student clean-up groups as proof for this sub-claim. However, were the students who cleaned up the litter representative (typical) of all students on campus? The writer has made the error of assuming that *all* students do not support Union X -- this is obviously not true, as the writer addressed the e-mail to students in hopes of winning over those students who didn't share his or her position! The writer is suppressing or overlooking the fact

that some students *do* support the striking union. Accordingly, sub-claim 2 is faulty because the writer assumes that the behaviour of *some* students is typical of *all* students.

**Accuracy:** This sub-claim would have more weight if the writer mentioned how many clean-ups were organized, by whom, and with how many participants. It doesn't provide much support for the sub-claim that "students do not support the union" if only two or three clean-ups occurred with only a few students participating (remember, there are 14,000 students at University XYZ!). Moreover, there isn't much support for the sub-claim if the clean-ups were organized by Resident Assistants who were required to collect garbage from the dormitories during the strike.

**Relevance:** Does the example support the sub-claim that students do not support Union X? At the very most, the example suggests that *maybe* some student don't support the strike, but not all.

**Conclusion and recommendations:** The writer could strengthen the sub-claim by clarifying that *some* students (not all) don't tolerate the strike, and providing *several* examples that indicate *clearly* that this is so. For example, did some students participate in demonstrations or sign petitions protesting the strike?

### **Relevance of sub-claims to thesis**

The central claim or thesis of the e-mail message is "The behaviour of the strikers is placing the students' academic year in jeopardy." Does this thesis follow logically from the three sub-claims?

- According to our previous analysis, *sub-claim 1* is faulty because it compares student employees to permanent employees, apples to oranges. (Even if the comparison *were* acceptable, the fact that students, not Union X part-timers, are the lowest paid on campus, doesn't prove that students are about to lose their academic year due to striker behaviour.)
- *Sub-claim 2* is that students do not support Union X. Does this sub-claim prove that students are about to lose their academic year due to striker behaviour? No. However, part of the evidence given to support the sub-claim is that students picked up litter scattered by strikers in their efforts to close the university. Accordingly, the writer could have rephrased the sub-claim so that it supported his or her thesis: "Students support Union X's attempts to close down the university by spreading garbage on campus. **WRONG!** Some students have organized clean-up groups."

- *Sub-claim 3* is that students are not responsible for the vandalism on campus, and that the strikers are. Does this prove that students are about to lose their academic year due to striker behaviour? No. However, some of the examples (erroneously cited as examples of “vandalism”) *do* suggest that strikers are preventing students from attending classes -- through death and bomb threats, placing nails where tires are sure to be punctured, and posting signs that say classes are cancelled. So that sub-claim 3 supports the claim that students are about to lose their academic year due to striker behaviour, the writer should rephrase the sub-claim: “Students are harassing strikers while they picket. **WRONG!** Some strikers are preventing students from attending classes.”

*Conclusion and recommendations:* Sub-claim 1 should be deleted from the e-mail message, and sub-claims 2 and 3 should be revised so that they support the thesis.

## 7.9 An Essay Outline

Take another look at the e-mail message in section 7.6. Let’s consider it to be an outline for an argumentative essay. Say the thesis of the essay is “In some ways, Union X is misleading the faculty, staff and students of University XYZ.” Each of the three sub-claims in the e-mail message could provide the basis of a body paragraph.

Here’s a sample body paragraph based on sub-claim 3 (notice I’ve used my creative licence to add some details that are not provided in the e-mail outline):

**In press releases, literature distributed on campus, and meetings with the university administration, Union X maintains that students, not strikers, are responsible for the vandalism on campus. [Sub-claim/topic sentence:] Whereas some students may be vandals, several acts of vandalism have positively been connected with the strikers. [Evidence:] For example, yesterday, I witnessed a striker scratch the paint of a car parked in one of the staff parking lots. Also, the student newspaper has reported several incidents of strikers throwing eggs at buildings and strewing garbage in classrooms and across campus. As the student newspaper has covered the perspectives of both the union and the administration, it is unlikely that the reports are fictitious and merely an attempt to sway public sympathy from the strikers. [Concluding sentence:] Although it is only a minority of strikers who are responsible for the aforementioned acts of vandalism and it is important for the union to retain public sympathy, it is unethical for the union to mislead people into thinking that the students are solely responsible.**



## **To do**

1. Using the e-mail message in section 7.6 as a possible outline, write an argumentative essay that includes an introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. Your thesis is “In some ways, Union X is misleading the faculty, staff and students of University XYZ.” (You have creative licence to improve the examples provided in the e-mail outline.)
2. Evaluate your essay against the checklist in the next section.

## **7.10 Improving a Substantiation Argument**

This checklist summarizes some of the ideas presented in this lesson and in Lesson 6, and can help you revise or suggest revisions for a substantiation argument.

### **Accommodation of audience (See Lesson 6)**

- Does the writer show respect for his or her audience by using neutral language? (For example, if opposing religious education in public schools, does the writer refer to supporters as adherents or believers rather than fanatics or bigots?)
- Does the writer acknowledge ideas that support opposing viewpoints rather than suppressing evidence to the contrary?
- Does the writer avoid introducing a viewpoint as the one his or her audience would naturally adopt (e.g., “We distance education students believe that....”)?

### **Sufficiency**

- Does the writer provide sufficient examples to convince the audience of his or her point of view? (Ask this question of each sub-claim/topic sentence in the essay.)

### **Typicality**

- Are the writer’s examples typical of the issue being arguing about, rather than “exceptions to the rule”? (Ask this question of each sub-claim/topic sentence in the essay.)

### **Accuracy**

- Where necessary, does the writer identify his or her sources to avoid plagiarism and allow readers to verify the facts? (e.g., “A study conducted by Continuing Education indicates...”)
- When using eye-witness accounts as evidence, does the writer rely on first-hand rather than second- or third-hand testimony?
- Does the writer avoid using facts from sources that have something to gain from the facts being accepted? (e.g., To prove that smoking does not cause cancer, does the writer quote statistics from a medical journal rather those from a major tobacco company?)

### **Relevance**

- Do each of the writer’s sub-claims (topic sentences) follow logically from the evidence given to support it?
- Does the writer’s central claim (thesis) follow logically from his or her sub-claims (topic sentences)?

### **Conclusion**

This lesson introduced you to the STAR test, a method of deciding whether the reasoning of an argument is sound. Most of the examples to which you applied the STAR test in this lesson were substantiation arguments. A substantiation argument is a text that proves something is true without passing judgment on that thing (it doesn’t prove something as good or bad, or better or worse than something else).

Outside of this course, you will probably never be asked to write a “substantiation” essay. However, when preparing university assignments, you should be able to recognize a substantiation thesis when you compose one. Then, you can use the checklist in section 7.10 to improve your assignment before submitting it to the instructor for grading.

### **Assigned Reading & Review Exercises**

Turn to the Textbook Key and complete the instructions for Lesson 7.

# Answer Guidelines for Lesson 7

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## Answer Guidelines for 7.1

1. *Due to conflicts with their work schedules, more full-time on-campus students are enrolling in distance courses.*

This is a substantiation claim because it argues cause (scheduling conflicts) and effect (distance education enrolments). It answers the question, “What consequences do the scheduling conflicts have?”

2. *Doctors should not prescribe antibiotics to patients with viral infections.*

The key word “should” should have told you that this is a recommendation claim. It answers the question, “What should doctors not do about viral infections?”

3. *Researchers and experienced writers report that the process of writing includes several overlapping stages.*

This is a substantiation claim because it promises to define the writing process and categorize it into several stages. It answers the question, “What is the process of writing?”

4. *An argument is a text that establishes or supports a particular viewpoint.*

This is a substantiation claim because it defines argument. It answers the question, “What is an argument?”

5. *Her piano playing is poor because it is mechanical and without emotion.*

This is an evaluation claim because it labels her piano playing as “poor.” It answers the question, “Is her piano playing good or bad?”

If you had difficulty with this exercise, review sections 6.2 and 6.5 of Lesson 6.

## Answer Guidelines for 7.4

### Paragraph A

*Claim (topic sentence):* The topic sentence is the third sentence of the example, “Television commercials directed toward young adults usually feature an extremely pretty girl or good-looking guy.” We know this is a substantiation claim because it promises that the paragraph as a whole will prove that the statement is true.

**Sufficiency:** Are there sufficient examples to support the claim? The writer provides one example of one television commercial. Although most of her readers would probably be able to think of their own examples (Canadians watch a lot of TV), the paragraph would be more convincing if the writer included, say, two more examples. They wouldn't have to be long; one to two sentences would describe each commercial adequately.

**Typicality:** Is the Noxema commercial a typical example of commercial directed toward young people or an extreme one? The writer states that good looks have nothing to do with the product being sold, Noxema skin cream. However, isn't Noxema supposed to give you clear, attractive skin? Is it inappropriate to use attractive actors to sell products that are supposed to improve your looks? The writer's claim would be more convincing if he or she gave examples of commercials that use attractive actors to sell products that aren't directly related to one's appearance, such as video games.

**Accuracy:** Is the Noxema commercial described accurately? If you remember the commercial, you'll be able to answer this question. Otherwise, you won't be able to apply this criterion to the example.

**Relevance:** Does the Noxema example prove the claim that TV commercials directed toward young adults usually feature an extremely pretty girl or good-looking guy? Yes.

**Conclusion and recommendations:** The claim is not acceptably strong because the one example given to support it is of a cosmetic product, and looks are directly related to selling cosmetics. The writer could strengthen the claim if he or she used several examples of commercials selling products that are not directly related to appearance yet use extremely attractive actors.

## **Paragraph B**

**Claim (topic sentence):** The topic sentence is the third sentence of the paragraph, "The state of cleanliness of our two bedrooms is drastically different." We know that this is a substantiation claim because it promises that the paragraph will compare the physical condition of the two bedrooms.

**Relevance:** You might have found it difficult to apply the criteria of sufficiency, typicality and accuracy to this example. This is because the evidence the writer gives to contrast the state of cleanliness of both rooms is not relevant — the writer caricatures the *feelings* experienced by someone walking into each bedroom (e.g., relaxation versus terror) rather than providing concrete evidence that one room is

cleaner than the other (e.g., the writer hides dirty laundry in a hamper; his brother throws it on the floor).

**Conclusion and recommendations:** The claim is weak because it is not supported by the examples. To strengthen the claim and convince the reader that his room is cleaner than his brothers, the writer should use examples related to cleanliness rather than feeling (e.g., you could bounce a coin off of the writer’s well-made bed, whereas the brother’s bedclothes are piled in a musty heap; the writer empties his or her garbage pail regularly and discards food scraps in the kitchen garbage, but the brother’s room is littered with empty pizza boxes and pop cans, etc). This doesn’t mean that the writer’s exaggerated description of the atmosphere of the two rooms should be deleted, but simply that the writer should provide concrete examples of the different state of cleanliness of each bedroom.

### **Paragraph C**

**Claim (topic sentence):** The topic sentence is the fourth sentence of the example, “Luckily, many restaurants list vegetarian dishes on their menus, so I’m able to order around my meat allergies, but my milk allergy makes dining out very challenging!”

**Sufficiency:** The writer meets our “three examples” guideline by providing three examples of difficulties ordering milk-free dishes — the incorrect information provided by servers in general, the muffin batter incident and the chef incident. The McDonald’s example illustrates the difficulty caused by *all* of the writer’s food allergies — the writer is also allergic to some meats — but the topic sentence makes it clear that it is milk allergy the real challenge.

**Typicality:** Although you may not be allergic to milk, from your dining experience, you probably can think of few restaurants (if any) that promote milk-free meals. As a result, we can reasonably assume that the incidents described by the writer are not extreme ones.

**Accuracy:** We can reasonably assume that the examples are accurate because they are first-hand testimony, which is more reliable than hearsay (ever play the game of Telephone)?

**Relevance:** The examples support the claim — all three demonstrate the challenge presented by the writer’s milk allergy when he or she when dines out.

**Conclusion:** The paragraph passes the STAR test; its claim is acceptably strong.

## **Notes**

1.Fulkerson, 1996.

2.Fulkerson, 1996.

# LESSON 8

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## EVALUATION ARGUMENTS

...arguing about ethics is not the exclusive province of religion or law....  
we all have beliefs about what is right, proper, or of value  
which [you] can appeal to in an evaluation.<sup>1</sup>

### Reminders

- Remember to set aside time to work on your assignments so that you will be able to submit them by the due dates.
- I recommend that you complete this lesson over several sittings during this next week. For instance, you could complete Part I on one day, Part II on another day, the review exercise on a third day, and the assigned textbook reading on a fourth day.

### Introduction

You're sprawled in front of the television, watching two critics evaluate a well-known actor's latest movie. Both critics give the movie two thumbs waaaaaay down, but for different reasons. Whose rationale do you find more convincing?

**Critic 1:** I didn't like his latest movie because I don't like him and I don't like westerns.

**Critic 2:** I didn't like his latest movie because the plot was predictable and the characters were recognizable.

You may have found the second statement to be more convincing. Critic 2 supports her critique of the movie with reasons that she feels that you would share or could be convinced to accept: the movie has a predictable plot and recognizable characters. On the other hand, Critic 1's statement expresses a personal opinion, a matter of personal taste. The reasons he gives for not liking the movie are entirely personal and emotional: "I don't like him" and "I don't like westerns." If you want to convince an audience, you must argue from external grounds (like Critic 2), rather than from personal grounds (like Critic 1).<sup>2</sup>

Say the second critic wrote a movie review arguing that "His latest movie is a poor one because the plot is predictable and the characters are recognizable." We would call his review an **evaluation argument**. As you may recall from Lesson 7, an evaluation argument judges the value of something; it uses labels like "good," "right," "ugly," and "unethical." This lesson will suggest ways to effectively evaluate different subjects, like people, things and actions. It will also provide a checklist to help you revise your evaluation argument or suggest changes for the evaluation argument of another writer.

## Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- decide on the best approach for evaluating a thing, person, act, abstraction or ethical problem;
- evaluate a subject using criteria that are acceptable to your audience rather than wholly personal;
- support your criteria when necessary by appealing to an audience’s values, to an authority or to a consequence, or by creating a comparison;
- explain several different ways to structure an evaluation essay;
- write an evaluation essay;
- improve an evaluation essay using the checklist provided at the end of this lesson.

## Part I: Different Approaches to Evaluation

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### 8.1 Getting Started

Turn to the Reader, and read Sample H, “Analysis of ‘The Nuclear Winter.’” Then, answer the following questions:

1. What subject is the writer evaluating? (*Hint: See the title of the sample.*)
2. a. What is the purpose of the thing being evaluated by the writer of the sample?  
b. How well does the thing fulfil its purpose?  
c. Is the purpose worth fulfilling?<sup>3</sup>

### 8.2 Using Purpose to Evaluate

The writer is evaluating Carl Sagan’s essay “The Nuclear Winter.” (If you’re not familiar with Sagan’s scientific writings, you may have read his novel, *Contact*, from which the 1997 movie starring Jodie Foster was adapted.) To evaluate the essay, the writer answers the three questions posed in item 2 above:

- a. *What is the purpose of “The Nuclear Winter”?*

From the introductory paragraph of Sample H, we see that the purpose of Sagan’s essay is to help the reader recognize the devastation of nuclear war.

- b. *How well does the essay fulfil its purpose?*

According to the writer of Sample H, the essay does a good job of helping the reader recognize the devastation of nuclear war. She states this clearly in the thesis of the sample (the last sentence of paragraph 1): “His use of shocking details, strong diction, disturbing images, and supporting facts all presented in a clear and organized manner *effectively awaken* the reader to the urgency and seriousness of this deadly topic” (italics mine).

- c. *Is the purpose worth fulfilling?*



In other words, is helping others recognize the devastation of nuclear war a worthwhile thing to do? The writer of Sample H thinks so, as becomes clear in the concluding paragraph of the sample. The writer concludes that the fear evoked in the readers by the essay may be enough to inspire the reader to help try to prevent a nuclear war, which is why she recommends that it be read by anyone who “cares about life on this planet.”

### Notes

The writer sets out the title of Sagan's essay in "quotation marks." In your writing, you should set out in quotation marks all essay titles, film titles, and the titles of articles from magazines, newspapers and academic journals.

You should *italicize* or underline the titles of books, magazines, newspapers and academic journals.

More on this in Lesson 13.

## 8.3 Preview: Using Criteria

Let's take another look at the thesis of Sample H:

[Sagan's] use of shocking details, strong diction, disturbing images, and supporting facts all presented in a clear and organized manner effectively awoken the reader to the urgency and seriousness of this deadly topic.

This thesis identifies five things Carl Sagan does to awaken the reader to the seriousness of nuclear war. The writer explores these five things in the remainder of the sample:

1. shocking details (see paragraph 2 of Sample H)
2. strong diction (see paragraph 5)
3. disturbing images (par. 3, 4)
4. supporting facts (par. 6)
5. clear and organized presentation (par. 7).

In other words, what the writer has done is to present five criteria that she feels make the “The Nuclear Winter” an effective essay, and that she feels her audience will agree with (or that she can convince her audience to agree with). More on **criteria** (standards of evaluation) later in the lesson.

## 8.4 Another Try

Let's look at another evaluation essay. Turn to the Reader. Read Sample I, “Animal Experimentation,” and then answer the following questions.

1. What subject is the writer evaluating?
2. a. What is the purpose of the thing being evaluated by the writer?

- b. How well does the thing fulfil its purpose?
- c. Is the purpose *worth* fulfilling?

## 8.5 Discussion

From the title of Sample I, you may have recognized immediately that the writer is evaluating **animal experimentation**. She identifies the **purpose** of animal experimentation as helping to advance new drugs, treatments and surgeries that can save human lives (see paragraph 1, sentence 5; par. 2, sent. 5 & 9; and par. 9, sent. 3 & 5).

The writer implies that animal experimentation **fulfills its purpose well** by giving examples of significant treatments that have resulted from animal experimentation, such as insulin, chemotherapy, and the vaccine for rabies (par. 7). Moreover, the writer suggests that animal experimentation is the best way to finding such treatments because human experimentation is out of the question (par. 2, sent. 8), and because animal experimentation is more effective than alternative methods such as computer models and cell cultures (par. 4).

Is the purpose of animal experimentation *worth* fulfilling? The writer obviously thinks so. For example, in the introductory paragraph, she calls animal experimentation “vital” and “essential.” But, there is a large group of people who disagree with her, and these are the people she is trying to convince. To convince them, she first acknowledges their arguments against animal experimentation, and then refute these arguments. For example, in the concluding paragraph the writer acknowledges that the animals do feel pain, but suggests that if a choice has to be made between the life of a rat and that of a child, it is better for the rat to suffer.

## 8.6 A Word of Caution

So far, we’ve examined an evaluation of two subjects in terms of their *purpose* — Sagan’s essay and animal experimentation. Using purpose to evaluate becomes problematic for those subjects with purposes that are controversial. For instance, the abortion pill, a product manufactured in France, achieves its purpose with a high degree of success. But does that make it a good product? Is its purpose worth fulfilling or is its purpose acceptable?<sup>4</sup> It would be a mistake to write an essay that evaluates the abortion pill and devotes discussion to how well the pill achieves its purpose, as this won’t convince the audience who believes abortion is unacceptable. In other words, arguing that the abortion pill achieves abortions effectively won’t convince an audience that the pill is a good product if the audience believes that the purpose of the abortion pill is *not* worth fulfilling. The same goes for evaluating the morality of a subject like animal experimentation. You have a greater chance of convincing those who think animal experimentation is unethical *not* by concentrating on how well it does its job, but by concentrating on its effects (consequences) and why these effects are acceptable.

Note that the writer of Sample I does *not* devote large part of her essay to explaining how well animal experimentation works. She devotes only one body paragraph (par. 4) to showing how animal experimentation works better than

other medical research methods, and she only implies that animal experimentation fulfils its purpose well (by giving examples of significant treatments that have resulted from animal experimentation in par. 7). She knows that her audience thinks animal experimentation is morally wrong. As a result, she discusses the consequences (results, effects) of animal experimentation, and addresses the relationship between these consequences and the values held by her audience.

### **To do**

See if you can identify some of the consequences of animal experimentation discussed by the writer of Sample I, as well as the values held by her audience. Keep your answer handy.

I suggest using the three “purpose” questions introduced in section 8.2 to evaluate things with purposes that are *not* controversial (like a personal computer or a sports car rather than the abortion pill or a suicide machine). Using a different approach will help you evaluate other subjects more effectively. I will introduce two alternative approaches to evaluation in the next section.

## **8.7 Three Methods of Evaluation**

1. You can evaluate a subject in terms of how well it fulfils its **purpose**. This is the approach taken by the writer of Sample H, “Analysis of ‘The Nuclear Winter’.” She asked herself the three key questions posed in section 8.2 (What is the purpose of the thing being evaluated by the writer? How well does the thing fulfil its purpose? Is the purpose *worth* fulfilling?) and wrote an evaluation essay that provided answers to the questions. Using purpose is an effective way to evaluate the usefulness of things with purposes that are not controversial, like a new software program or grammar workbook.
2. You can measure the subject of the evaluation against an **ideal definition** of what it ought to be, a standard of perfection for its type. For example, say you wish to argue “My professor is a good distance education instructor.” To argue this effectively, you must look at the criteria of good teacher (e.g., accessible during office hours, sets fair exams and assignments, evaluates and returns assignments promptly), and demonstrate how your professor meets these criteria. More on using criteria later in the lesson.
3. You can evaluate a subject by exploring its **consequences** (results, effects) showing how these consequences comply with or contradict certain social values.<sup>5</sup> For instance, the writer of Sample I, “Animal Experimentation,” argues that animal experimentation has resulted in medical advancement and prolonged human lives. She suggests that although animal experimentation contradicts the value of animal rights, it complies with the value of human life, which is the “higher” or more important value of the two. (Compare this example to the notes you jotted in for section 8.6.)

## 8.8 Subjects for Evaluation

An evaluation argument may evaluate:<sup>6</sup>

1. *things* — for example, a consumer product, a teacher evaluation form, a book, a job performance evaluation, and so on.
2. *people* — either in their roles (Mr. X is a poor doctor; Ms. Y is good teacher) or their character (Hitler was evil).
3. *acts* — such as events, policies and decisions.
4. *abstractions* — such as lifestyles (country or city living, raising your own food, pursuing a career) or institutions (marriage, the church, the Supreme Court). Abstractions include things, people and acts. For example, the institution of the university includes textbooks, Web pages, instructor evaluations and application forms (things); students, faculty and staff (people); and guest lectures, admissions policies, sports events, and study skills seminars (acts).
5. *ethical problems*, which are not cases of right versus wrong action, but of two positive values in conflict. An evaluation of an ethical problem weights one value over another. For example, say you're evaluating the Amish's refusal of government-mandated secondary education on the grounds that any education above eighth grade conflicts with their practice of religion. You might decide that the value of religious freedom is more important than education.

## 8.9 Finding Ideas for an Evaluation

Figure 8.1 provides some key questions that will help you gather ideas for your evaluation essays. You can use your answers to decide on arguments and subarguments for an essay that evaluates a thing, act, person, abstraction or ethical problem. Remember from Lesson 2 that asking key questions is a prewriting technique!

Figure 8.1 should not only help you find ideas for an evaluation essay, but also help you evaluate a finished draft. For example, say you use purpose to evaluate your expository writing textbook (see the first set of questions in Figure 8.1). After writing your book review, you can reread what you've written and ask yourself whether your book review (1) articulates the purpose of the book, (2) provides criteria against which you've evaluated the book, and (3) makes a judgement about whether the book's purpose is worth fulfilling, that is, judges whether the book is useful for its audience.

**Figure 8.1. Questions to ask in the prewriting stage of an evaluation essay.**

<p><b>Purpose</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the purpose of X?</li> <li>2. How well does X fulfil its purpose? (Establish criteria.)</li> <li>3. Is the purpose worth fulfilling?</li> </ol>	<p>These questions are useful for evaluating a thing with a purpose that is not controversial (e.g., a personal computer rather than the abortion pill; the latest Honda motorcycle rather than a suicide machine).</p>
<p><b>Ideal Definition</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the criteria of the ideal X?</li> <li>2. How well does X stand up against these criteria?</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Consequence</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the likely consequences of X?</li> <li>2. What accepted values does X comply with or contradict?</li> </ol>	<p>Remember, an ethical problem places two positive values in conflict, and so you will have to decide which value is more important and establish criteria that will convince your audience to agree with you.</p>

### 8.10 Quick Quiz

1. Identify each of the following subjects as a thing, person, action/event, abstraction, or ethical problem.<sup>7</sup>
2. How would you evaluate each of the following? Using purpose, ideal definition, consequence, or a combination of these?
3. Which criteria would you use to evaluate a), d), g), i) and j)? Identify at least four criteria for each.

Compare your answers to those provided at the end of the lesson.

- a. a good distance education instructor
- b. a rock concert
- c. adolescence for parents of adolescents
- d. photographing celebrities when they're not "working"
- e. a competent server in a restaurant
- f. a sleeping bag
- g. a labour strike
- h. distance education for distance education students

- i. forgoing medical attention for your child for religious reasons
- j. a personal computer

## 8.11 What if I'm Comparing Two Subjects?

Say you're arguing that Jerry Seinfeld is a better comedian than Jim Carrey (who is, incidentally, a Canadian). You've decided to use ideal definition, that is, to answer the following questions adapted from Figure 8.1:

1. What are the characteristics of the ideal comedian?
2. How well does Jerry Seinfeld stand up against these characteristics? How well does Jim Carrey stand up against these characteristics?

You can judge whoever has more of the ideal qualities of a "comedian" to be the better one.

Note that this evaluation would require you to **weight** or rank the criteria of a comedian. In other words, if you find physical comedy to be more effective than intellectual wit, you will judge Jim Carrey to be the better comedian. If you find intellectual wit more effective than physical comedy, you will judge Jerry Seinfeld to be the better comedian. When you compose your evaluation argument, you may not only have to defend your criteria, but also your weighting because your audience may not agree that physical comedy is more important than intellectual wit.<sup>8</sup>

## Part II: Using Criteria in an Evaluation

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### 8.12 Recap

As discussed in Part I of this lesson, when evaluating a subject, it is effective to find some criteria against which to measure that subject. For instance, if you are evaluating the effectiveness of these lesson notes, you could establish the criteria of an effective distance education lesson (e.g., includes exercises so that students can practice what they learn) and then examine how well the lesson meets those criteria. The key questions listed in Figure 8.1 as well as other prewriting techniques discussed in Lesson 2 can help you discover criteria for use in evaluation essays.

You may not be able to use every criterion you come up with, and so you should choose the ones that are most likely to convince your audience. If you are not confident that your criteria are accepted by your audience, you will need to defend or support them. If you claim that your friend is a “good student,” you would probably not have to defend your criteria of a good student to your classmates; they will likely be familiar and accepting of them (good grades, good attendance, etc.). But what do you do when your audience doesn’t accept your criteria (or how you’ve weighted them) automatically? There’s a few things you can do to support your criteria.<sup>9</sup>

You can have several *criteria*, but only one *criterion*.

### 8.13 Ways to Support your Criteria

You can provide support for your criteria (standards of judgment) by<sup>10</sup>:

1. *Appealing to an audience’s values* or sense of right and wrong, such as arguing that it is unethical for the paparazzi to photograph the “private lives” of celebrities because, like other human beings, celebrities have a right to their privacy. Or, you might argue that it is ethical for the paparazzi to photograph celebrities because we live in a democracy.
2. *Appealing to an authority*, such as reminding your audience of a famous thinker who shares your view or citing facts from a credible source like the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. For instance, if arguing that the actions of the paparazzi are unethical/ethical, you might quote a statement from a well-known judge who shares your point of view.
3. *Appealing to the consequences*, or good and bad effects, of following your criterion. For example, you might argue that the paparazzi’s actions are unethical because they result in conflict and even injury. Or, you might argue that the paparazzi’s actions are ethical because both the celebrities and photographers benefit: the celebrities gain more publicity, and the photographers make money.

4. *Creating a comparison* to support a criterion. For instance, to convince your audience that the paparazzi's actions are wrong, you might liken them to bounty hunters or hungry mosquitoes. Or, to convince your audience that the paparazzi's actions are ethical, you might compare their pursuit of the ultimate photograph to the competition among athletes for a gold medal.

Let's explore each of these methods of support in turn.

## 8.14 Appealing to Your Audience's Values

One way to support a criterion is to show that it is based on the values your audience holds. With particular audiences, you can appeal to certain values — such as freedom of choice and freedom of speech — as the “right thing.” Can you think of some other values that might be shared by most of your classmates?

- health and fitness
- preservation of the environment
- equality of all Canadians, regardless of race, age, gender, physical disability, religion, etc.
- loyalty to one's family
- adherence to criminal or civil law
- fairness and justice
- academic success
- tradition vs. progress (some classmates may value tradition; others may value change)
- putting your needs over those of others vs. putting others over yourself (self-actualization vs. altruism)<sup>11</sup>

### To do

Turn to Sample B in the Reader which evaluates Dr. Kevorkian's role in assisted suicides. Read paragraph 4.

1. a. Which criterion does the paragraph use to show that Dr. Kevorkian's involvement in patient suicides is wrong? (*Hint: Restate the argument of the paragraph in this manner: “Dr. Kevorkian's assistance in patient suicides is wrong because\_\_\_\_\_.”* The underlined clause should help you identify the criterion that the writer is using to evaluate Dr. Kevorkian's role.)
  - b. Which value does the writer appeal to in order to support this criterion?
  - c. Does the writer convince you with her appeal? Why or why not?
2. Turn to Sample I, “Animal Experimentation,” and reread paragraph 8.
  - a. Which criterion does the writer use to show that animal experimentation is a good thing?
  - b. Which value does the writer appeal to in order to support this criterion?



- c. Does the writer convince you with her appeal? Why or why not?  
Compare your answers to the guidelines provided at the end of the lesson.

## 8.15 Appealing to an Authority

If your audience would not necessarily be convinced by a particular criterion, you may find it helpful to appeal to an authority that supports your view, such as a famous thinker, a religious leader, a great philosopher, the law, or the Charter of Rights.<sup>12</sup>

The following points should help you appeal to an authority effectively.

□ *Do I use unbiased sources?*

Remember that your arguments will have more weight if you appeal to authorities who are not biased; that is, if you appeal to those who don't have something to gain from their information being accepted. For example, if arguing that a particular brand of vitamins is superior to all other brands, quoting test results from *Consumer Reports* magazine would probably carry more weight than quoting the marketing literature of the companies who manufacture the vitamins.

□ *Do I name my authority?*

You should demonstrate that you have nothing to hide and give readers the opportunity to verify your facts by naming your sources. Say "Aristotle argued that..." rather than, "A great philosopher once said...." You should refer to "Dr. Benton of Toronto's Sick Children's Hospital" rather than simply "an Ontario doctor." If you're quoting or paraphrasing a source, you should cite or document the source according to the guidelines of the appropriate style manual. See the Textbook Key for more on documentation methods.

□ *Do I use current sources?*

It's usually best to quote a recent source so that you are gaining the most updated information. However, in some cases you may find it necessary or useful to appeal to a source that been around for many years because it is still an authority on the subject that you are evaluating. One example is the 10 commandments (from the Hebrew Scriptures and the Old Testament of the Bible) which many people value as a moral code even though the commandments are thousands of years old.

□ *Do I appeal to an expert?*

Say you want to argue that one type of cancer treatment is more effective than another. Would you support your arguments with the views of a general practitioner or a cancer specialist? An "authority" speaks on a topic in his or her field of expertise.

### To do

1. There is a difference between appealing to an authority to defend an argument and simply quoting or giving an example from a source. Which of the

following excerpts defends an argument by appealing to an authority? Which simply refers to a source?

2. Look at those excerpts which you have identified as appeals to an authority. How would you improve each of the appeals? (*Hint: See the above checklist.*)

Compare your answers to those provided at the end of the lesson.

- a. Until God answers my questions, I will try to do as it says in the Bible, and "Trust in the Lord with all [my] heart, and lean not on [my] own understanding" (Romans 8:31-39).
- b. One argument that those opposing animal research often pose is that the pain and suffering animals go through is too extreme and severe. They feel that the pain we put these innocent animals through is not worth the advancements that are made. Animal research, however, does not inflict as much pain on these animals as one may think. The animals are taken very good care of in laboratories. In 1985, Congress enacted the Health Research Extension Act, and in the same year, the Animal Welfare Act of 1966 was amended. These laws have encouraged much more efficient use of animals.
- c. There is a significant characteristic to the language of the schizophrenic which reflects his thinking patterns. This characteristic has been called the concrete concept....In the novel, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, we see the phenomenon of concrete thinking in Deborah Blau.
- d. Many schizophrenics identify with the immediate concrete environment around them. Kurt Goldstein, M.D. (Kasanin, 1944) writes about this situation and his experience with it and schizophrenics. He says that this tendency is marked in the schizophrenic to an abnormal degree because this person has such a tenuous identity that is always in fear of impingement from the outside worlds.

## 8.16 Appealing to a Consequence

Another way to defend a criterion to an audience is to appeal to a consequence (a good or bad effect) of following your criterion.

### To do

Look at paragraph 7 in Sample I, "Animal Experimentation."

- a. What is the criterion does the paragraph use to evaluate animal experimentation?
- b. What consequence (result, effect) of following the criterion does the writer appeal to?

Compare your response to that provided at the end of the lesson.

## 8.17 Creating a Comparison

Sometimes you can defend a criterion by comparing it with something that you know is accepted by your audience.

### To do

Read the following paragraph which is taken from a book review that argues that Mr. X's latest novel is "corrupt."

Good literature not only brings pleasure to the reader, but also teaches a moral lesson. For example, just as a parent should point out to a child the rightness or wrongness of an action, so also should a novelist point out to readers the rightness or wrongness of a character's action. Mr. X. does not do this. In fact, his characters are rewarded for their immoral behaviour. Harvey Lopez becomes a millionaire as a result of his Mafia activities, the prostitute and addict Mia marries a client who proves to be a loving husband, and corrupt cop Davies is promoted. On the other hand, those characters who stay on "the straight and narrow" do not meet such happy ends. The politician who refuses to accept Lopez's bribes is assassinated by Lopez's hit man; Mia's sister, who pursues her studies rather than illegal activities, fails her college entrance exams; and Davies' partner is forced off the police force when it becomes apparent that he will reveal Davies' crimes. Mr. X rewards his bad characters and punishes his good characters and, in so doing, promotes unethical values and lifestyles to his readers.

- a. Which criterion does the paragraph use to evaluate Mr. X's novel?
- b. What comparison does the writer use to support his criterion?
- c. Is the comparison effective? Why or why not?

Compare your answers to those provided at the end of the lesson.

## 8.18 Structuring an Evaluation Essay

If you experience difficulty structuring an evaluation essay, you might want to return to this section. No matter what structure you choose, your evaluation essay should provide answers to the appropriate questions posed in Figure 8.1.

1. You can identify your criteria, support any criteria that might be challenged by your audience, and then show the subject that you're evaluating fits the criteria, and so on. This structure is followed by *Consumer Reports* magazine in its evaluations of consumer products.
2. You can introduce a criterion, show how what you're evaluating fits the criterion, then introduce another criterion, show how the subject you're evaluating fits the criterion, and so on.... This is the approach used by writer of Sample H, "Analysis of 'The Nuclear Winter'."
3. You can evaluate a subject without making your criteria explicit. The writer of Sample I, "Animal Experimentation," uses this approach. She introduces an argument from the opposition, refutes it, then moves on to another argument and refutes it, etc. She uses criteria, of course, but unlike the writer of Sample H does not state these criteria clearly (compare the theses of the two samples). Evaluating a subject without making your criteria explicit works well when your audience is familiar with the general issues, such as a review of a new mystery novel written for fans of the genre. However, when you use this structure, you assume your criteria need no clarification or defense. Therefore, if your audience challenges any of the assumptions, you have lost the opportunity to support part of your argument.<sup>13</sup>

## 8.19 Evaluating an Evaluation Essay

The following questions should help you revise an evaluation essay that you have written or suggest revisions for the evaluation essay written by another person. Some of the questions reflect the principles of accommodation that were introduced in Lesson 6 and the STAR test that was introduced in Lesson 7.

### Criteria

- Does the writer evaluate the subject against certain criteria *shared* by the audience rather than using completely personal criteria? (See the film critic example in the lesson introduction.)
- If a criterion is not likely to be accepted by the audience, does the writer *defend* it sufficiently and accurately — by appealing to the audience's values, to

authority, to consequence, or by creating a comparison? (This question applies the sufficiency and accuracy parts of the STAR test. Also, see section 8.13 of this lesson.)

- Are the criteria *appropriate* to the subject being evaluated? (This question applies the typicality and relevance parts of the STAR test.) Say a reviewer of a sitcom writes, “Yes, the sitcom was witty, but it had no deep social significance. It does not help the working class face economic reality.” You should ask whether deep social significance is an appropriate demand to make of a sitcom.<sup>14</sup>
- Does the writer make too severe a judgement based on too minor a criterion or too generous an assessment based on an unimportant criterion? (This question applies the relevance part of the STAR test.) For example, would you accept this favourable evaluation of a deposed dictator? — “True, he slaughtered thousands of his countrymen, but he was a wonderful leader because he was so colourful and did things with such flair!”<sup>15</sup>

### **Accommodation of audience**

- Does the writer show respect for the audience by using neutral language? For example, if evaluating the Amish’s refusal of government-mandated secondary education, does the writer refer to the Amish as “conservative” or “traditional” rather than “backwards” and “primitive”?
- Does the writer acknowledge ideas that support opposing viewpoints rather than suppressing evidence to the contrary?
- Does the writer avoid introducing a viewpoint as the one his or her audience would naturally adopt (e.g., “We Canadians”)?

## **Conclusion**

This lesson introduced you to the evaluation essay. It suggested ways of evaluating a subject, identified some essay structures you could follow or modify, and provided a checklist to help you revise an evaluation essay.

So far, we’ve explored the substantiation essay and the evaluation essay. In the next lesson, we will look at the recommendation essay.

## **Review Exercise**

This exercise will take some time, so you may want to complete it during a separate study period. Please don’t skip the exercise; it will help you retain what you have learned in this lesson and complete your assignments successfully.

Besides, many students enjoy the exercise!

Read the following story and then follow the directions provided.

## The Drawbridge

As he left for a visit to his outlying districts, the jealous Baron warned his pretty wife: "Do not leave the castle while I am gone, or I will punish you severely when I return!"

But as the hours passed, the young Baroness grew lonely, and despite her husband's warning, decided to visit her lover who lived in the countryside nearby.

The castle was located on an island in a wide, fast-flowing river, with a drawbridge linking the island and the land at the narrowest point in the river.

"Surely my husband will not return before dawn," she thought, and ordered her servants to lower the drawbridge and leave it down until she returned.

After spending several pleasant hours with her lover, the Baroness returned to the drawbridge, only to find it blocked by a madman wildly waving a long and cruel knife.

"Do not attempt to cross this bridge, Baroness, or I will kill you," he raved.

Fearing for her life, the Baroness returned to her lover and asked him for help.

"Our relationship is only a romantic one," he said. "I will not help."

The Baroness then sought out a boatman on the river, explained her plight to him, and asked him to take her across the river in his boat.

"I will do it, but only if you can pay my fee of five marks."

"But I have no money with me!" the Baroness protested.

"That is too bad. No money, no ride," the boatman said flatly.

Her fear growing, the Baroness then ran crying to the home of a friend, and after again explaining the situation, begged for enough money to pay the boatman his fee.

"If you had not disobeyed your husband, this would not have happened," the friend said. "I will give you no money."

With dawn approaching and her last resource exhausted, the Baroness returned to the bridge in desperation, attempted to cross to the castle, and was slain by the madman.

## Directions

1. In the above story, there are six characters. Decide which character is most guilty of the Baroness' murder in the given situation. Then, write a brief essay that defends your choice.<sup>16</sup> (*Hint: Figure 8.1 should come in handy.*)

The Baron	The Friend
The Baroness	The Lover
The Boatman	The Madman

2. Use the checklist provided in section 8.19 to evaluate your essay. Make the necessary revisions.

3. A classmate has also tackled this exercise and wants you to read her essay and offer some suggestions. Turn to the Reader and read Sample J, “The True Deceiver.” Then, answer the following questions. (*Hint*: Remember that the sample is a *draft*. The fact that it is a “work in progress” may explain any difficulty you experience answering the following questions — for example, if you can find two or more possible answers to a question it may be because the writer needs to focus some of her ideas. Go with the *best* answer to each question.)
- What subject is the writer evaluating? Which criteria does the writer use to evaluate the subject?
  - Evaluate the sample using the checklist provided in section 8.19. What three suggestions would you make to the writer of Sample J to most improve her evaluation essay?
- Compare your responses to those provided at the end of the lesson.
4. Now that you’ve analyzed Sample J, are there any further revisions you would make to *your* essay? Explain.

## Assigned Reading

Turn to the Textbook Key and complete the instructions for Lesson 8.

# Answer Guidelines for Lesson 8

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## Answer Guidelines for 8.10

1.
  - a. a good distance education instructor -- person.
  - b. a rock concert -- event.
  - c. adolescence for parents of adolescents -- an abstraction because it includes people (parents of adolescents), things (acne medication, designer clothes, CDs), and acts/events (teenager violates curfew, etc.)
  - d. photographing celebrities when they're not "working." This is an ethical problem because it puts two positive values in conflict: the photographer's personal freedom against the celebrities' right to privacy.
  - e. a competent server in a restaurant -- person.
  - f. sleeping bag -- thing.
  - g. a labour strike -- action/event.
  - h. distance education for distance education students -- abstraction, because it is made up of things (course materials), people (students, instructors, administrators), and actions (taking an exam, grading assignments, delivering course packages).
  - i. forgoing medical attention for your child for religious reasons -- This is an ethical problem because it places two positive values in conflict: the freedom to practise one's religion against the right of children not to be abused.<sup>17</sup>
  - j. personal computer -- thing.
  
2.
  - a. a good distance education instructor -- You could evaluate a good distance instructor against the ideal definition of a good instructor.
  - b. a rock concert -- You could evaluate a rock concert against an ideal definition (e.g., "A good rock concert has good acoustics and an energetic crowd), or against consequences/effects (e.g., people contributed to the band's favourite charities after the show). Conceivably, you could combine these approaches: "The concert was terrific because it had a great light show; the acoustics were perfect, allowing us to hear the lyrics of the songs; the crowd was energetic [ideal definition]; and many people contributed to the band's favourite charities afterwards [consequences]."
  - c. adolescence for parents of adolescents -- You could evaluate this abstraction according to consequences for the parents, that is, the results of having a child going through adolescence.
  - d. photographing celebrities when celebrities aren't "working" -- You could evaluate this ethical problem by examining the consequences of photographing the private lives of celebrities. For instance, you might look at the injuries that result from celebrities attacking or trying to elude



- photographers. Ethical problems require you to weight one value (freedom to take photographs) over another (right to privacy).
- e. a competent waiter or waitress -- You could evaluate this person by measuring them against the definition of the ideal waiter/waitress (criteria may include prompt service, neat appearance, anticipating requests such as refilling water glasses without being asked, etc.)
  - f. sleeping bag -- You could evaluate this thing in terms of purpose.
  - g. a labour strike -- You could evaluate this event in terms of ideal definition, consequences, or both.
  - h. distance education for distance education students -- You could evaluate this abstraction in terms of ideal definition or consequences or both.
  - i. forgoing medical attention for your child for religious reasons -- You could evaluate this ethical problem in terms of consequences or results for the child. The problem will require you to weight one value over another (freedom of religion vs. right of children not to be abused).
  - j. personal computer -- You could evaluate this thing in terms of its purpose.
3. The prewriting techniques described in Lesson 2 can help you find criteria for evaluating a subject.
- a. Possible criteria of a good distance education instructor:
    - prompt return of graded assignments
    - helpfulness of written comments on assignments
    - initiates contact with students
    - friendly and helpful manner during telephone tutoring
    - replies promptly to student e-mail messages
    - is present to answer the telephone during telephone office hours
    - informs students of connection between current events and course content
    - sets assignments and exams that test the content of course fairly.
  - d. Possible criteria for evaluating the morality of photographing celebrities when celebrities aren't "working":
    - the injurious effects on parties involved
    - the reputation of the literature in which photographs are published
    - the freedom of photographers to take photographs
    - the right of celebrities to privacy.
  - g. Possible criteria for evaluating a labour strike:
    - right to strike
    - behaviour of participants
    - effects upon non-strikers
    - causes of strike.

- i. Possible criteria for evaluating the morality of forgoing medical attention for your child for religious reasons:
  - right to religious freedom
  - right of children not to be abused
  - legislation on child abuse or religious freedom
  - reliance on prayer/faith rather than medicine.
- j. Possible criteria for evaluating a personal computer:
  - speed
  - memory capacity
  - compatibility with other brands
  - price
  - dependability
  - warranty.<sup>18</sup>

### Answer Guidelines for 8.14

1.
  - a. The criterion is *ethics/law* — see the first and last sentences which state that taking life is immoral, and the fifth sentence which implies that taking life is illegal.
  - b. The writer appeals to the audience’s respect for human life/belief in the immorality of murder.
  - c. You may not have found the appeal to be convincing because the writer doesn’t acknowledge or refute fairly Dr. Kevorkian’s opposing viewpoint — that people have the right to decide to end their own lives, particularly people suffering from a chronic illness. Although the writer says she would like to ask Dr. Kevorkian what his views are, she doesn’t seem open to his answer. For example, she states that “*No matter what the circumstances...there is no ethical way to justify ending someone’s life*” (italics mine).
2.
  - a. In paragraph 8, the writer argues that animal experimentation is a good thing because it sacrifices animals rather than human beings. The criterion is human welfare is more important than animal welfare.
  - b. She appeals to the audience’s *value of human life* over that of animals. For instance, she assumes that the reader would value human life more than the life of animals when she asks, “What hurts more, the thought of 100 rats in pain, or the thought of one child suffering because the 100 rats did not?” Often in an evaluation essay, you will need to weight one value above another, that is, you will need to appeal to “higher” values or consequences.
  - c. If you didn’t find the argument to be convincing, it may be because you felt the rat/child question was posed unfairly. Would you answer the question

the same way if it was posed in this manner, “What hurts more, the thought of 100 puppies in pain or the thought of a serial killer suffering because the 100 puppies did not?” You might say that the comparison of the rat to the child isn’t *typical* (remember *typicality* from Lesson 6?). The writer has given an example of a commonly-feared animal and contrasted it with one of the most vulnerable and loved beings. The writer could make her point more fairly if she had said, “What hurts more, the thought of 100 animals in pain or the thought of one person suffering because the 100 animals did not?”

On the other hand, you might have found the rat/child comparison to be effective because it concludes the essay with a powerful image that might help sway the audience to the writer’s viewpoint, and because it gives the animal rights movement a taste of their own “emotional” medicine (see par. 8).

### **Answer Guidelines for 8.15**

- a. This is a *reference* to a source rather than an appeal to an authority. The writer borrows the words of the Bible to express her idea.
- b. This excerpt appeals to an *authority* of the law to defend its position. The example is a tricky one. I would have been very pleased if you noted that the legislation that the writer appealed to is *American*. Do any Canadian laws encourage humane treatment of animals? If not, the writer’s argument is weakened for her Canadian audience. Perhaps animals in Canadian labs are not treated as well as animals in American labs because of differences in legislation.
- c. You might have argued that is a *reference* rather than an appeal — it provides an example of concrete thinking. On the other hand, you might have argued that the writer is using the novel as an *authority* on schizophrenia; that the writer is appealing to the novel to defend her argument that schizophrenics have concrete thought patterns. In this case, the writer should indicate how the novelist is qualified as an “expert” on schizophrenia; he or she should point out that, although fictional, the facts presented in the novel are accurate.
- d. This excerpt *appeals* to an authority. The excerpt could be improved by clarifying why Dr. Goldstein, a medical doctor, can be considered an expert on schizophrenia — has he had experience with one schizophrenic patient? Two dozen? Is his work recognized by a prominent mental health institution? You should also have suggested that the writer either quote an expert whose opinions were published more recently than 1944 or make it clear that Goldstein’s views are still held by the medical and psychiatric community.

### **Answer Guidelines for 8.16**

- a. The criterion is that human lives are more important than animal lives (see sentences 9, 12, 13).
- b. The writer identifies a series of treatments (consequences, good results) that would never have been discovered if animal lives had not been sacrificed:

vaccines for polio, tetanus and rabies, insulin, chemotherapy, and techniques to remedy heart defects.

### Answer Guidelines for 8.17

- a. The writer uses the criterion of didacticism (teaching a moral lesson) to evaluate Mr. X's novel.
- b. To support this criterion, the writer compares a parent instructing his child (an action acceptable to his audience) to a novelist instructing readers.
- c. If you didn't find this comparison to be effective, you might have suggested the writer quote several experts who feel literature should teach moral lessons or that literature can influence people's behaviour. Perhaps you objected to the comparison of an adult reader (like yourself) to an impressionable child.... Maybe you disagreed with the writer's viewpoint completely, and argued that a better criterion of literature should be that it reflects real life, and in this way, Mr. X's novel is good literature — bad things often happen to good people, and vice versa.

### Answer Guidelines for Review Exercise

- 3.a. The writer of Sample J argues that the Baroness is most guilty of her death because the Baroness is the most immoral person in the story (see par. 8, sent. 5-7). She evaluates the Baroness' character and show how her immoral actions (cause) led to her death (effect/consequences).

You may have found it difficult to identify the criteria because they are not laid out neatly as they are in the thesis of Sample H, "Analysis of 'The Nuclear Winter'." The writer uses the ideal definition approach to evaluate the Baroness' character. The writer of Sample J does not state the criteria of a moral person explicitly. Instead, she *implies* these criteria when she argues that the Baroness is immoral because:

- she is an adulterer (implied criterion: a good person is *loyal* to one's spouse);
- she is deceptive (implied criterion: a moral person is *honest*);
- she is unremorseful (implied criterion: a moral person is *remorseful* when he or she does wrong).

By the way, if you're having difficulty seeing where I found the three criteria in the sample, see the first two sentences of paragraph 8. Also, note that the essay follows this structure:

Paragraph 1 Introduction

Paragraph 2 Argues that the Baroness is immoral because she commits adultery (implied criterion of a moral person: loyalty)

Paragraph 3 Addresses opposing viewpoint

Paragraph 4 Argues that the Baroness is immoral because she is deceptive\* (implied criterion: honesty)

Paragraph 5 Addresses opposing viewpoint

Paragraph 6 Argues that the Baroness is immoral because she does not show remorse\* (implied criterion: remorsefulness)

Paragraph 7 Addresses opposing viewpoint

Paragraph 8 Conclusion

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\*The key phrase "Another thing" opens both paragraph 4 and 6. This should have helped you to recognize that the writer was introducing a new criterion/changing the subject.

3.b. Your suggestions for the writer of Sample J may have included the following:

- *Suggestion 1.* Some readers will disagree with your viewpoint that marriage vows are forever (par. 1) or that "decent" people don't have extramarital relationships (par. 2, sent. 5). So that you don't alienate or antagonize these readers, avoid negative words and phrases like "sneaky adulteress," "sinful passion," "lustful desires," "fooling around," and "cheating." Instead, use neutral language like "extramarital relationship," "extramarital sex," and "love affair."
- *Suggestion 2.* You suggest that it is the Baroness' fault if her husband beats her because he warned her he would punish her severely if she left the castle (par. 5, sent. 8-9). Be careful — spousal abuse is a very sensitive issue and your suggestion would receive an outraged response from many readers. Most people would disagree with you, arguing that it is *never* justifiable to beat your spouse! The main issue here, however, is that your suggestion is but one example of how you lay *all* the blame on the Baroness, rather than the majority of it — although your introduction states that other characters share in the guilt and that the Baroness is *most* guilty, the remainder of your essay blames the Baroness alone and refers to the "innocence" of the others (par. 4, sent. 6; par. 5, sent. 6; par. 8, sent. 4.).

If the Baroness is *most* guilty in her death, the other characters are *somewhat guilty*. You have to demonstrate the other character's guilt to

prove that the Baroness' guilt is greater. For instance, doesn't the lover commit adultery, just like the Baroness? And doesn't he refuse to help the Baroness when she tells him her life is in danger? What makes the Baroness more guilty of her murder than her lover? And is the Baroness *completely* unjustified for seeking comfort in the arms of another if her husband is "possessive," "jealous" (par. 7, sent. 4) and perhaps violent (par. 5, sent. 8)? You can acknowledge that the Baron shares some responsibility for the Baroness' death yet still conclude that the Baroness is *most* responsible because, ultimately, the choice to have an extramarital relationship was hers, and the consequence was that she was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

- **Suggestion 3.** Certain words and phrases that you use imply that you think the Baroness deserved to die simply because she was a bad person. For example, you talk about her "unforgivable" acts (par. 2, sent. 7; par. 4, sent. 6). Also, you pronounce the Baroness to be "guilty" of such moral wrongs as deception (par. 6, sent. 8) and adultery (par. 7, sent. 8), and then conclude that, because of these wrongs, she is "guilty of her own death" (par. 8, sent. 7). This is a harsh judgment. Does someone deserve to die because she has an affair and hides her affair from her husband? It would be more fair to argue that the Baroness is most guilty of her own death because of the choices she made: she chose to have an extramarital relationship, which resulted in her being in the wrong place at the wrong time. In other words, instead of focusing on ideal definition (the Baroness falls short of the definition of a moral person; therefore, she deserves to die), it might be better to focus on consequences (the Baroness chose to have an affair and go against her husband's wishes; as a result, she was in the wrong place at the wrong time).

### **A work in progress...**

By the way, you might find it helpful to look at the notes from which the above suggestions were drawn. The writer of the above suggestions evaluated Sample J, "The True Deceiver," against the checklist in section 8.19, jotting down the notes that appear below. She then composed the three suggestions above from her notes.

1. *Does the writer evaluate the subject against certain criteria acceptable to or shared by the audience?*

Okay, she says that the criteria of a moral person (spouse?) are loyalty, honesty and remorsefulness. Yeah, I accept that.

2. *Are any criteria not likely to be accepted by the audience? If so, does the writer defend the criteria adequately and fairly?*

I don't accept the writer's defense of loyalty. The writer uses the 10 commandments — a biblical authority — to argue that the Baroness is guilty of a moral wrong because she had an affair. But, then she concludes that adultery is an unforgivable sin. The Bible doesn't say this, and moreover,

Jesus rescued an adulterous woman from the men who wanted to stone her and told her to "go and sin no more." The writer's authority supports her argument that adultery is a moral wrong, but not her conclusion that the moral wrong makes the Baroness most guilty of her own death.

3. *Are the criteria appropriate to the evaluation of the Baroness' guilt in her own murder?*

Well, yeah, if you agree that a bad person deserves to die simply because he or she is bad. I don't think the ideal definition approach is working here; it doesn't work to argue that "The Baroness falls short of the ideal definition of a moral person, so she's guilty of her death." I think it would be better for the writer to use consequences as a means of evaluation, that is, to argue that "The Baroness chose to have an affair and in so doing, violated the moral code; as a result, she put herself in the position of being in the wrong place at the wrong time." I don't agree with this last viewpoint either, but I think it works better than the first one!

4. *Does the writer make too severe a judgment based on too minor a criterion, or too generous an assessment based on an unimportant criterion?*

Yeah. It's too harsh to suggest Baroness deserved death because of her wrongdoing.

5. *Does the writer show respect for the audience by using neutral language? S*

She comes down hard on "adulterers" and even divorced people ("marriage is forever").

6. *Does the writer acknowledge ideas that support opposing viewpoints rather than suppressing evidence to the contrary?*

Well, after presenting each subargument, the writer looks at the opposition's point of view. But she "suppresses" the guilt of the other characters by calling them "innocent," even though she says Baroness is the *most* guilty (which suggests other characters share guilt as well). And when refuting the Baron's role in the Baroness' affair, she defends the Baron's possible violent streak — give me a break!

7. *Does the writer avoid introducing a viewpoint as the one her audience would naturally adopt (e.g., "We Canadians")? Yes.*

Now that you've analyzed Sample J, "The True Deceiver," are there any further revisions you would make to *your* essay? Explain.

## Assigned Reading

Turn to the Textbook Key and complete the instructions for Lesson 8.

## **Notes**

1. Fahnestock & Secor, 1993.
2. Example inspired by Fahnestock & Secor, 1990.
3. Questions cited in Fulkerson, 1996.
4. Example taken from Fulkerson, 1996.
5. The idea of evaluating a subject according to ideal definition and consequence was drawn from Fahnestock & Secor, 1990.
6. This section is based on Fahnestock & Secor, 1990.
7. This step is adapted from an exercise composed by Fahnestock & Secor, 1990.
8. Example and discussion adapted from Fahnestock & Secor, 1990.
9. Example and discussion adapted from Fahnestock & Secor, 1990.
10. Four methods of support taken from Fahnestock & Secor, 1990.
11. Most of these examples are adapted from Fahnestock & Secor, 1990.
12. Fahnestock & Secor, 1990.
13. The first three structures in the list are taken from Fulkerson, 1996.
14. Example adapted from Fahnestock & Secor, 1990.
15. Example adapted from Fahnestock & Secor, 1990.
16. Exercise adapted from Long, K.F. (1989). *Expository Writing English 26-100, 101 Course Manual*.
17. Example taken from Fulkerson, 1996.
18. Example taken from Fahnestock & Secor, 1990.



# LESSON 9

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## RECOMMENDATION ARGUMENTS

### Reminder

Remember to set aside time to work on your assignments so that you will be able to submit them by the due dates.

### Introduction

What do the following sentences have in common?

1. Distance education students should be able to correspond with each of their instructors by e-mail.
2. The queen's picture should not be removed from our currency.
3. Cafés and ice-cream parlours ought to sell lactose and casein-free desserts for customers who are lactose intolerant or allergic to milk.
4. Large employers need to offer day-care facilities for the children of employees.
5. Hockey scoring should penalize uncivilized behaviour.
6. Teenagers should not stay out later than 10:00 pm on school nights.

The above sentences are examples of recommendation claims; they state that something should (need, ought, must) or should not be done. A proposal or recommendation claim is a very common kind of argument. You might “propose” or urge a particular action when, say, watching hockey with a friend at a local sports bar (see sentence 5), debating curfews with a teenaged son or daughter (see sent. 6), consulting with your distance instructor during telephone office hours (sent. 1), purchasing a product from a local store (sent. 3), preparing a written proposal for your employer (sent. 4), or writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper (sent. 2). This lesson will help you make proposals more effectively as well as evaluate the proposals made by others.

### Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- identify the parts of a recommendation argument (need/problem, proposal/solution, strengths, weaknesses);
- judge the effectiveness of the selection and arrangement of these parts;
- write a recommendation argument that incorporates these parts;
- suggest revisions for a recommendation argument based on criteria from this and previous lessons.

## 9.1 To Whom it May Concern...

Think about a time when you were unhappy with a product or service. Take a few minutes and write a brief letter to the manager of the business to inform him or her of your dissatisfaction. Your purpose is to convince the manager that a particular problem exists and a particular change needs to be made. You don't have to mail the letter, although you can if you want to!

Now, put yourself in the shoes of the manager. Answer the letter. As "manager," your purpose is to pacify the customer, whether or not you agree with him or her.<sup>1</sup>

## 9.2 In Someone Else's Shoes

Responding to your own complaint letter in section 9.1 gave you the opportunity to consider your audience's (the manager's) point of view. This is important because to argue effectively, you should usually acknowledge your audience's perspective. By acknowledging your audience's point of view, you demonstrate that you have considered fairly the matter about which you are arguing. By refuting your audience's viewpoint, you increase the chance of convincing them to adapt your perspective or at least alter their own.

Read the following complaint letter and response. Do you think the consumer's letter is likely to convince the manager that a problem exists and needs to be addressed? Why or why not? Do you think the consumer will be satisfied by the manager's response? Why or why not?

Save your notes; your answers will come in handy later in the lesson.

### Sample letter of complaint

To whom it may concern,

Not long ago, my husband and I purchased a Coleman lantern from your hardware store. Although we are satisfied with the lantern, we are unhappy with the service we received at Mighty Hardware.

After selecting a lantern, we experienced difficulty finding mantles to fit it.

*[Course writer's note: Mantles are lacy sheaths of material that are inserted inside propane lanterns and give light when placed over a flame.]* I asked a young employee which mantles we should purchase. "I don't know," he responded. When I asked if he could find out the answer for me, he grudgingly set out to do so. Upon his return, he reported that his colleague didn't know the answer either.

We then approached a more senior staff member and asked whether the mantles we had selected would fit our lantern. He replied that he did not know, but that Coleman made a lot of mantles, and that we should be able to find the appropriate mantle somewhere, if not at a Mighty Hardware store then with another chain. This was not a satisfactory answer, especially as we were heading out on a week-long camping trip that afternoon and, due to a fire ban, needed to know that the lantern we purchased would be usable. The employee did not offer to find out from another

staff member whether the mantles would fit, nor did he call Coleman or another store to learn whether they carried the correct ones. In fact, the employee's abrupt manner and preoccupation with paperwork gave us the impression that we were "interrupting" him. Finally, I (not the employee) hit upon a solution: open the lantern box and compare the mantles in the box against the ones in the package.

When we brought the lantern to the cashier to pay for it, we discovered that it was \$20.00 more than the sign on the shelf had indicated! We returned to the camping department to investigate and were informed that the price sign posted under our model was for another model that was out of stock. After talking with two employees, we discovered that although there were three models of lanterns on the shelves and three price signs posted, only one of the three signs was for a model that was actually in stock!

Although aware of the confusion, neither employee took the initiative to correct the pricing situation. This was especially surprising in that there were several signs on the lantern shelves warning campers of a campfire ban. Thus, even though the staff were expecting more lantern sales than usual, they did not ensure that the lanterns were priced correctly and clearly.

The pricing mix-up alone would not have motivated me to write; it was the ungraciousness of the staff that prompted my letter of complaint. No matter how good the quality of the products sold by Mighty Hardware, if the employees are unfriendly and unhelpful, they will discourage customers from shopping at the store. In fact, my husband and I left the store remarking on how much more pleasant our visit to Walmart had been the previous day. It would not be difficult to train employees to serve customers with a friendly smile and, when unsure of the answer to a customer's question, to respond helpfully, "Just a moment; I'll find out for you."

Sincerely,

R.E. Ally Dissatisfied

### **Sample response**

Dear Ms. Dissatisfied,

Thank you for your recent letter. Because Mighty Hardware's motto is "Customers come first" and we have frequent price checks, I am particularly dismayed that your recent shopping experience was so unsatisfactory.

It is my hope that your unpleasant experience was an isolated event. It was an extraordinarily hectic week at the store due to peak camping season, the campfire ban, and understaffing. However, at our next staff meeting, I will address your complaints and reemphasize the importance of frequent price checks and friendly, helpful service. I also intend to use the situation you described in a role-playing exercise during future training sessions.

Please accept the enclosed gift certificate as evidence of our appreciation for your

letter and for your patronage. We hope that you will continue to shop at Mighty Hardware.

Sincerely,

I.B. Manager

### 9.3 Dissecting a Recommendation Argument

The sample complaint letter above implies that Mighty Hardware should train employees to be friendly and helpful (see the last sentence of the letter). Similarly, your complaint letter probably implied or stated explicitly that the manager of a particular store “should” or “ought” do something. Such a statement is called a **proposal statement** or recommendation claim. The complaint letter as a whole is a **recommendation argument**. Usually, the recommendation arguments that you write for your university courses will be in essay (not letter) form, and your proposal statement will be your thesis.

A recommendation argument has four essential parts:<sup>2</sup>

1. Need
2. Proposal
3. Strengths
4. Weaknesses

A writer may combine two or more of the above parts or arrange the parts in any sequence. For that matter, a writer may choose to leave out one or more of the parts, although this may weaken the impact of his or her argument. We’ll examine the parts of some recommendation arguments later in the lesson.

In the meantime, let’s look at the four parts more closely.<sup>3</sup>

#### 1. Description of need or problem

A recommendation argument usually spends some time establishing a need that must be met or a problem that must be solved. The amount of time you spend describing the need or problem depends on the awareness of your audience. For example, if you’re writing about flood prevention after your town has been flooded, you won’t have to spend much time convincing your audience of the need to establish better safeguards.

To convince your audience that a particular need or problem exists, you might

- (i) explore the undesirable consequences or effects of a situation (e.g., working long hours at the computer can lead to repetitive strain injuries).
- (ii) appeal to your audience’s values, that is, their sense of right and wrong. For example, assuming that your audience values equal opportunity for all Canadians, you might argue that a particular situation is wrong because it discriminates against a certain group of people.

Thus, your recommendation argument may include substantiation claims (see item i. above) or evaluation claims (see item ii.)! To review substantiation or evaluation claims, see Lessons 7 and 8.

## **2. Statement of proposal or solution**

A recommendation argument presents a proposal that suggests a solution to a problem. The sentence (or sentences) that propose a particular course of action or suggest a solution is called the **proposal statement**; it is often the **thesis** of a recommendation argument.

The proposal statement can be very general (“We need to do something about this...”) or very specific. A **general proposal** is one way for individual with no power to arouse conviction and emotion in an audience which can in turn demand action from those with power. For example, an exposé of toxic-waste dumping in a local river or children who are abandoned while their parents gamble at a local casino can arouse appropriate responses from those in a position to do something.

A **specific proposal** describes the action that should be taken to correct a solution. It can take the form of one sentence; for example, “Distance education students should be able to e-mail assignments to their instructors.” On the other hand, a specific proposal can take considerable time to explain, as would be the case for the proposal to develop a new method of job evaluation in your workplace. We usually don’t bother to argue for a specific proposal unless we are addressing an audience that can take action. For instance, if you are proposing that distance education students be able to e-mail assignments to their instructors, you must find out to whom you should address your proposal — the university president? the distance education instructors? the director of Continuing Education? (In this case, your audience would be the distance instructors as they decide whether to incorporate e-mail correspondence into their courses.)

## **3. Strengths of the proposal or solution**

An effective recommendation argument presents the strengths or advantages of its proposal. For example, you might examine the positive consequences or advantages of adopting the proposal (or, if arguing that something should *not* be done, you might examine the negative consequences that will be avoided if the proposal is adopted).

Alternatively, a recommendation argument may appeal to the audience’s values (see Lesson 8). In other words, you might argue that implementing its proposal is the “right” thing to do. If when presenting the problem (see item 1. above), you appealed to your audience’s sense of what was wrong, then when promoting the strengths of your proposal, you may want to appeal to the audience’s sense of what is right. For example, if toxic-waste dumping is wrong, preserving the environment is right; if neglecting children is wrong, then foster care is right.

#### 4. Weaknesses of the proposal or solution

No proposal is perfect. A good recommendation argument addresses opposing viewpoints; it admits the weaknesses of its proposal. While acknowledging the shortcomings of your proposal may help to convince your audience that you have thought the proposal through carefully, it would be counterproductive to devote a large part of your recommendation argument to discussing these weaknesses. If your proposal is to be implemented, its advantages must outweigh its disadvantages. Accordingly, you should present the weaknesses of your proposal in order to **minimize** them. For example, you can show how the positive consequences of your proposal outweigh the bad, or how the value that your proposal complies with is more important than the one it contradicts (see Lesson 8 on weighting values). You'll learn more about minimizing the weaknesses of your proposal in the next section.

### 9.4 Challenge

You will easily forget the above discussion unless you apply it to some recommendation arguments. Accordingly, for each of the following samples, I'd like you to:

- (a) Identify the parts of the recommendation argument (problem/need, proposal/solution, strengths, weaknesses). Remember that the writer may combine or even disregard some of these parts.
- (b) Explain why the selection or arrangement of parts works or does not work. (I'm not asking you to agree or disagree with what is being proposed. Instead, I'm asking you to examine the *structure* of the recommendation argument — the way the parts are organized — and decide whether it is effective.)<sup>4</sup>

Compare your responses to the answer guidelines provided at the end of the lesson.

#### Sample 1: Pet peeve

Men should boycott neckties! They are uncomfortable and a superficial pretense to importance. Males should not have to suffer this archaic hang-up so their peers will approve their "well dressed" look. Women dress as they please. I think men should too.<sup>5</sup>

#### Sample 2: Complaint letter

Reread the complaint letter in section 9.2 and answer questions (a) and (b) above.

#### More fun!

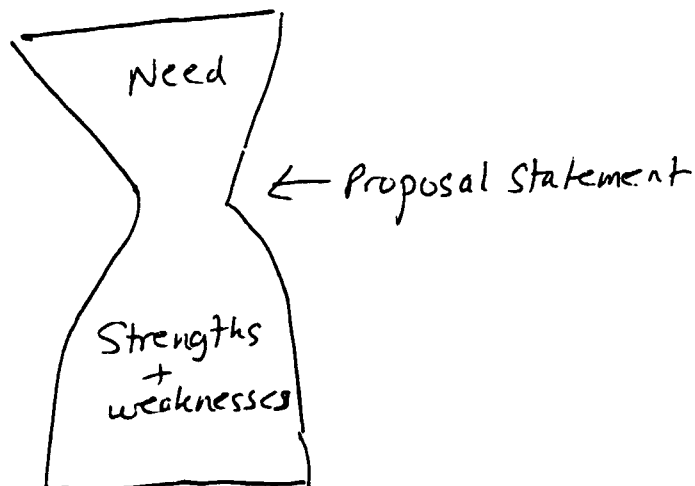
I'd like you to continue this exercise by analyzing some essays from the textbook. Turn to the Textbook Key and follow the instructions for Lesson 9.

## 9.5 Different Ways to Arrange the Parts

The samples in section 9.4 exemplify some different ways you can arrange the parts of a recommendation argument. Here are some additional ways to organize a recommendation argument:

1. You can first present the problem/establish the need. Next, you can propose your solution. Then, you can discuss and minimize the weaknesses of your proposal. You should spend the remainder and bulk of your essay demonstrating the advantages of your proposal over the current way things are being done.
2. You can present your proposal or solution, announcing it as your thesis. Then, you can consider and minimize the disadvantages of implementing your proposal. Next, you should spend the bulk of your essay contrasting the strengths of your proposal with the weaknesses of the current system. (On the other hand, if you're arguing *against* changing from the current way of doing things, you should discuss and minimize the potential strengths of the potential change, and then devote the remainder of your essay to the weaknesses of the potential change.)
3. You can follow the "hourglass" approach (see Figure 9.1). First, describe the problem. Then, state your proposal. Finally, support your proposal by exploring its positive consequences or by showing why it is the right thing to do. You can address and minimize the weaknesses of your proposal as they crop up in the discussion of its strengths.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 9.1. Hourglass approach to a recommendation argument.**



## 9.6 This Recommendation Argument was Written for You...or Was It?

Turn to the Reader, and read Sample K (“Why Course Journals?”) which is a recommendation argument that takes the form of a research paper. Then, answer the following questions and compare your responses to those provided at the end of the lesson. Sample K is a long essay, but you should be well prepared to analyze it. The writer uses headings to break up the essay into manageable pieces and boldfacing to highlight important ideas.

1. Who is the writer’s audience? Are the examples used by the writer appropriate for this audience?
2. What is the writer’s purpose? (*Hint:* See the thesis.)
3. Identify the parts of the recommendation argument. (*Hint:* The writer uses certain clues to help you identify these parts.)
4. What are the weaknesses of (deterrents to) the writer’s proposal? How does the writer minimize these weaknesses?

## 9.7 It Can Be Done!

To convince an audience to follow your proposal, you must convince them that it is **feasible**, that what you’re recommending can actually be done. To persuade your audience that your proposal is feasible, you may wish to address some of the following questions:<sup>7</sup>

- Can we afford it?
- Does it take long?
- Can we get people to do this?
- How can we do it?
- What’s the first step toward implementing the proposal?
- Has it been done before?
- Why hasn’t anyone done it before? (Your audience may ask this difficult question when reading your recommendation argument. You could anticipate this question and argue that, say, the circumstances are new so that a solution is now possible, a “roadblock” has been removed, there is new knowledge that makes your proposal feasible, etc.)
- What’s wrong with the other proposals? (Answering this question would allow you to acknowledge and refute opposing viewpoints.)

## 9.8 “Feasibility” in Action

Return to Sample K, “Why Course Journals?” How does the writer try to convince the audience that keeping course journals is a feasible thing to do? (*Hint:* See section 9.7 of this lesson and paragraphs 13-16 of Sample K.) Does the writer



convince you to keep a journal? Why or why not? Compare your response to the guidelines provided at the end of the lesson.

## 9.9. Evaluating a Recommendation Argument

The following checklist summarizes the ideas we have explored in this lesson and reviews some ideas from previous lessons. You can use the checklist to decide where to revise your recommendation argument or to decide which improvements to suggest to another writer.

- Which parts of a recommendation argument are included by the writer (problem/need, proposal/solution, strengths, weaknesses)? Would it improve the argument if the writer included any missing parts or reordered the existing parts? (See section 9.3.)
- Would the intended audience need convincing that the current situation is a problem? If so, does the writer explain how the situation has undesirable consequences or is morally wrong? In evaluating the situation, does he or she use criteria shared by the audience (Lesson 8)?
- Does the writer devote most of the recommendation argument to the strengths of his or her proposal? If not, does he or she have a good reason for devoting the bulk of the essay to one of the other parts?
- Does the writer acknowledge and minimize the weaknesses of his or her proposal (section 9.3)?
- Does the writer explain how the proposal is feasible? In other words, does the writer anticipate some of the audience's questions about how the proposal could be implemented (section 9.8)?
- Does the writer show respect for the audience by using neutral language and acknowledging fairly their points of view (Lesson 6)?
- Are the writer's arguments careful and well-reasoned? (The STAR criteria from Lesson 7 can help you answer this question — sufficiency, typicality, accuracy and relevance.)

## Review Exercise

Use the above checklist to evaluate Sample K, “Why Course Journals?” Based on your findings, decide what two or three things the writer could do to improve the essay MOST. Compare your suggestions to those provided at the end of the lesson.

## Conclusion

This lesson concludes the unit on argument and global revision. In this unit, you were introduced to the three types of arguments common to university courses and the real world:

- substantiation arguments, which answer the question “What is this thing?” or “What consequences does this thing have?” (Lesson 7);

- evaluation arguments, which answer the question, “Is this thing good or bad?” (Lesson 8);
- recommendation arguments, which answer the question “What should we do about this thing?” (this lesson).

Through revision aids like the checklist in section 9.9, this unit also showed you how to improve the content, organization, and communicative effectiveness of the three types of arguments. These type of improvements are called **global revisions** because they deal with features of a text that are above the sentence level. In the next unit we will zoom closer to the samples that we analyze and examine their “local” features or features that are at the sentence level or below. **Local revisions** include making changes to individual sentences, words, and letters, such as breaking a long sentence into two shorter ones, substituting one word for another, and correcting spelling.

## **Recommended Reading**

Return to the Instructions for Lesson 9 in the Textbook Key, and complete steps 5 and 6.

# Answer Guidelines for Lesson 9

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## Answer Guidelines to 9.4

### Sample 1: Pet Peeve

- a. The writer examines three of the four parts in this sequence:

*Proposal/solution* — Men should boycott neckties!

*Problem* — Neckties are uncomfortable and pretentious.

*Strengths of proposal (implied)* — The strengths of the solution include its positive consequences — men can be comfortable and dress as they please. The writer also appeals to the reader's value of gender equality — if women can dress as they please, men should be able to as well. (The writer does not address the weaknesses of the solution.)

- b. The argument would be more effective if the writer had considered the weaknesses of the solution. One obvious weakness of boycotting neckties is that some men may like neckties and, because of the proposed boycott, would not feel comfortable wearing them. If the writer had thought about the weaknesses of his proposal, he or she might have realized that a better solution would be to, say, propose that company and restaurant dress codes not obligate men to wear neckties.

Note that the proposal to boycott neckties is a general one. The writer does not have the power to enforce the boycott, but (we assume) hopes that the proposal will evoke an emotional response from readers and influence those who do have power to do something about it.

### Sample 2: Complaint letter

- a. The writer examines three of the four parts in this sequence:

*Problem* — The problem is that the service at a particular hardware store is unsatisfactory (par. 1) because employees are unfriendly and unhelpful (par. 6). The writer describes this problem in the first five paragraphs. The writer also describes a pricing mix-up (par. 4-5), but his or her concern is with the poor customer service — the way the mix-up was handled — rather than with the mix-up itself.

*Strengths of proposal/solution (implied)* — The writer suggests that if employees are not trained to be friendly and helpful (the writer's proposal), customers will shop elsewhere (par. 6). Note that the writer presents the negative consequences of *not* applying the proposal rather than the positive consequences of applying the proposal.

*Proposal/solution (implied)* — The solution to the problem of poor service is to train employees to serve customers with a friendly smile and to respond in a helpful manner (last sentence). Note that this proposal is a specific one; it is addressed to someone in a position to do something (the manager) and it states

specifically what should be done. Note also that the proposal is *implied* by the last sentence of the letter; the writer does not state directly that the manager “should” or “ought” to do something.

- b. The complaint letter does not examine the weaknesses of applying the solution, which might include the cost of additional training. However, the writer could easily insert a few sentences that acknowledge and minimize this weakness by suggesting that improved service would allow Mighty Hardware to retain old customers and gain new ones, and that the resultant sales would probably outweigh the costs spent on training.

You probably noted that the writer spent five paragraphs describing the problem but devoted only one to the proposal and its strengths (par. 6). You might have felt that the letter was too long and that a busy manager would not read it. On the other hand, you might have felt the lengthy description would be effective in convincing the manager that a problem exists, and that placing the proposal statement at the very end of the letter affords its greatest impact.

In section 9.2, I asked you to decide whether the sample complaint letter would convince the manager that a problem exists and needs to be addressed. Compare the notes you made in section 9.2 to your answer to this question. Did your ideas change or remain the same? Why or why not?

## Answer Guidelines for 9.6

1. The writer identifies fellow university students as his or her audience (see the thesis, which is the last sentence of paragraph 1).

You might have been puzzled by the references to the “new” and “traditional” composition classrooms in paragraph 10. These terms would probably be familiar to the writer’s Theory of Composition classmates, but not to the wider audience of all university students.

A significant shortcoming of the essay is that the examples are geared towards *on-campus* students. For example, the writer mentions lecture notes (par. 6), in-class assignments (par. 9), waiting for the professor to arrive (par. 14), and riding the bus to campus (par. 14). The writer has overlooked the large population of distance education students who are also members of his or her target audience.

2. The writer’s purpose is to encourage his or her fellow university students to try the course journal.
3. *Need/problem (assumed)* -- The writer does not identify clearly the problem that course journals can solve. When the writer states that the course journal can improve learning and self-knowledge (see opening and concluding paragraphs), she *assumes* that his or her audience values these things and would want to improve their current state.

*Proposal* — The writer proposes that university students try course journals (see the thesis, which is last sentence of par. 1).

**Strengths of proposal** — The positive consequences or benefits of using course journals are discussed in paragraphs 3 to 12. You may have relied on certain key words and phrases to find the “strengths” part of the recommendation essay. For instance, the writer often uses the opening sentence of a paragraph to sum up the strength or benefit discussed in the preceding paragraph and to introduce the next benefit of the proposal (e.g., see par. 9, sent. 1.) In paragraph 11, before introducing the final benefit of the proposal (personal growth), the writer sums up all the benefits discussed previously. The heading “Why course journals?” and the boldfaced words provide even more obvious clues as to which section of the essay discusses the strengths of the writer’s proposal.

**Weaknesses of proposal** — The weaknesses of, or deterrents to, the proposal are discussed in paragraphs 13-16. The subheading “Why *not* journals?” and the boldfaced words probably helped you to identify easily the “weaknesses” part of the recommendation argument.

4. The writer proposes that his or her fellow university students try keeping a course journal. The weaknesses of the proposal, or the deterrents to implementing the proposal, include lack of time, the impatience of writer, and lack of motivation. The writer minimizes lack of time by suggesting brief writing sessions and by arguing that investing in a journal now can save study time later (par. 14). The writer argues that the benefits of the course journal make overcoming the deterrents worthwhile (see par. 16d). In other words, the writer presents a **trade off** — sure, it’s tough to get going and to stay committed to journal writing, she says in essence, but there’s no gain without a little pain.

## **Answer Guidelines for 9.8**

In attempt to convince readers that keeping a course journal is feasible, the writer addresses the question “Does keeping a journal take long?” He or she suggests that students try 10-minute writing sessions (par. 14). It would be helpful if she suggested a particular number of sessions per week, especially when she emphasizes patient, committed writing (par. 15) — how many 10-minute sessions a week means that I’m being patient? How many sessions a week mean that I’m committed?

Moreover, the examples the writer gives of where to squeeze in a journal write are for on-campus students. The writer should provide examples for distance students, such as writing while waiting in the doctor’s office, when taking a break at work, or each time one sits down to work on a lesson.

It would also be useful if the writer suggested topics that students could write about during their 10-minute sessions. The example the writer gives in paragraph 14 is of responding to the assigned reading for a literature course. Does this mean that her audience should respond to what they’re reading for the first 10 minutes and then stop writing? And what should their “responses” look like? The writer could suggest, for instance, that as students read their text or lesson, they jot down

the ideas with which they agree and disagree, the personal experiences that correspond with the ideas presented, and their answers to exercises assigned by the instructor or course writer.

## **Answer Guidelines for Review Exercise**

In your suggestions, did you address some of the same problems that you identified when completing the exercises in sections 9.6 and 9.8? If so, I'm not surprised.

Here are some possible suggestions:

1. The writer assumes that the audience values good writing and cognitive and personal growth. However, it is likely that many university students are satisfied or at least complacent about where they stand in these areas. The writer needs to convince the audience of the necessity of striving for excellence or of the problem of mediocrity. (This suggestion is derived from question 2 in the section 9.9 checklist.)
2. The writer minimizes the deterrent of time by suggesting 10-minute sessions, but needs to provide more details. How many sessions a week is "sticking" to journal-keeping? What should students write about during these sessions? (Derived from questions 4 & 5 in the checklist.)
3. The writer identifies the audience as fellow university students, but overlooks distance education students when giving examples and making suggestions. (Derived from question 6 in the checklist.)
4. The writer should develop the definition of the course journal further. It is not clear from the definition (par. 2) that the journal can contain both: responses to topics assigned in class by instructor (or, by extension, responses to exercises assigned by a distance course writer), and personal responses to course readings and assignments.
5. The writer's sources are dated. To convince his or her audience, the writer should use recent sources (*accuracy*). Also, when minimizing the deterrent to the proposal, the writer relies on his or her personal experience. It would be more convincing if the writer also drew from the experience of classmates and/or other sources (*sufficiency, typicality*). (Derived from question 7 in the checklist.)

► Now that you've evaluated your answers to the review exercise, return to the Conclusion of this lesson and resume reading.

**Notes**

1. Inspired by Scardamalia et al., 1981.
2. Adapted from Fulkerson, 1996.
3. Discussion adapted from Fulkerson, 1996, Chapter 8; and especially Fahnestock & Secor, 1990, Chapter 13.
4. Exercise inspired by Fahnestock & Secor, 1980.
5. Adapted from Fahnestock & Secor, 1980, p.291.
6. The first two structures are adapted from Fulkerson, 1996; the third structure is adapted from Fahnestock & Secor, 1980.
7. Questions adapted from Fahnestock & Secor, 1980.





## UNIT 3 GUIDE

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# LOCAL REVISIONS

Imagine that you're in a space ship approaching the earth. The shape of the globe becomes clear, and soon you can make out the continents. You're getting closer to North America. Eventually you're able to distinguish Canada, then the region where you live and, finally, your home town.

This metaphor is useful for understanding what we have done so far in the course and what we're about to explore. In previous units, we looked at the “global” features of a text — that is, the content, organization, communicative effectiveness of a whole text or paragraph. Now, we're going to move in “closer” to given texts, and examine them sentence by sentence, word by word, even letter by letter.

### Objectives

Upon completing this unit successfully, you should be able to:

- revise passages so that they use language that is appropriate for a university audience (Lesson 10);
- identify and correct several grammatical and punctuation errors that you make frequently in your assignments (Lesson 10-13);
- invigorate your writing by, for example, varying the length of your sentences (Lesson 12);
- proofread a draft and make the necessary corrections (Lesson 13).



## LESSON 10

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# CREATING ATMOSPHERE WITH LANGUAGE

### Reminder

Remember to set aside time to work on your assignments this week so that you can send them to your instructor by the due dates.

### Search & Destroy

Each of the following sentences contains the same type of error. Can you identify and correct the error in each sentence? (*Hint:* Read each sentence aloud — you might find that you make the necessary corrections automatically.)

1. Neither Tim nor Erin work.
2. After saying goodnight, he unlock the door.
3. Each of them hold a passbook.

Compare your results to those provided at the end of the lesson.

### Introduction

Some older relatives whom you don't know well are coming to your home for dinner. How would you prepare for their visit? Would you clean your home carefully? Choose a special outfit to wear? Plan a formal dinner? Upon your relatives' arrival, what refreshments would you serve? What music would you play in the background?

Now, imagine that your best friend has announced that he or she is coming over for dinner. How would your preparations differ? You might wear jeans rather than dress clothes, serve take-out rather than a home-cooked meal, eat dinner in front of the TV rather than at the dining room table, and play contemporary music loudly rather than classical music softly.

Although they are visiting you in the same place, the "atmosphere" you set for your relatives would probably be different than that you set for your best friend. Similarly, the language of writers differs with their audience. Writers create a different atmosphere or "tone" in their writing depending on whom they are writing for — and why.

This lesson will explore some varieties of written language, as well as suggest guidelines for the language that is appropriate in your university assignments.

## Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- identify the subject and verb of a sentence;
- correct any subject-verb agreement errors in your assignments (especially if your instructor has indicated that you make this type of error frequently);
- explain whether a text is written in colloquial, general or formal language;
- rewrite texts in “general” language;
- eliminate or correct two to three words or phrases that you often use inappropriately in your assignments.

## 10.1 An Experiment

What is the most interesting or exciting thing that has happened to you recently? Take a moment to write a brief letter that describes the incident to your young niece or nephew or another child whom you know.

Now, write a brief letter to your instructor describing the same incident (you shouldn't send this letter to the instructor as it will not be graded).

Place the letters side by side. Although you've described the same incident in both letters, the words and phrases you've used to describe the incident may have differed considerably. You may have been more informal in your letter to the child than you were in your letter to the instructor. Your choice of language is affected by your audience.

## 10.2 Specialized Language

Look at this paragraph, which is taken from a student essay:

**Galli, Meier and Brunold germinated seeds of *P. abies* for 14 days in petri dishes on nutrient agar and then transferred the seedlings to aseptic plastic vessels where they were cultivated for 2 to 3 weeks. Five seedlings with developed cotyledons were transferred to Erlenmeyer flasks containing spruce nutrient. They cultivated *L. laccata* in petri dishes on nutrient agar containing sterile nutrient solution. Cd treatment was started by transferring balls of mycelium with a diameter of approximately 1cm to fresh nutrient solution containing the Cd and then was added to the Erlenmeyer flasks.**

Who is the intended audience of this sample?

If you're studying biology, you may have recognized the language immediately. If not, you may have been confused — what's a petri dish? nutrient agar? mycelium? The student was writing for fellow biology students who would understand her readily. If she were writing for an audience without a science background, she would have to explain some terms or use different words so that they would understand her.

People working in the same profession often use terminology that is unique to their profession. Computer programmers, for instance, have developed a specialized

language that allows them to work together efficiently but may not be understood by others. Some friends of mine work in a secure-custody and detention centre for young offenders, and they talk about “putting a resident on program,” which means that a child who has misbehaved will be supervised one-on-one by a staff member for a designated period.

In this course, I’ve introduced some terminology that only your classmates and composition instructors and researchers may understand. Can you think of some examples? (Audience, writing process, global revisions, local revisions.)

### **Just for fun: The office terminology of Generation X**

*Cube farm* // An office filled with cubicles.

*Prairie dogging* // Something loud happens in a cube farm, and people’s heads pop over the walls to see what’s going on.

*Tourists* // People who take training classes just to take a vacation from their jobs. “We had three serious participants in the workshop; the rest were tourists.”

*404* // Someone who is clueless, from the World Wide Web error message “404 Not Found,” meaning the requested document couldn’t be located. “Don’t bother asking him, he’s 404.”

*Uninstalled* // Euphemism for being fired, as in “They were uninstalled this morning.”<sup>1</sup>

## **10.3 Varieties of Language**

In this lesson, you’ve encountered texts that can be categorized into one of three varieties of language:

↔ COLLOQUIAL ↔	↔ GENERAL ↔	↔ FORMAL ↔
•The letter you wrote to the child in section 10.1.	•The textbook	•The scientific sample in section 10.2.

In their textbook, *Essay Essentials* (1995), Brian Green and Sarah Norton outline the basic characteristics of colloquial, general and formal language. I’ve adapted their outline here:

	↔ COLLOQUIAL ↔	↔ GENERAL ↔	↔ FORMAL ↔
<b>Vocabulary</b>	casual, everyday language; some slang; contractions ( <i>you're, don't</i> ); frequent use of <i>I</i> and <i>you</i>	the language of educated persons; nonspecialized; readily understood	technical, specialized language of a particular group or profession; no contractions or colloquialisms; limited use of <i>I</i> and <i>you</i>
<b>Sentence &amp; Paragraph Structure</b>	short, simple sentences; short paragraphs	sentences of varying length; paragraphs of varying length, but often short	sentences are usually long and complex; paragraphs are often long
<b>Tone or "Atmosphere"</b>	conversational, casual, sounds like ordinary speech	varies to suit message and purpose of writer	impersonal, serious, often instructional
<b>Typical Uses</b>	personal letters, some fiction, some newspapers, much advertising	most of what we read: newspapers, magazines, novels, business letters	legal documents, some textbooks, academic journals, scientific reports

Each variety of language has its place. Your audience and purpose will help you decide which variety is most appropriate. In many cases, you will probably choose to write in general language so that you can reach as many people as possible, to avoid excluding readers who might not understand certain colloquial expressions or technical words. Most university assignments will require you to write in general language.

## 10.4 Having Fun with the Conventions

To follow are two samples. The first one pokes fun at colloquial writing; the second pokes fun at formal writing.

For each sample, decide which audience the writer is caricaturing. Then, rewrite each sample so that both a teenager and a grandparent could understand it easily (that is, rewrite it in general language). Compare your "translations" to those provided at the end of the lesson.

### Sample 1

So Romeo gets to the party and starts checking out the chicks. He sees Juliet and he goes, "Who is that babe?" And she goes, "Who is that hunk?" Which is bad, see, 'cause like, Shakespeare already said they got "fatal loins," whatever that means, and they're "star cross'd," which means both of them are Aquarians, I think. <sup>2</sup>

### Sample 2

Missiles of ligneous or pterous consistency have the potential of fracturing my osseous structure, but appellations will eternally remain innocuous.

## 10.5 A Continu-what?

Note that in the above tables (section 10.3), I've included a two-way arrow (↔) between each variety of language. I've done this to emphasize that the varieties of language are on a *continuum*. A continuum is a lot like a colour wheel. Just as there are many shades of, say, blue before you reach purple on the colour wheel, many texts are written in varying degrees of colloquial, general and formal language. And much like there are some shades on the colour wheel that may be difficult to group with either the blue or purple family, so there are some texts that are difficult to classify because they contain features of both colloquial and general language or of both general and formal language. For instance, you might argue that this lesson is written in colloquial language. But, when you look at a note that your teenage daughter has written to her boyfriend, you might change your mind and argue that the lesson is written in general language. Or, you might decide that the lesson falls somewhere between the colloquial and general on the continuum.

## 10.6 Dialect

People have distinctive patterns of speech depending on the region in which they live. Many Maritimers say, "Hey there, boy" by way of greeting, and "Where are you to?" instead of "Where are you?" If you live in a international border city like Windsor, you can probably identify easily the Americans who come to visit by their pronunciation (Michigan residents say "pap" rather than "pop,") and by certain expressions that they use ("How y'all doing?"). In turn, Americans might point out that Canadian visitors give away their citizenship with expressions such as "eh."

Much like *dialects* (differences in speech patterns) vary from region to region, so there can be different dialects within a single community. I live on the outskirts of an Asian neighbourhood. My Asian neighbours speak English differently than I do. For instance, I have heard the owner of my favourite Hong Kong bakery tell Asian customers that "the store close every Tuesday," whereas I would say, "the store closes every Tuesday." Amy Tan, author of *The Joy Luck Club*, has written about the different types of "Englishes" she uses, such as the one she uses at home with her mother, whose native language is Chinese, and the one she uses with native speakers of English. One day, she recognized how she switches between the two

dialects: while discussing the price of new and used furniture with her mother, she heard herself say, "Not waste money that way."<sup>3</sup>

Dialect can carry over to written English. To follow is a Black English colloquial translation of some verses from the Bible. (You may have encountered the original version at a wedding, church service or in a class.) Reading the passage out loud can help you appreciate the beauty and rhythm of the words:

Love be patient and kind. It ain't jealous or envious. It ain't boastful or proud.

And love ain't selfish or rude. It don't take its own way or be ruffled easily. It don't hold a grudge and hardly even notice when folks do it wrong.

It never glad 'bout wrong things. It be happy when truth win out.

Love bear up under everything and anything that come. Love always believe the best of everybody, an' it stand everything an' not fade. It endure everything and stay strong (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).<sup>4</sup>

### Not "bad" English

It is important that you realize that the above passage is not "bad" or "incorrect" English. In fact, some American colleges offer courses in Black English! What you should recognize is that *this* course teaches the conventions of general English or what some educators call the Language of Wider Communication. The Language of Wider Communication is the dialect of government, science, business, technology, and education.<sup>5</sup>

Let's update the language continuum presented earlier:

↔ COLLOQUIAL ↔ DIALECT or THE LANGUAGE OF EVERYDAY SPEECH	↔ GENERAL ↔ THE LANGUAGE of WIDER COMMUNICATION	↔ FORMAL ↔ THE LANGUAGE of a PARTICULAR PROFESSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Romeo &amp; Juliet example in section 10.4</li> <li>• The Black English translation in this section</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The textbook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scientific sample in section 10.2</li> </ul>

The Black English sample is an example of colloquial, or everyday, language. So was the Romeo and Juliet example in section 10.4. The writer of the Romeo and Juliet example used a different *dialect* to that used by the black writer, but both wrote in the language of speech.

### To do

Take a minute to rewrite the Black English sample in the general language, that is, in the Language of Wider Communication. Then, compare your "translation" to the one provided at the end of the lesson.



## 10.7 Showing Respect for Both Genders

When writing, remember to use language that includes both genders — unless, of course, you have a good reason for excluding one (for example, there's no need to call your grandfather *Grandperson*! See Figure 10.1).

Rewrite the following so that they are gender-inclusive (nonsexist):

1. Meryl Streep is one of the most acclaimed actresses of our time.
2. Modern man takes electricity for granted.
3. A student who submits the first draft of an assignment is usually depriving herself of a better grade.
4. What a doctor expects from his patients is not quite the same as what a lawyer expects from his clients.
5. The schizophrenic sees the world as acting against him — he has no part in it. Schizophrenics often see themselves as vessels smashed by the world's hate, fear, and misunderstanding. The only way to gain some control over the inevitability of the world's destruction is to "beat them to it." This is seen in the example of the schizophrenic who inflicts pain on himself and when asked why he does so replies: "Why, before the world does them...Don't you see? It always comes at last, but this way at least I am master of my own destruction."

Compare your answers to those provided at the end of the lesson.

Figure 10.1.



**"You're not allowed to be a grandfather anymore; you're a 'grandperson.'"**

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## 10.8 Inconsistencies

For the most part, the writers of the following paragraphs use general language. Occasionally, however, they slip into expressions that are too casual, too much like everyday speech. Underline the colloquial expressions in the following samples and replace them with words or phrases that are more appropriate for a university audience.

### Sample 1

Although my mother had taught me to be a proper young lady, my father had taught me that I didn't have to take any crap from any boy. The boy who had pushed me realized quickly that the look in my eye was unfriendly, and started to run away from me. I was angry because, not only had he pushed me but, in touching me, he had also given me the ever-dreaded cooties. I began the challenge of catching this loser. For a young girl, I could run pretty fast, and soon I was right on his heels.

### Sample 2

Some people may feel that the only reason the Baroness went to such extreme measures to cover up her lustful deceit is because she was afraid of the Baron. He does say that he will punish her severely when he gets back if he finds out she left the castle. However, it is possible that the Baron did not mean that he would physically punish her, but that he would end their relationship and kick her out of the castle. Perhaps he knew she was cheating, and was giving her one last chance to change. If this is indeed the case, then the very fact that she tried so hard to prevent the Baron from finding out and throwing her out makes her seem even more cold and unfeeling. She did not care about hurting her husband or other innocent people, only about getting caught.

## Conclusion

In this lesson, you learned that writers vary their language with their purpose and audience. Their style can be colloquial or formal, or somewhere between.

Most university assignments require you to write in general or formal language. The following checklist will help you decide whether your essays use the appropriate language.

### Is my language appropriate for a university audience?

- ❑ Have I avoided slang or colloquial expressions, such as *okay* or *wow*? If it is necessary for me to use a colloquial expression, have I set it out in “quotation marks” to show that I am aware it doesn’t fit (see the next question for an example)?
- ❑ Do I use contractions like *don’t* and *you’re* with restraint so that my writing does not become overly “chatty”?
- ❑ Do I avoid using fancy words to impress my reader? George Orwell (author of *Animal Farm* and *1984*) recommends that writers never use a long word when a short one will do.<sup>6</sup>
- ❑ Will readers understand the terminology that I use? Should I define certain words or paraphrase particular passages? Orwell recommends that writers never use a foreign phrase or a technical word if they can think of an well-known English equivalent.
- ❑ Do I include readers of both genders? (See section 10.7.)
- ❑ Have I avoided phrases like *I believe*, *in my opinion* and *I think*? Unless I am using them to distinguish my ideas from another person’s, such phrases are unnecessary — the reader knows that the ideas expressed in my essay are mine.

## Assigned Reading

Turn to the Textbook Key for Lesson 10 and follow the instructions given there.

## Answer Guidelines for Lesson 10

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### Answer Guidelines for Search & Destroy

1. Original: Neither Tim nor Erin *work*.  
Revised: Neither Tim nor Erin *works*.
2. Original: After saying goodnight, he *unlock* the door.  
Revised: After saying goodnight, he *unlocks/unlocked* the door.
3. Original: Each of them *hold* a passbook.  
Revised: Each of them *holds* a passbook.

This exercise focused on subject-verb agreement. Grammatically-correct sentences almost always have at least a subject and a verb:

SUBJECT | VERB

She | polishes.

She | is polishing.

She | has polished.

An easy way to determine the verb part of the sentence is to ask, “Which word(s) tell what is going on?” The answer will be the verb part of the sentence: *polishes, is polishing, has polished*. (When a verb consists of more than one word, it may be called a *verb phrase*.)

To find the **subject**, you can formulate a question like “*Who* or *what* {insert verb here}?” For instance, the answer to the question “*Who* polished?” is “she.” This means that *she* is the subject.<sup>7</sup>

►If you had difficulty with this exercise, or if the instructor has indicated that you should work on subject-verb agreement, turn to the Textbook Key for Lesson 10 and complete the supplementary exercise.

### Answer Guidelines for 10.4

#### Sample 1

The writer seems to be poking fun at the colloquial language of teenagers who have read the play *Romeo in Juliet*. (I assume that the audience has read the play rather than seen the movie because the sample refers to the playwright Shakespeare.)

I rewrote the sample like this: “Romeo arrives at the party and is admiring the attractive girls. He sees Juliet and asks, ‘Who is that good-looking girl?’ Juliet notices him, too, and asks, ‘Who is that good-looking fellow?’ It was unfortunate that they noticed each other because, as Shakespeare suggests, their relationship was ill-fated.”

## Sample 2

This sample may have been a bit harder for you to rewrite unless you used a dictionary, have a science background, or recognized the old saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.”

Which audience is the writer poking fun at? You might have argued that the writer is parodying those who write in formal language, such as lawyers, government officials, and academics. Since the writer uses scientific language in particular (*pterosus, fracturing, osseous*), you might have decided that he or she is caricaturing the writers of scientific reports in particular.

Incidentally, if you enjoyed this parody of formal writing, you’ll probably enjoy the following caricature of “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” (first stanza):

’Twas the nocturnal segment of the diurnal period preceding the annual Yuletide celebration, and throughout the place of residence, kinetic activity was not in evidence among the possessors of this potential, including that species of domestic rodent known as *Mus musculus* (mouse).<sup>8</sup>

## Answer Guidelines for 10.6

Here’s my translation:

Love is patient and kind. It isn’t jealous or envious; it isn’t boastful or proud.

Love isn’t selfish or rude. It doesn’t force its way of doing things nor is it angered easily. It isn’t resentful and hardly notices when people do it wrong.

It never delights in wrongdoing, but it is happy when the truth wins.

Love bears up under anything and everything that comes. Love always believes the best of everyone, and it withstands everything and does not fade. It endures everything and stays strong.

Note that my translation combines two short sentences, and replaces some colloquial expressions (e.g., *ain’t, ruffled*). The most important changes, however, are to the verbs of the Black English passage. A verb is a word or phrase that shows action (Ethan *runs*; Rahat *is reading*) or a state of being (It *is* difficult; I *am* happy).

Here are the two passages side by side. I’ve underlined the corresponding verbs.

Love <u>be</u> patient and kind.	Love <u>is</u> patient and kind.
It <u>ain't</u> jealous or envious.	It <u>isn't</u> jealous or envious;
It <u>ain't</u> boastful or proud.	it <u>isn't</u> boastful or proud.
And love <u>ain't</u> selfish or rude.	Love <u>isn't</u> selfish or rude.
It <u>don't take</u> its own way,	It <u>doesn't force</u> its own way of doing things,
or <u>be ruffled</u> easily.	nor <u>is it angered</u> easily.
It <u>don't hold</u> a grudge	It <u>isn't</u> resentful
and hardly even <u>notice</u> when folks <u>do it</u> wrong.	and hardly <u>notices</u> when people <u>do it</u> wrong.
It never <u>glad 'bout</u> wrong things.	It never <u>delights</u> in wrongdoing,
It <u>be</u> happy when truth <u>win out</u> .	but it <u>is</u> happy when the truth <u>wins</u> .
Love <u>bear up</u> under anything and everything that <u>come</u> .	Love <u>bears up</u> under anything and everything that <u>comes</u> .
Love always <u>believe</u> the best of everybody,	Love always <u>believes</u> the best of everyone,
an' it <u>stand</u> everything an' not <u>fade</u> .	and it <u>withstands</u> everything and <u>does not fade</u> .
It <u>endure</u> everything and <u>stay</u> strong.	It <u>endures</u> everything and <u>stays</u> strong.

## Answer Guidelines for 10.7

- Original: Meryl Streep is one of the most acclaimed actresses of our time.  
 Revised: Meryl Streep is one of the most acclaimed actors of our time.  
*Actor* is a better term because it designates a position that can be held by either a man or a woman.
- Original: Modern man takes electricity for granted.  
 Revised: Human beings take/We take/Modern people take electricity for granted.

Whenever a *man* or *man*-word refers to both sexes, you should replace it with a genderless alternative such as *person*, *human* or *people*.

3. Original: A student who submits the first draft of an assignment is usually depriving **herself** of a better grade.

Revised: A student who submits the first draft of an assignment is usually depriving **himself or herself** of a better grade.

There is nothing wrong with the revised sentence above, although “**himself or herself**” is quite a mouthful! The following alternative is more pleasant sounding:

Revised: Students who submit the first draft of an assignment are usually depriving **themselves** of a better grade.

4. Original: What a doctor expects from **his** patients is not quite the same as what a lawyer expects from **his** clients.

Revised: What a doctor expects from **his or her** patients is not quite the same as what a lawyer expects from **his or her** clients.

The above is correct, but the following alternatives are less wordy.

Revised: What **doctors** expect from **their** patients is not quite the same as what **lawyers** expect from **their** clients.

Note how this next alternative balances the use of the masculine pronoun *his* with the feminine pronoun *her*:

Revised: What a doctor expects from his patients is not quite the same as what a lawyer expects from **her** clients.

5. Original: **The schizophrenic** sees the world as acting against **him** — **he** has no part in it. Schizophrenics often see themselves as vessels smashed by the world’s hate, fear, and misunderstanding. The only way to gain some control over the inevitability of the world’s destruction is to “beat them to it.” This is seen in the example of the schizophrenic who inflicts pain on himself and when asked why he does so replies: “Why, before the world does them...Don’t you see? It always comes at last, but this way at least I am master of my own destruction.”

Revised: **Schizophrenics** see the world as acting against **them** — **they** have no part in it. Schizophrenics often see themselves as vessels smashed by the world’s hate, fear, and misunderstanding. The only way to gain some control over the inevitability of the world’s destruction is to “beat them to it.” This is seen in the example of the schizophrenic who inflicts pain on himself and when asked why he does so replies: “Why, before the world does them...Don’t you see? It always comes at last, but this way at least I am master of my own destruction.”

You should not have changed the underlined words, as the writer is quoting the words of a schizophrenic who happens to be male.<sup>9</sup>

## Answer Guidelines for 10.8

### Sample 1

Although my mother had taught me to be a proper young lady, my father had taught me that I didn't have to [1] take any crap from any boy. The boy who had pushed me realized quickly that the look in my eye was unfriendly, and started to run away from me. I was angry because, not only had he pushed me but, in touching me, he had also given me the ever-dreaded [2] cooties. I began the challenge of catching [3] this loser. For a young girl, I could run [4] pretty fast, and soon I was right on his heels.

1. You could replace *take any crap from* with *be bullied*. Or, you could enclose "take any crap" in punctuation marks to show the reader the writer is quoting her father.
2. Cooties could be set out in "punctuation" marks to show the reader that the writer is aware the word is colloquial. For example: *He had also given me the ever-dreaded "cooties."*
3. You could rewrite *this loser* as *the offender*, *the bully*, or *my tormenter*, etc.
4. *Pretty fast* could be replaced by *quickly*.

### Sample 2

Some people may feel that the only reason the Baroness went to such extreme measures to cover up her lustful deceit is because she was afraid of the Baron. He does say that he will punish her severely when he gets back if he finds out she left the castle. However, it is possible that the Baron did not mean that he would physically punish her, but that he would end their relationship and [1] kick her out of the castle. Perhaps he knew [2] she was cheating, and was giving her one last chance to change. If this is indeed the case, then the very fact that she [3] tried so hard to prevent the Baron from [4] finding out and throwing her out makes her seem even more cold and unfeeling. She did not care about hurting her husband or other innocent people, only about getting caught.

1. *Kick her out* could be rewritten as *command her to leave*.
2. You could revise *she was cheating* to read *she was unfaithful* or *of her infidelity* or *of her unfaithfulness*.
3. *Tried so hard* could be rewritten as *tried*, *sought*, *attempted* or *endeavoured*.
4. You could rewrite *finding out and throwing her out* as *discovering her infidelity and demanding that she leave*.



## **Notes**

1. Source unknown.
2. Harden, Mike. (1989, November 8). *The Columbus Dispatch*. Reprinted in *Reader's Digest*.
3. Tan, A. (1997). Mother tongue. *The Norton Sampler*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 86-91.
4. Black English Vernacular Translation by Gayle Crittenden in Weaver, C. (1996). *Teaching Grammar in Context*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.
5. Williams, J.D. (1996). *Preparing to Teach Writing*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
6. Orwell, G. (1988). Politics and the English Language. *Inside the Whale and Other Essays*. London: Penguin pp.143-157.
7. Discussion adapted from Weaver, C. (1996). *Teaching Grammar in Context*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.
8. Source unknown.
9. This exercise was inspired by Heffernan & Lincoln, 1994.



# LESSON 11

## EDITING FOR PUNCTUATION

### Introduction

Most e-mail messages tend to be short. Because of this and the absence of cues from spoken language (handshakes, laughs, etc.), it's easy to misinterpret the tone of an e-mail message as, say, sarcastic instead of teasing, or rude instead of assertive. Many e-mail users try to prevent such miscommunication by including emoticons like the wink ; ) and the smile : ) in their messages. Long before e-mail, writers developed punctuation marks to give readers cues as to the tone in which their texts were written. For example, the exclamation point(!) can indicate excitement or anger, the dash( -- ) can create drama, and the question mark(?) can express uncertainty or confusion. These and other punctuation marks help writers communicate effectively to their readers.

Punctuation marks can also help readers find their way around a text, much like road signs help drivers find their way around a community. When driving in new territory or territory under construction, you might get lost without road signs to point out directions or detours. And can you imagine how difficult driving would be without road signs? During the holiday season, try leaving the parking lot of a local mall without the help of a stop sign or traffic light! We can consider some punctuation marks to be akin to traffic signs. Periods(.) act as stop signs. Semicolons(;) and commas(,) serve as yields, inviting short pauses before the reader continues on. And parentheses often signal "detours" or digressions (believe me, with all the construction taking place near my home lately, I've had to make a lot of detours...).

This lesson will review the various punctuation marks and help you identify and correct the punctuation errors that occur most frequently in your writing.

#### **Punctuation marks**

<b>Periods (.)</b>	<b>Commas (,)</b>
<b>Semicolons (;)</b>	<b>Colons (:)</b>
<b>Parentheses ( )</b>	<b>Dashes (--)</b>
<b>Apostrophes (')</b>	<b>Quotation marks (" ")</b>

### Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- add the appropriate punctuation marks to a text and justify your choices;
- identify up to three punctuation marks that you misuse most frequently;
- try to correct these errors in your assignments.

## 11.1 Dictation 1

First, I'd like you to read the following passage. The passage does not contain any punctuation marks. It would be much easier to read if it did.

in my home the word clean is used to describe the overall appearance of a room  
person or thing its impossible to describe my brothers bedroom as clean on the  
other hand calling my bedroom clean is not doing it justice although the two  
bedrooms are similar in colour size and layout they are different in appearance and  
smell my mother is a housekeeping supervisor and she has two rules of cleaning if it  
is dirty clean it and if at first you dont succeed try again my brother has yet to  
apply these rules

Now, find a tape recorder and the audiocassette that Continuing Education included in your course package. I'd like you to play the first segment on the audiocassette (called *Dictation 1*), and add the appropriate punctuation marks to the following passage as you listen. (It's okay to pause the tape at intervals.) When you've finished punctuating the passage, replay the dictation and check your work. When you're finished, compare your work to the answer guidelines provided at the end of the lesson.<sup>1</sup>

## 11.2 Dictation 2

Let's practice some more. Listen to the second dictation on the audiocassette and punctuate the following passage as you do so. Check your work against the answer guidelines provided at the end of the lesson.

I tried to be strong it was difficult and I couldn't hold back any longer I couldn't stop the tears nor could I stop the feelings that were tearing me apart inside we sat in the car in heavy silence my youngest sister who had just turned five began to ask questions I believe that she was the one who saved me from deep depression she was the light at the end of the tunnel the hand that reached for me and pulled me out she began to ask questions Mom how did they get Grandpa from the hospital to the funeral home my mother explained to her that they put him in a special black car called a hearse she was disgusted well if you hadn't left the trailer at the cottage they could have taken him in that I didn't know whether to laugh or cry so I laughed

### 11.3 Dictation 3

Complete the third and final dictation. Evaluate your work against the answer guidelines provided.

The next day we arrived at the funeral home for the visitation the room was crowded with people that I had never seen before some were weeping silently others were laughing I couldnt believe anyone could laugh and have a good time at a funeral I wanted to stand in the middle of the room and scream stop it stop it all of you why are you laughing dont you get it hes gone he isnt ever coming back and you are standing here laughing what would he think instead I found a quiet corner and began to listen to what people were saying I realized that they werent laughing because my grandfather was dead but because they were remembering the good times that they had shared with him I learned more about my grandfather that day than I had in 18 years of knowing him

### 11.4 Taking Inventory

Look at your three corrected dictations. Were there any errors that you made more than once? For example, did you experience difficulty using semicolons(;) or quotation marks(")? Are these the same punctuation errors that your instructor has noted on your assignments? Or has he or she identified different errors?

Use your corrected dictations and returned assignments to decide which two or three punctuation errors you make most frequently. Record these errors below. We'll return to this "inventory" later in the lesson.



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## 11.5 Lewis Thomas on Punctuation

To follow is an entertaining essay on punctuation. One of the things that makes the essay enjoyable is that the author, Lewis Thomas, creates personalities for most of the punctuation marks. Read the essay and then answer the questions that follow it.

### Notes on Punctuation

- 1 There are no precise rules about punctuation (Fowler <sup>1</sup> lays out some general advice (as best he can under the complex circumstances of English prose (he points out, for example, that we possess only four stops (the comma, the semicolon, the colon and the period (the question mark and exclamation point are not, strictly speaking, stops; they are indicators of tone (oddly enough, the Greeks employed the semicolon for their question mark (it produces a strange sensation to read a Greek sentence which is a straightforward question: Why weepest thou; (instead of Why weepest thou? (and, of course, there are parentheses (which are surely a kind of punctuation making this whole much more complicated by having to count up the left-handed parentheses in order to be sure of closing with the right number (but if the parentheses were left out, with nothing to work with but the stops, we would have considerably more flexibility in the deploying of layers of meaning than if we tried to separate all the clauses by physical barriers (and in the latter case, while we might have more precision and exactitude for our meaning, we would lose the essential flavour of language, which is its wonderful ambiguity) ) ) ) ) ) ) ) ) ) )
- 2 The commas are the most useful and usable of all the stops. It is highly important to put them in place as you go along. If you try to come back after doing a paragraph and stick them in the various spots that tempt you you will discover that they tend to swarm like minnows into all sorts of crevices whose existence you hadn't realized and before you know it the whole long sentence becomes immobilized and lashed up squirming in commas. Better to use them sparingly, and with affection, precisely when the need for each one arises, nicely, by itself.
- 3 I have grown fond of semicolons in recent years. The semicolon tells you that there is still some question about the preceding full sentence; something needs to be added; it reminds you sometimes of the Greek usage. It is almost always a greater pleasure to come across a semicolon than a period. The period tells you that is that; if you didn't get all the meaning you wanted or expected, anyway you got all the writer intended to parcel out and now you have to move along. But with a semicolon there you get a pleasant little feeling of expectancy; there is more to come; read on; it will get clearer.
- 4 Colons are a lot less attractive, for several reasons: firstly, they give you the feelings of being rather ordered around, or at least having your nose pointed in

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<sup>1</sup>H.W. Fowler, author of *Modern English Usage* (1926, revised 1965 by Sir Ernest Gowers), a standard reference work.

a direction you might not be inclined to take if left to yourself, and secondly, you suspect you're in for one of those sentences that will be labelling the points to be made: firstly, secondly and so forth, with the implication that you haven't sense enough to keep track of a sequence of notions without having them numbered. Also, many writers use this system loosely and incompletely, starting out with number one and number two as though counting off on their fingers but then going on and on without the succession of labels you've been led to expect, leaving you floundering about searching for the ninthly or seventeenthly that ought to be there but isn't.

- 5 Exclamation points are the most irritating of all. Look! they say, look at what I just said! How amazing is my thought! It is like being forced to watch someone else's small child jumping up and down crazily in the centre of the living room shouting to attract attention. If a sentence really has something of importance to say, something quite remarkable, it doesn't need a mark to point it out. And if it is really, after all, a banal sentence needing more zing, the exclamation point simply emphasizes its banality!
- 6 Quotation marks should be used honestly and sparingly, when there is a genuine quotation at hand, and it is necessary to be very rigorous about the words enclosed by the marks. If something is to be quoted, the *exact* words must be used. If part of it must be left out because of space limitations, it is good manners to insert three dots to indicated the omission, but it is unethical to do this if it means connecting two thoughts which the original author did not intend to have tied together. Above all, quotation marks should not be used for ideas that you'd like to disown, things in the air so to speak. Nor should they be put in place around clichés; if you want to use a cliché you must take full responsibility for it yourself and not try to job it off on anon., or on society. The most objectionable misuse of quotation marks, but one which illustrates the dangers of misuse in ordinary prose, is seen in advertising, especially in advertisements for small restaurants, for example "just around the corner," or "a good place to eat." No single, identifiable, citable person ever really said, for the record, "just around the corner," much less "a good place to eat," least likely of all for restaurants of the type that use this type of prose.
- 7 The dash is a handy device, informal and essentially playful, telling you that you're about to take off on a different tack but still in some way connected with the present course -- only you have to remember that the dash is there, and either put a second dash at the end of the notion to let the reader know that he's back on course, or else end the sentence, as here, with a period.
- 8 The greatest danger in punctuation is for poetry. Here it is necessary to be as economical and parsimonious with commas and periods as with the words themselves, and any marks that seem to carry their own subtle meanings, like dashes and little rows of periods, even semicolons and question marks, should be left out altogether rather than inserted to clog up the thing with ambiguity. A single exclamation point in a poem, no matter what else the poem has to say, is



enough to destroy the whole work.

- 9 The things I like best in T.S. Eliot's poetry, especially in the *Four Quartets*, are the semicolons. You cannot hear them, but they are there, laying out the connections between the images and the ideas. Sometimes you get a glimpse of a semicolon coming, a few lines farther on, and it is like climbing a steep path through woods and seeing a wooden bench just at a bend in the road ahead, a place where you can expect to sit for a moment, catching your breath.
- 10 Commas can't do this sort of thing; they can only tell you how the different parts of a complicated thought are to be fitted together, but you can't sit, not even take a breath, just because of a comma,

"Notes on Punctuation," Copyright ©1979 by Lewis Thomas, from *The Medusa and the Snail* by Lewis Thomas. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc.

## 11.6 Questions

Answer the following questions on "Notes on Punctuation." Then, compare your responses to the guidelines provided at the end of the lesson.

1. How soon in "Notes on Punctuation" did you realize that Thomas is playing a kind of game with the reader? What is this game?
2. The first paragraph in Thomas' essay is a single sentence. Rewrite the paragraph so that it is several sentences. What changes in punctuation did you make? Why?

## Conclusion

In this lesson, we reviewed the roles of various punctuation marks as well as some guidelines for using them. As part of the lesson, you identified the two to three punctuation errors that you make most frequently in your assignments. Next, you will complete some practice exercises that will help you decide how to correct these errors.

## Practice Exercises

Turn to the Textbook Key and complete the Instructions for Lesson 11.

# Answer Guidelines for Lesson 11

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## Answer Guidelines for Dictation 1

Line by line, compare the passage you have punctuated with the passage below. Your passage will not include the numbers or underlining that appears below; I inserted them so that I could draw your attention to certain punctuation features.

[1] In my home, the word "clean" is used to describe the overall appearance of a room, person, or thing. [2] It's impossible to describe my brother's bedroom as clean. [3] On the other hand, calling my bedroom clean is not doing it justice. [4] Although the two bedrooms are similar in colour, size, and layout, they are different in appearance -- and smell. [5] My mother is a housekeeping supervisor, and she has two rules of cleaning: if it is dirty, clean it, and if at first you don't succeed, try again! [6] My brother has yet to apply these rules.

- Did you remember to insert commas after the introductory elements "In my home" (sentence 1) and "On the other hand" (sentence 3)?
- I have underlined the two lists or series that appear in the dictation. Some writers do not use a comma to separate the last two items in a series, so it's okay if you didn't insert a comma between "person" and "or thing" in sentence 1. Similarly, you might not have inserted a comma between "size" and "and layout" in sentence 4.
- In sentence 2, did you insert an apostrophe in *it's*? This is a contraction that trips up even professional writers. *It's* can be spelled out to read *it is*. Don't confuse this with *its*, which is the possessive form of *it* (as in *The kitten opened its mouth*). More on the difference between *it's* and *its* in Lesson 13.
- In sentence 4, did you insert a dash where I did? On the audiocassette, the reader paused slightly before saying "and smell." The dash indicates a pause for dramatic effect or emphasis. Instead of a dash, you might have inserted a period between "appearance" and "and smell." This would have created a sentence fragment: *And smell*. Some writers use sentence fragments (incomplete sentences) for effect, especially in colloquial writing, but it's conventional to avoid them in university essays.
- You could have inserted a period rather than an exclamation mark at the end of sentence 5, although the reader's intonation suggests that an exclamation mark is a better choice.
- Sentence 5 might have been challenging to punctuate. Perhaps you inserted a dash instead of a colon -- that's fine. However, check that you have inserted a comma between "if it is dirty, clean it" and "if at first you don't succeed, try again". A comma is needed to separate these two main clauses (groups of words that can stand on their own as sentences) because they are connected by the joining word *and*.

If you're struggling to understand some of the above points, don't panic! The remainder of this lesson should answer your questions. And, if it doesn't, remember that the instructor is available to clarify things for you.

►Return to section 11.2 of this lesson and try the next dictation.

### Answer Guidelines for Dictation 2

The dictations are useful because they demonstrate how intonation can help you punctuate a passage. In fact, I recommend that you read your assignments aloud before submitting them to the instructor for grading. As you read, you may find yourself correcting in speech the punctuation and other errors you have made in writing.

Compare each line of your punctuated passage to the one provided below.

[1] I tried to be strong. [2] It was difficult, and I couldn't hold back any longer. [3] I couldn't stop the tears, nor could I stop the feelings that were tearing me apart inside. [4] We sat in the car in heavy silence. [5] My youngest sister, who had just turned five, began to ask questions. [6] I believe that she was the one who saved me from deep depression. [7] She was the light at the end of the tunnel, the hand that reached for me and pulled me out. [8] She began to ask questions. [9] "Mom? [10] How did they get Grandpa from the hospital to the funeral home?" [11] My mother explained to her that they put him in a special black car called a "hearse." [12] She was disgusted. [13] "Well, if you hadn't left the trailer at the cottage, they could have taken him in that." [14] I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. [15] So I laughed.

- In sentence 2, you should have separated the two main clauses by inserting a comma before the connecting word *and*.
- In sentence 5, you should have enclosed "who has just turned five" in commas, because this clause is not essential to the meaning of the sentence. The clause could be deleted without changing the meaning of the sentence; it's a **nonessential element**. You could argue that the clause could be enclosed in parentheses, but commas are the better choice because the sentence is short and parentheses would distract the reader unnecessarily.
- Hopefully, you did **not** insert a semicolon between "tunnel" and "the hand" in sentence 7. You should use semicolons to separate two main clauses that are not already connected with words like *and* or *but* (conjunctions). "The hand that reached for me and pulled me out" is not a main clause; that is, it cannot stand on its own as a sentence. Here are some examples to help clarify this:
  - *Use a comma:* She was the light at the end of the tunnel [main clause], the hand that reached for me and pulled me out [dependent clause].
  - *Use a semicolon:* She was the light at the end of the tunnel [main clause]; she was the hand that reached for me and pulled me out [main clause].

- You could have ended sentences 8 and 12 with colons rather than periods because they introduce quotations.

►Return to section 11.3 of the lesson and try the final dictation.

### **Answer Guidelines for Dictation 3**

[1] The next day, we arrived at the funeral home for the visitation; the room was crowded with people that I had never seen before. [2] Some were weeping silently; others were laughing. [3] I couldn't believe anyone could laugh and have a good time at a funeral. [4] I wanted to stand in the middle of the room and scream, "Stop it! [5] Stop it all of you! [6] Why are you laughing? [7] Don't you get it? [8] He's gone! [9] He isn't ever coming back and you are standing here laughing! [10] What would he think?" [11] Instead, I found a quiet corner and began to listen to what people were saying. [12] I realized that they weren't laughing because my grandfather was dead, but because they were remembering the good times that they had shared with him. [13] I learned more about my grandfather that day than I had in 18 years of knowing him.

- Did you remember to insert a comma after the introductory elements "The next day" (sentence 1) and "Instead" (sentence 11)?
- In sentence 1, you might have inserted a period rather than a semicolon. The semicolon would be the better choice because the reader paused only slightly after reading "visitation".
- You should have inserted a semicolon between "Some were silently weeping" and "others were laughing" in sentence 2, because both clauses are main clauses. You can tell if a clause is a main clause by testing to see if it can stand on its own as a complete sentence, that is, whether it has a subject and a verb. (To review subjects and verbs, see Lesson 10.)
- In sentence 4, you could have inserted a colon instead of a comma before "Stop it!"
- You probably inserted exclamation marks after sentences 4, 5, 8 and 9 because they express what the writer wanted to "scream" aloud.
- Did you remember to insert question marks after the questions the writer wanted to ask (sentences 6, 7 and 10)?

### **Answer Guidelines for 11.6**

1. You may have realized as early as the first paragraph that Thomas is playing a "game" with you. Thomas uses -- or misuses -- the punctuation marks he is discussing in the manner that he is discussing. For example, the last sentence of paragraph 2 both discusses and exemplifies the proper use of the comma. As another example, Thomas ends paragraph 1 by suggesting that using stops (commas, semicolons, colons, and periods) is preferable to using parentheses. But by using parentheses rather than stops throughout paragraph 1, Thomas

shows us *why* this is so -- the parentheses are confusing and you must remember to close them.

2. You should have replaced most of the parentheses in the paragraph with a stop: a comma, a semicolon, a colon, or a period. Toward the end of the paragraph, you may have decided to remove some connecting words (conjunctions) in order to break the long sentence into shorter ones.

To follow is one way of revising the paragraph. What did you do differently? Why?

There are no precise rules about punctuation. Fowler lays out some general advice, as best he can under the complex circumstances of English prose. He points out, for example, that we possess only four stops: the comma, the semicolon, the colon and the period. The question mark and exclamation point are not, strictly speaking, stops; they are indicators of tone. (Oddly enough, the Greeks employed the semicolon for their question mark. It produces a strange sensation to read a Greek sentence which is a straightforward question: "Why weepest thou"; instead of "Why weepest thou?") And, of course, there are parentheses, which are surely a kind of punctuation, making this whole much more complicated by having to count up the left-handed parentheses in order to be sure of closing with the right number. [removed *but*] If the parentheses were left out, with nothing to work with but the stops, we would have considerably more flexibility in the deploying of layers of meaning than if we tried to separate all the clauses by physical barriers. [removed *and*] In the latter case, while we might have more precision and exactitude for our meaning, we would lose the essential flavour of language, which is its wonderful ambiguity.

►Read the Conclusion to this lesson.

**Note**

1. Inspired by Scardamalia et al.'s dictation exercise.

# LESSON 12

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## EDITING FOR SENTENCE VARIETY

### Reminder

Remember to set aside time to work on your assignments each week so that you will be able to submit them to the instructor by the due dates.

### Introduction

I once knew a woman who wore only black. Black from head to toe. Every single day. At first I thought she cut quite a figure. But after some time I grew tired of her look. It was so predictable. I longed for her to wear some colour. Even if it were only in a scarf or brooch. Some writers compose sentences of the same length. Much like my friend's wardrobe, their sentences have no variety. A reader easily becomes bored.

This lesson will explore some strategies for changing the rhythm of your writing, that is, for editing for sentence variety. It will also introduce some other ways to make your sentences more interesting for your readers. In addition, the lesson will draw your attention to misplaced and dangling modifiers, errors made frequently by student writers.

### Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- combine sentences by (1) deleting redundant words and phrases, (2) adding punctuation marks and connecting words, and (3) rearranging or changing words or phrases;
- revise a text so that its sentences are varied in length;
- correct dangling and misplaced modifiers;
- invigorate your writing by eliminating wordiness, avoiding clichés, employing active voice, and/or using parallel structures.

### 12.1 Revising by Deleting

Combine each group of sentences into one sentence. Answer guidelines are presented at end of the end of the lesson.

1. a. French fries are loaded into a basket.  
The French fries are white.  
The basket is wire.

- b. The French fries are lowered.  
The lowering is slow.  
The lowering is into oil.
  - c. Their bath crackles.  
Their bath foams.  
The bath is hot.
  - d. The potatoes release a puff.  
The potatoes are thinly sliced.  
The puff is steam.  
They come out crispy brown.  
They come out streaked with oil.<sup>1</sup>
2. Now, look at the four sentences you have composed. Try to combine them further. Compare your results to those provided at the end of the lesson.

## 12.2 Revising by Addition

In the previous section, you revised a series of sentences by deleting redundant words and phrases and then combining the ideas that remained. Another way to combine sentences is by connecting one sentence to another without changing either one. You can do this by using a punctuation mark (like the comma or semicolon) with or without a connecting word (e.g., *and*, *but*, *when*, *because*, *while*, *though*, or).<sup>2</sup>

Use punctuation marks with or without connecting words to combine the sentences in the following passages. See how many combinations you can come up with. Answer guidelines are provided at the end of the lesson.

- 1. Worse yet, beginning writers believe their words are inviolate. Woe to anyone who suggests that something could be improved!
- 2. Remember, revising serves one purpose. It makes your writing readily accessible to the reader.<sup>3</sup>
- 3. The Internet has been compared to a giant tabloid. That's not the view held by most distance educators.
- 4. Distance education students often have work and family responsibilities vying for their time. This makes studying at a distance challenging. Self discipline is essential.
- 5. The strongest argument for legalization of the abortion pill is the ease and convenience it would deliver for women. The surgical method is a very uncomfortable procedure. It is often traumatizing for women and has been known to leave emotional scars that last a lifetime. The drug RU-486 practically eliminates that trauma. It prevents the pain and humiliation of going to an abortion clinic and facing angry protestors. The abortion pill allows a



woman to exercise her right to have an abortion in a safe and private way. Avoiding the trauma of surgery and guaranteed privacy are the great advantages of RU-486.

## 12.3 Revising by Transformation

Try combining these two sentences into one:

**She kept a close eye on her staff.**

**She met with each of them weekly.**

Possible revisions:

**She kept a close eye on her staff and met with each of them weekly.**

**She kept a close eye on her staff by meeting with them weekly.**

**By meeting with her staff weekly, she kept a close eye on them.**

The last two sentences above have been revised by “transformation.” In other words, I changed or “transformed” the sentences before connecting them.

### To do

Try to combine these sentences through transformation. See how many different combinations you can come up with. Model answers are provided at the end of the lesson.

1. **The vampire padded softly along.**

**It paused.**

**It sniffed the air.**

**It hurried on.**

2. **You'll have to reserve that video.**

**It is difficult to find.**

**It is popular.**

3. **No known species of reindeer can fly.**

**There are 300,000 species of living organisms yet to be classified.**

**Most of these are insect and germs.**

**This does not rule out flying reindeer.**

Read the following two passages aloud. Combine some sentences through transformation where you feel it is appropriate (that is, where the passage falls into a boring and predictable rhythm, or where the passage needs clarifying). Model answers are provided at the end of the lesson.

5. **Once I complete an article or a chapter of a novel, the really hard work begins.**

**First, Brock reads back every word I have written. Then we discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the material. I have to admit that this can be**

painful at times. He is almost always right in his assessment.

Often I have to leave the manuscript. I go vacuum the carpet to let off steam. When I return, I am ready to rewrite the material. And it is inevitable that there will have to be a rewrite. That is a fact of life for a writer. (Adapted from Bodie & Brock Thoene, *Writer to Writer*, 1990.)

6. I once said: "I may not be the world's greatest writer, but I'm certainly one of the great rewriters." My years as an editor at Macmillan taught me how much hard work writing requires. To see one of my manuscripts in its third version is to see pieces of paper that have been scribbled upon. They are cut and pasted, and endlessly revised. When the book finally appears, it often reads so smoothly that others have been led into believing that the result was easily achieved. Only my manuscripts will show how diligently I worked to attain this ever-advancing narrative flow. Each manuscript is filed away in some accessible library. It did not come automatically. (Adapted from James Michener, *The World is my Home*, 1993.)

## 12.4 The Great Sentence-Combining Challenge

Using any of the combining strategies we explored in this lesson, revise the following passages. It may not be necessary to revise every sentence; revise only when you think a change would make the passage more effective. The point is to provide some variety in the sentence length so that the passages are more pleasing to read. You may also wish to revise certain sentences in order to make their meaning clearer to the reader.

### Sample 1

I made a complete fool of myself.

My fly was down.

My shirt was sticking out of my fly.

I wanted to ask her out in her own language.

I tried to say "Would you like to go to the movies?"

I said, "Dance with my ostrich's uncle and then vomit on my disco shoes."

### Sample 2

I once knew a woman who wore only black. Black from head to toe. Every single day. At first I thought she cut quite a figure. But after some time I grew tired of her look. It was so predictable. I longed for her to wear some colour. Even if it were only in a scarf or brooch. Some writers compose sentences of the same length. Much like my friend's wardrobe, their sentences have no variety. A reader easily becomes bored.

### Sample 3

Is there a Santa Claus? Let's look at the facts. Santa has 31 hours of Christmas to work with. This is due to the different time zones. It is also due to the rotation of the earth. It also assumes that he travels east to west. This assumption seems logical. This works out to 822.6 visits per second. That is to say, for each household with good children, Santa has 1/1000th of a second to work with. He must park. He must hop out of the sleigh. He must jump down the chimney. He must fill the stockings. He must distribute the remaining presents under the tree. He must eat whatever snacks have been left. He must get back up the chimney. He must jump into the sleigh. He must move on to the next house.

Assume that each of these 91.8 million stops are distributed evenly around the earth. Of course, we know this to be false. For the purposes of our calculations, we will accept it. We are now talking about .78 miles per household. This is a total trip of 75-1/2 million miles. It doesn't count stops to do what most of us must do at least once every 31 hours. It doesn't count stops for feeding the reindeer. This means that Santa's sleigh is moving at 650 miles per second. That's 3,000 times the speed of sound. For purposes of comparison, consider the Ulysses space probe. It is the fastest man-made vehicle on earth. It moves at a poky 27.4 miles per second. A conventional reindeer can run, tops, 15 miles per hour. In conclusion, if Santa ever *did* deliver presents on Christmas Eve, he's dead now.<sup>4</sup>

## 12.5 To Remember

### Bigger is not necessarily better

By including a lesson on sentence combining in this course, I'm not suggesting that bigger sentences are better. What I am saying is that varying the length of your sentences can add some vitality to your writing, and one way to vary sentence length is to combine shorter sentences into longer ones.

To test whether your sentences are sufficiently varied, you can read what you've written aloud; that is, listen to the rhythm or music of what you've written. If you don't trust your inner ear, try counting the words in each sentence. If many are about the same length, make changes by combining two or three short sentences (or breaking up longer ones).<sup>5</sup>

### To everything there is a season

Just as there is a time for wearing black from head to toe (it is quite striking on a formal occasion), there is also time for composing sentences of the same length. For instance, writers can use short, terse sentences to build suspense, as in this example:

*She went to the door and listened. They were on the ground floor. She crept along the wall to the landing and made for the place where she had been safe before, the bathroom halfway down the stairs. But she heard them climbing.*<sup>6</sup>

Remember that writing is about making choices: What is your purpose in writing a particular text? What will help you accomplish this purpose -- using a series of short sentences (to create drama or build suspense) or using sentences of different lengths (to avoid boring your reader with a repetitive rhythm)?

## 12.6 Application

Look back at your assignments. Read them aloud. Are there any places where the rhythm is monotonous? Are many of your consecutive sentences the same length? Using the revision techniques you have learned in this lesson, make the relevant changes.

## 12.7 Bloopers

So far in this lesson, we've examined how you can make a text interesting for your reader by varying the lengths of your sentences. When revising sentences, you are often guided by your personal preference, that is, by what "sounds" good to you. However, you make your choices within certain parameters. For instance, to avoid creating a comma splice, you should use a semicolon rather than comma to connect two main clauses that are not already joined with a conjunction (for some examples of the comma splice, see the textbook). We explored some other rules of punctuation in the last lesson.

Another error you should be aware of when revising sentences is exemplified in the following list of real-life classified ads.<sup>7</sup> Rewrite each ad so that it is no longer a blooper. Compare your revised list to the one provided at the end of the lesson.

1. Dog for sale: eats anything and is fond of children.
2. Mixing bowl set designed to please a cook with round bottom for efficient beating.
3. For sale: antique desk suitable for lady with thick legs and large drawers.
4. Have several very old dresses from grandmother in beautiful condition.
5. Wanted. Man to take care of cow that does not smoke or drink.
6. We will oil your sewing machine and adjust tension in your home for \$1.00.

## 12.8 Misplaced Modifiers

Each of the above ads is a blooper because, due to a misplaced modifier, it conveys a meaning that the writer did not intend. A **modifier** is a word or word group that describes, limits or qualifies another word or word group in a sentence.<sup>8</sup> When revising sentences, you should avoid misplacing modifiers. You may not always catch misplaced modifiers while revising a draft, which is why proofreading is so important. (More on proofreading in the next lesson.)

Look back at your the sentences you created in sections 12.1-12.4. Did you make any bloopers; that is, did you misplace any modifiers? Did your instructor identify any misplaced modifiers in your returned assignments? If so, correct them now.

## **Conclusion**

This lesson explored why and how you should vary the length of your sentences. We also learned how misunderstandings are created by misplaced modifiers. The *dangling modifier* is another error that occurs frequently in student essays. We'll explore this error, as well as ways to invigorate your writing, in the Textbook Key.

## **Assigned Reading & Practice Exercises**

Turn to the Textbook Key and complete the instructions for Lesson 12.

# Answer Guidelines for Lesson 12

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## Answer Guidelines for 12.1

1. a. I eliminated the redundant phrases in the three sentence and combined the remaining ideas.<sup>9</sup>

French fries are loaded into a basket.

~~The French fries~~ are white.

~~The basket~~ is wire.

*Revision:* The white French fries are loaded into a wire basket.

- b. The French fries are lowered.

~~The lowering~~ is slow.

~~The lowering~~ is into oil.

*Revision:* The French fries are lowered slowly into oil.

- c. Their bath crackles.

~~Their bath~~ foams.

~~The bath~~ is hot.

*Possible revisions include:* Their hot bath crackles and foams. // Their crackling, foaming bath is hot. // Their bath is hot, crackling and foaming.

- d. The potatoes release a puff.

~~The potatoes~~ are thinly sliced.

~~The puff~~ is steam.

They come out crispy brown.

~~They come out~~ streaked with oil.

*Possible revisions include:* The thinly sliced potatoes release a puff of steam and come out crispy brown and streaked with oil.

2. The white French fries are loaded into a wire basket.

~~The French fries~~ are lowered slowly into oil.

Their hot bath crackles and foams.

The thinly sliced potatoes release a puff of steam and come out crispy brown and streaked with oil.

*Possible revisions include:* White French fries are loaded into a wire basket and lowered slowly into a hot, crackling, foaming bath of oil. The thinly sliced potatoes release a puff of steam and come out crispy brown and streaked with oil.

- Go to section 12.2 of the lesson.

## Answer Guidelines for 12.2

1.
  - Worse yet, beginning writers believe their words are inviolate, and woe to anyone who suggests that something could be improved! [, AND]

*Course writer's note:* Did you remember to insert a comma before “and”? Two main clauses joined by a conjunction are usually separated by a comma.

  - Worse yet, beginning writers believe their words are inviolate; woe to anyone who suggests that something could be improved! [;]
  - Worse yet, beginning writers believe their words are inviolate -- woe to anyone who suggests that something could be improved! [-- ]

*Course writer's note:* A comma alone would not be acceptable for combining the two sentences as this would create a comma splice. To review comma splices, see the textbook.
2.
  - Remember, revising serves one purpose: it makes your writing readily accessible to the reader. [:]
  - Remember, revising serves one purpose; it makes your writing readily accessible to the reader. [;]
  - Remember, revising serves one purpose -- it makes your writing readily accessible to the reader. [--]

*Course writer's note:* A comma alone would not be acceptable for combining the two sentences as this would create a comma splice.
3.
  - The Internet has been compared to a giant tabloid, but that's not the view held by most distance educators. [, BUT]
  - The Internet has been compared to a giant tabloid; however, that's not the view held by most distance educators. [; HOWEVER]

*Course writer's note:* Your revised sentences should include words like “but” or “however” in order to indicate clearly to your readers that distance educators do not hold the view that the Internet is a giant tabloid.
4. Some possible revisions include:
  - Distance education students often have work and family responsibilities vying for their time, and this makes studying at a distance challenging; self-discipline is essential. [, AND // ; ]
  - Distance education students often have work and family responsibilities vying for their time, and this makes studying at a distance challenging because self-discipline is essential. [, AND // BECAUSE ]
  - Distance education students often have work and family responsibilities vying for their time; this makes studying at a distance challenging; self-discipline is essential. [; // ;]
5. The strongest argument for legalization of the abortion pill is the ease and convenience it would deliver for women. The surgical method is a very uncomfortable procedure; it is often traumatizing for women and has been known to leave emotional scars that last a lifetime. [← ;] The drug RU-486

practically eliminates that trauma; it prevents the pain and humiliation of going to an abortion clinic and facing angry protestors. [← ;] The abortion pill allows a woman to exercise her right to have an abortion in a safe and private way. Avoiding the trauma of surgery and guaranteed privacy are the great advantages of RU-486.

The strongest argument for legalization of the abortion pill is the ease and convenience it would deliver for women. The surgical method is a very uncomfortable procedure; furthermore, it is often traumatizing for women and has been known to leave emotional scars that last a lifetime. [← ; FURTHERMORE] The drug RU-486 practically eliminates that trauma; in addition, it prevents the pain and humiliation of going to an abortion clinic and facing angry protestors. [← ; IN ADDITION] The abortion pill allows a woman to exercise her right to have an abortion in a safe and private way. Avoiding the trauma of surgery and guaranteed privacy are the great advantages of RU-486.

► Go to Section 12.3 of the lesson.

## Answer Guidelines for 12.3

To follow are some of the many ways of transforming the sentences.

- The vampire padded softly along, pausing, sniffing, and hurrying on.
  - The vampire padded softly along; it paused and sniffed the air before hurrying on.
- You'll have to reserve that video; its popularity makes it difficult to find.  
*Course writer's note:* You should not use a comma to connect the two main clauses above. This would create a comma splice.
  - Finding that video is difficult because it is so popular; you'll have to reserve it.
  - You'll have to reserve that video, for its popularity makes it difficult to find.
  - You'll have to reserve that popular video as it is difficult to find.
  - It's difficult to find that popular video; you'll have to reserve it.
- Although no known species of reindeer can fly, there are 300,000 species of living organisms yet to be classified, so this does not rule out flying reindeer.
  - No known species of reindeer can fly, but there are 300,000 species of living organisms yet to be classified (mostly insects and germs), so this does not rule out flying reindeer.  
*Course writer's note:* Incidentally, what error has this writer made in his or her reasoning? It's illogical to compare reindeer to insects and germs. The conclusion does not follow from the evidence.
4. Once I complete an article or a chapter of a novel, the really hard work begins.



First, Brock reads back every word I have written. Then we discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the material. I have to admit that this can be painful at times, but he is almost always right in his assessment.

Often I have to leave the manuscript and go vacuum the carpet to let off steam. When I return, I am ready to rewrite the material. And it is inevitable that there will have to be a rewrite. That is a fact of life for a writer.

5. I once said: "I may not be the world's greatest writer, but I'm certainly one of the great rewriters," my years as an editor at Macmillan having taught me how much hard work writing requires. To see one of my manuscripts in its third version is to see pieces of paper that have been scribbled upon, cut and pasted, and endlessly revised. When the book finally appears, it often reads so smoothly that others have been led into believing that the result was easily achieved; only my manuscripts, each filed away for inspection in some accessible library, will show how diligently I worked to attain this ever-advancing narrative flow. It did not come automatically.

► Go to section 12.4 of the lesson.

## Answer Guidelines for 12.4

### Sample 1

- I made a complete fool of myself. My fly was down and my shirt was sticking out of it. I wanted to ask her out in her own language, but when I tried to say, "Would you like to go to the movies?", I actually said, "Dance with my ostrich's uncle and then vomit on my disco shoes."
- I made a complete fool of myself because I wanted to ask her out in her own language. I tried to say "Would you like to go to the movies?", but I actually said, "Dance with my ostrich's uncle and then vomit on my disco shoes." Through it all, my fly was down and my shirt was sticking out of it.
- I wanted to ask her out in her own language. I tried to say "Would you like to go to the movies?" but I actually said "Dance with my ostrich's uncle and then vomit on my disco shoes." Through it all, my fly was down and my shirt was sticking out of it. I made a complete fool of myself.

### Sample 2

Did you recognize this passage as the lesson introduction?

I once knew a woman who wore black, from head to toe, every single day. At first I thought she cut quite a figure, but after some time I grew tired of her look. It was so predictable. I longed for her to wear some colour, even if it were only in a scarf or brooch. Much like my friend's wardrobe, some writers compose sentences of the same length; their writing has no variety. A reader easily becomes bored.

### Sample 3

To follow are the ways two different writers revised the passage. You may have made some of the same choices. Although the second writer combined the series of short sentences beginning with “He must” (par. 1) into one long sentence, the first writer did not. She liked the rhythm of the short sentences, feeling that it emphasized the amount of work that Santa has to do.

• *Model 1.*

Is there a Santa Claus? Let’s consider the facts. Santa has 31 hours of Christmas to work with due to the different time zones and the rotation of the earth, and assuming that he travels east to west (which seems logical). This works out to 822.6 visits per second. That is to say, for each household with good children, Santa has 1/1000th of a second to work with. In that short time, he must park. He must hop out of the sleigh. He must jump down the chimney. He must fill the stockings. He must distribute the remaining presents under the tree. He must eat whatever snacks have been left. He must get back up the chimney. He must jump into the sleigh. Only then can he move on to the next house.

Assume that each of these 91.8 million stops are distributed evenly around the earth (of course, we know this to be false, but for the purposes of our calculations, we will accept it). We are now talking about .78 miles per household. This is a total trip of 75-1/2 million miles. It doesn’t count stops to do what most of us must do at least once every 31 hours, let alone feeding the reindeer. This means that Santa’s sleigh is moving at 650 miles per second. That’s 3,000 times the speed of sound. For purposes of comparison, consider the Ulysses space probe: the fastest man-made vehicle, it moves at a poky 27.4 miles per second. A conventional reindeer can run, tops, 15 miles per hour. In conclusion, if Santa ever *did* deliver presents on Christmas Eve, he’s dead now.

• *Model 2.*

Is there a Santa Claus? Let’s consider the facts. Santa has 31 hours of Christmas to work with, thanks to the different time zones and the rotation of the earth, and assuming he travels east to west (which seems logical). This works out to 822.6 visits per second. This is to say that for each household with good children, Santa has 1/1000th of a second to park, hop out of the sleigh, jump down the chimney, fill the stockings, distribute the remaining presents under the tree, eat whatever snacks have been left, get back up the chimney, jump into the sleigh and move on to the next house.

Assuming that each of these 91.8 million stops are distributed evenly around the earth (which, of course, we know to be false, but for the purposes of our calculations we will accept), we are now talking about .78 miles per household, a total trip of 75-1/2 million miles, not counting stops to do what most of us must do at least once every 31 hours, plus feeding the reindeer. This means that Santa’s sleigh is moving at 650 miles per second, 3,000 times the speed of sound. For purposes of comparison, consider that the fastest man-made vehicle on earth, the Ulysses space probe, moves at a poky 27.4 miles per second -- a conventional

reindeer can run, tops, 15 miles per hour. In conclusion, if Santa ever *did* deliver presents on Christmas Eve, he's dead now.

*Course writer's note:* By the way, would this passage stand up under the STAR test (Lesson 7)? Why or why not?

► Go to section 12.5 of the lesson.

## Answer Guidelines for 12.7

1. *Dog for sale: eats anything and is fond of children.* Few people would want to buy a child-eating dog! Here two ways you could have rewritten this ad:
  - Dog for sale: fond of children and eats anything.
  - Dog for sale: eats anything and is also fond of children.
2. *Mixing bowl set designed to please a cook with round bottom for efficient beating.* Don't most cooks have round bottoms that, unfortunately, can be beaten efficiently? Some ways to rewrite this ad include:
  - Mixing bowl set with round bottom for efficient beating; designed to please a cook.
  - Mixing bowl set designed to please a cook: has round bottom for efficient beating.
  - Mixing bowl set designed to please a cook. Has round bottom for efficient beating.
  - Mixing bowl set designed to please a cook -- has round bottom for efficient beating.
3. *For sale: antique desk suitable for lady with thick legs and large drawers.* Maybe the desk comes with a sturdy chair that will support a pear-shaped woman? Here are some ways to rewrite this ad:
  - For sale: antique desk with thick legs and large drawers, suitable for a lady.
  - For sale: antique desk suitable for a lady, thick legs and large drawers.
4. *Have several very old dresses from grandmother in beautiful condition.* The advertiser probably didn't intend to brag about a beautiful grandmother! You could have rewritten the ad along these lines:
  - Have several very old dresses, from grandmother, in beautiful condition.
  - Have several very old dresses in beautiful condition from grandmother.
  - From grandmother, several very old dresses in beautiful condition.
5. *Wanted. Man to take care of cow that does not smoke or drink.*  
Hmmm...wouldn't a substance-abusing cow require more care than one that doesn't smoke or drink? Revision ideas:
  - Wanted. Man who does not smoke or drink to take care of cow.
  - Wanted. Man to take care of cow. He must not smoke or drink.
  - Wanted. Man to take care of cow; he must not smoke or drink.

- Wanted. Non-smoking and non-drinking man to take care of cow.
6. *We will oil your sewing machine and adjust tension in your home for \$1.00.* I'd pay these advertisers more than one dollar to rid my home of stress, and I wouldn't even expect them to oil my sewing machine! Revision ideas:
- We will oil your sewing machine and adjust its tension in your home for \$1.00.
  - We will oil and adjust the tension of your sewing machine in your home for \$1.00.
  - In your home, we will oil your sewing machine and adjust its tension for \$1.00.
  - For \$1.00, we will oil your sewing machine and adjust its tension in your home.
- Go to section 12.8 of the lesson.

## **Notes**

1. W. Strong in M.F. Stewart. Sentence-combining: Its past, present, and future. *The English Quarterly*, 21-36.
2. O'Hare & Memering, 1990.
3. Items 1 and 2 are adapted from Thoene & Thoene, *Writer to Writer*, 1990.
4. Source unknown.
5. Heffernan & Lincoln, 1994.
6. From *Family Arsenal* by Paul Theroux, quoted in Scardamalia et al, 1981.
7. Source unknown.
8. Heffernan & Lincoln, 1994.
9. My approach to sentence combining in this lesson is adapted from O'Hare & Memering, 1990.



# LESSON 13

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## PROOFREADING

A careful rereading of the paper a day after you think it is completed often reveals enough errors to negatively influence a reader's evaluation.<sup>1</sup>

### Reminder

Remember to set aside time to work on your assignments so that you will be able to submit them by the due dates.

### Introduction

A supervisor once asked me to duplicate a research study conducted by our office. The study was to be used as part of her petition for a job-creation grant during an important meeting later that evening. Unfortunately, I was in such a rush to compile the copies that I failed to look through them before I gave them to her. When she was making her presentation to the committee, she discovered that a critical page was missing.

Do you recall a similar incident where, to your embarrassment or inconvenience, you overlooked an error in an important document? Maybe you accidentally mistyped a word, deleted part of a sentence, or stapled pages together in the wrong sequence. It's frustrating when an instructor lowers your grade due to such errors, especially when the argument you made was a sound one. And it's even more unfortunate when errors surface in a resume or business proposal because, however unfairly, they may give your reader a bad impression.

It's been said that over half of the errors in a final draft are caused by carelessness rather than ignorance of the conventions of written language.<sup>2</sup> Although it is difficult to catch every mistake, this lesson will recommend some techniques to help you proofread your university and business compositions more effectively.

### Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- distinguish among revising, proofreading and editing;
- apply two or three proofreading techniques;
- use a proofreading checklist to guide your search for errors in a final draft.

## 13.1 What's "Proofreading" Anyway?

The last thing you should do before submitting an assignment to an instructor or a report to a supervisor is to proofread your writing. How do you think proofreading differs from revising?

- **Revising** means reworking your draft so it says what you want it to say clearly and gracefully. As you revise, you move from a broad survey of the text (global revisions) to a line-by-line examination (local revisions or **editing**), all the time developing, cutting, and reordering.
- **Proofreading** means examining the *finished* text or "proof" to find and fix errors in typing or writing. It's important to do one last check for mistakes that you may have missed or accidentally created while editing, such as errors in spelling, capitalization, quotation marks, page sequencing and margin widths.

## 13.2 The Danger of Relying on Spell Check

Taking proofreading seriously will help you avoid embarrassing mistakes in your writing and convey a good impression to your reader. However, you shouldn't rely on your spell-checker program to find all your spelling errors. The following exercise should help make it clear why spell checking alone will not enable you to find all spelling errors in your final draft.

## 13.3 But I Used the Spell Checker!

Take a moment to underline and correct the spelling errors in the following writing samples. Then, compare your corrections to those provided at the end of the lesson.

1. Excerpts from some actual classified ads:<sup>3</sup>
  - a. Our experienced Mom will care for your child. Fenced yard, meals, and smacks included.
  - b. Vacation special: Have your home exterminated. Get rid of aunts. Zap does the job in 24 hours.
  - c. For rent: 6-room hated apartment.
  - d. And now, the Superstore — unequaled in size, unmatched in variety, unrivaled inconvenience.
  - e. For sale. Three canaries of undermined sex. Great Dames for sale.
2. I have a spell checker,  
It came with my PC;  
It plainly marks four my revue,  
Mistakes I cannot sea.



I ran this poem threw it,  
I'm sure your please too no;  
Its letter perfect in it's weigh,  
My checker tolled me sew.<sup>4</sup>

### 13.4 Proofreading Challenge

In the above exercise, you looked specifically for spelling errors. In this exercise, you should look for typing or writing errors in general. After proofreading and correcting the mistakes in the following business letter<sup>5</sup>, compare your corrections to the model answer provided at the end of the lesson.

Dear colleague:

I am writing to introduce our company as one of Canadas leading distributors in print stationery. We offer a comprehensive range of products, including:

continuous listing paper	cheques
continuous envelopes	self-adhesive labels
business cards	fax paper
letterhead	copier paper

IB Forms commenced trading in 9172 and since that time has earned regular contracts from many major accounts such as ford, Chrysler, Air Canda, and Purolator As you may have read in a recent issue of The Globe and Mail, we are currently ranked among the top ten business forms suppliers within Canada.

Quotations and samples of our products are only a toll-free telephone call away.

Sincerely,

### 13.5 Formatting

Did you notice that the date, signature block and letterhead (including the toll-free number) were missing from the above business letter? These features are a necessary and conventional part of the business letter. In the same way that you follow certain writing conventions in the workplace, you should also follow certain writing conventions or formatting guidelines at the university.

Checking for correct formatting is part of proofreading. In the case of a university assignment, you should check your final draft to see that you have followed the instructor's specifications for lay-out issues such as:

- margin width (1" or 1.5"?)
- line spacing (1.5 or 2?)

- page numbering (bottom centre or top right?)
- the title page (compose your own or use a cover form provided in the course package?)
- citing sources (use endnotes or footnotes? follow APA or MLA style?)

For this course, the instructor has probably included formatting guidelines in the Assignment File, on the Instructor and Assignment Information page, or in both places. If you have any doubt about the instructor's expectations, contact him or her.

## 13.6 Tips from the Experts

So far, you've practised proofreading in some brief exercises in this lesson, and you may have been fairly successful. It's often easier to spot errors in someone else's work than in your own. By the time you finish a composition, you're so familiar with what you *think* you've said that you may miss what you've *really* said. To follow are some tips from the experts to help you proofread more effectively.<sup>6</sup>

It would be difficult for you to apply every one of the following tips -- there's a lot of them to remember! Even if you managed to apply every technique, it's unlikely that all of them would work for you. Some strategies will work better for you than others. I recommend that you choose two or three tips from the following list that seem most useful for you. Once applying the techniques becomes habitual (that is, when you can do them without even thinking about them), you may wish to return to this list, and select a few more to put into practice. Or you may wish to trade in a technique that didn't work very well for one that looks more promising.

1. Let the final draft sit overnight before you proofread it so that you can approach it with "fresh" eyes. If you proofread too soon after your final edit, you will see what you *think* you've written (what's fresh in your mind), not what you've *actually* written.<sup>7</sup>
2. Read the draft aloud at least once. Sometimes your ears will hear something that your eyes missed. In fact, you might find it effective to tape record your reading of the draft, and to read along in the draft as you play it back.
3. Ask a friend to proofread the draft for you. He or she may discover some errors that you have missed.
4. After proofreading the draft once, start at the end and read word for word *backwards* to the beginning. This will help you to see what you have actually written, not what you have "memorized."
5. Keep a list of mistakes that you make frequently, so that you can refer to this list when proofreading future drafts.
6. Use a coloured index card or piece of paper to place along the bottom of each line as you proofread. This will help you focus on each sentence separately and thus notice missing words more easily. (This is my favourite proofreading strategy.)

7. If you “trip” over a sentence as you read it, read it again for awkward construction or improper punctuation (see Lessons 11 and 12). It may require rewriting.
8. When you find an error, re-read that word and the line it is in to ensure you haven’t overlooked another error in the same word or line. Errors often happen in groups. (This is the case in both practice exercises in the lesson. See the second stanza of “Spellbound” in section 13.3 and the second paragraph of the business letter in section 13.4.)
9. Fold the draft into a fan, and proofread the words in each column. (Be sure to send the instructor an uncreased copy.) This will help you look at each word individually -- sometimes your mind assumes that a word is correct and your eye skips over it without really looking at it.

## 13.7 Proofreading Checklist

The above section lists some proofreading techniques, or *ways* to proofread a final draft. Below, I’ve listed some areas you should examine closely while proofreading. Until looking for these errors becomes automatic for you, you may have to read through a final draft several times — look for one or two checklist items during each reading until you have worked your way through the entire checklist.

I recommend you use the following checklist when you’re ready to submit an assignment for grading (or present a report or proposal to a supervisor). If you find you make some errors frequently, add them to the list.

- Have I checked the spelling of all headings, authors’ names, and book titles?
- Have I checked the spelling of all words of which I am uncertain?
- Do I use Canadian spelling? (E.g., *colour* instead of *color*; *subsidize* instead of *subsidise*.)
- Have I *italicized* (or underlined) all book, newspaper, magazine, and film titles? Have I set out the titles of all articles in “quotation marks”?
- Have I checked all parentheses and quotation marks to ensure I have both ends of the set?
- Have I checked all numbers, figures and dates to see that they are correct and that digits haven’t been switched?
- Are all numerals over 10 written in figures? Are all numerals from one to nine written in words? (Numbers 1 to 9 should be written in figures only when they appear in the same sentence as the number 10 or greater numbers.)
- Have I checked to see that the pages of the draft are numbered correctly and stapled in the correct sequence?
- Have I compared my final draft to the formatting guidelines provided by the instructor? (That is, are my margins the specified width? Have I used the correct line spacing? Are my titles, references, and footnotes or endnotes formatted the way my instructor recommended?)

Have I...

Have I...

If you find only a few mistakes in your final copy, your instructor probably won't mind if you blot out the errors neatly with correction fluid and print the correction in ink. Of course, if you use a computer, it should be easy for you to enter the corrections and reprint the necessary pages.

## Conclusion

When you think you have "finished" a writing task, think again! Put aside the draft for at least one night and then give it another, careful reading (proofreading). It's likely that several mistakes you missed the day before will leap out at you. Finding these errors is particularly important since careless mistakes can lower a grade or a reader's opinion of you.

This lesson recommends at least two ways to improve your proofreading skills:

1. Select two to three proofreading techniques and put them into practice.
2. Use a proofreading checklist to remind you of some common mistakes that you should look for.

## Review Exercise

The following essay has probably been run through spell checker since it has only one spelling mistake (can you find it?), and because the writer seems quite knowledgeable about computers. However, there are some formatting errors in the essay.

1. Proofread the essay, and see if you can locate and correct these errors. (The checklist in section 13.7 might come in handy.)
2. Compare your results to the model answer provided at the end of this lesson.

### The Written Page

The world is moving at a feverish pace and the appreciation of life's simple joys, such as eating a home cooked meal or reading the morning newspaper, have been lost. The latest "advancement" in society is to read your favorite newspaper on the internet instead of buying it at the local newsstand. Reading the newspaper is like drinking your favorite cup of coffee in the morning; it helps to bring you out of your sleep-induced, dull, lazy, coma-like condition and makes you feel alive. Creating this feeling is a task that no computer can mimic and that is why reading the morning paper is far better than clicking on gizmos and watching countless gimmicks while trying to extract the news from the internet.

Computer technology is growing faster than any other technology. Unfortunately, because of all the advancements, the internet seems to favor the technologically elite. My grandmother, an eighty-four year old retiree, has no interest in learning how to use the internet, but she loves reading her favorite newspaper and

magazines on her old, yet comfortable, Lay-Z-Boy recliner. Many people, especially retirees, don't have the know-how or the resources to use the internet.

As many computer salespeople are quick to point out, computers are getting cheaper and cheaper. Computer scientists are continually making computers more efficient and affordable. Unfortunately, there is still no comparison between the cost of a computer and the \$1.00 it cost for an edition of the Windsor Star or the \$3.95 for a copy of Newsweek. When I tried to buy a computer three months ago, the only obstacle was the enormous price tag. I could not find a computer system which included a CPU, monitor, printer, had multi-media capabilities and fulfilled my requirements for under \$2000.00. In all fairness, I did need, at the very least, a Pentium 133. The costs do not end with the price of the computer. I needed another phone line and it would cost \$25.00 a month for unlimited access to the internet. Then there is the subject of the computer that you just purchased becoming obsolete. You see, a computer is not a lifelong possession. After a few years, say five, your computer will be outdated. To reap all the benefits of this new science, you must always be up to date. This is one of the drawbacks of such a fast growing science. I'm surprised that salespeople can keep a straight face when they tell you how "affordable" computers have become.

I can't remember the last time I curled up in bed with my P.C. and read the latest Sports Illustrated, or took my laptop into the bathroom the bathroom and read NBA Inside Stuff. Oh wait! That's right, I never did. Newspaper and magazines are simply more convenient than browsing through the internet. There are no restrictions. You read what you want, when you want, and the newspaper never freezes on you, unlike a computer.

The internet will never make printed material obsolete. Newspapers and magazines are simply cheaper, more convenient and more enjoyable than using the internet. When I want to relax and read the paper, I just don't feel like staring at a florescent, gimmick filled screen; I just want to read the paper.

## **Assigned Reading**

Please turn to the Textbook Key and complete the instructions for Lesson 13.

# Answer Guidelines for Lesson 13

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## Answer Guidelines for 13.3

Incorrect words are underlined. Corrections are enclosed in [square brackets].

1. a. Our experienced Mom will care for your child. Fenced yard, meals, and smacks [snacks] included.
- b. Vacation special: Have your home exterminated. Get rid of aunts [ants]. Zap does the job in 24 hours.
- c. For rent: 6-room hated [heated] apartment.
- d. And now, the Superstore — unequaled in size, unmatched in variety, unrivaled inconvenience, [in convenience]
- e. For sale. Three canaries of undermined [undetermined] sex. Great Dames [Danes] for sale.

2. I have a spell checker,

It came with my PC;

It plainly marks four [for] my revue [review],

Mistakes I cannot sea [see].

I ran this poem threw [through] it,

I'm sure your please too no [you're pleased to know];

Its [It's] letter perfect in it's [its] weigh [way],

My checker tollled [told] me sew [so].

### • Homonyms

Did you catch all the spelling errors in the writing samples? Some of them are tricky. For example, they contain several *homonyms* — words that have the same pronunciation, but different meanings and spelling (e.g., aunts/ants, way/weigh, through/threw, to/too). It might be easier to catch such errors if you set aside your final draft for a night before proofreading it, or if you ask a friend to proofread it for you.

### • *It's* versus *its*

What I'd really like us to look at is the confusion between *it's* and *its* in the poem. This is a common mistake, even for experienced writers.

- *It's* is a contraction, and can be rewritten as *it is* (just like *you're* can be rewritten as *you are*, *don't* can be rewritten as *do not*, and so on).

Example: *It's* a perfect day to work on an Expository Writing assignment.

- *Its* is the possessive form of *it* (just like *hers* is the possessive form of *she*, and *his* is the possessive form of *he*).

Example: The alien aircraft hovered over the wheat field before releasing *its* landing gear.

If you are still having trouble distinguishing between the two forms, refer to the textbook for further discussion, or contact the instructor. One way to avoid this error completely is to not permit yourself to use the apostrophe ('). This will force you to write out "it is" and help you avoid the problem completely.<sup>8</sup>

### 13.4 Proofreading Challenge

Dear colleague:

I am writing to introduce our company as one of Canadas leading distributors in print stationery. We offer a comprehensive range of products, including:

continuous listing paper	cheques
continuous envelopes	self-adhesive labels
business cards	fax paper
letterhead	copier paper

IB Forms commenced trading in 9172 and since that time has earned regular contracts from many major accounts such as ford, Chrysler, Air Canda, and Purolator. As you may have read in a recent issue of The Globe and Mail, we are currently ranked among the top ten business forms suppliers within Canada.

Quotations and samples of our products are only a toll-free telephone call away.

Sincerely,

Were you successful in catching most of the above errors? The following discussion could explain why you may have overlooked some of the mistakes.

- **Canadas** (should be **Canada's**)

Possessive apostrophe errors are made frequently by writing students. Review the corresponding section in the textbook.

- **9172** (should be **1972**)

Switching digits is a common error, which is why you should check all numbers, including dates, dollar amounts, table and chart entries, telephone numbers, and addresses. Another frequent numerical error is repeating a number in a list or chart (e.g., 1, 2, 2, 3, 4). The automatic numbering option in your word processing program can help you avoid this mistake.

- **Canda** (should be **Canada**)

When words are familiar, we expect them to be correct, and often unconsciously skip over them when proofreading. The tips for proofreading listed later in the lesson will help you avoid such “selective” reading.

- ford (should be Ford)

When proofreading, it's easy to miss words that should be capitalized because we expect them to be correct. Headers, footers, titles, page numbers, and tables of contents also fall into this category. To review which words should be capitalized, see the textbook.

- Purolator (should be followed by a period, that is, “Purolator.”)

Often, when revising a draft on the computer, you can accidentally delete a punctuation mark from the end of a sentence. Here's where proofreading aloud might come in handy!

- The Globe and Mail (should be *The Globe and Mail*)

*Italics* are used to indicate the titles of newspapers, books, plays, periodicals, magazines, television programs and films. In handwritten or typewritten texts, you can substitute underlining for *italics*.

- ten (should be 10)

In general, the number 10 and greater numbers should be written in numerals, and the numbers zero through nine should be written in words.

Did you miss any of the above errors? If so, you may wish to make a note of them, especially if you're likely to miss them frequently. For more discussion on any of the above topics, refer to your textbook (use the index), or contact the instructor.

### **Review Exercise: The Written Page**

Compare your corrections to ones that I have made in [square brackets] in the essay.

The world is moving at a feverish pace and the appreciation of life's simple joys, such as eating a home [-]cooked meal or reading the morning newspaper, have been lost. The latest “advancement” in society is to read your favo [u]rite newspaper on the [I]nternet instead of buying it at the local newsstand. Reading the newspaper is like drinking your favo [u]rite cup of coffee in the morning; it helps to bring you out of your sleep-induced, dull, lazy, coma-like condition and makes you feel alive. Creating this feeling is a task that no computer can mimic and that is why reading the morning paper is far better than clicking on gizmos and watching countless gimmicks while trying to extract the news from the [I]nternet.

Computer technology is growing faster than any other technology. Unfortunately, because of all the advancements, the [I]nternet seems to favor the technologically elite. My grandmother, an [84] year old retiree, has no interest in learning how to use the [I]nternet, but she loves reading her favo [u]rite newspaper and magazines on her old, yet comfortable, Lay-Z-Boy recliner. Many people, especially retirees, don't have the know-how or the resources to use the [I]nternet.



As many computer salespeople are quick to point out, computers are getting cheaper and cheaper. Computer scientists are continually making computers more efficient and affordable. Unfortunately, there is still no comparison between the cost of a computer and the \$1.00 it cost for an edition of the *[Windsor Star]* or the \$3.95 for a copy of *[Newsweek]*. When I tried to buy a computer three months ago, the only obstacle was the enormous price tag. I could not find a computer system which included a CPU, monitor, printer, had multi-media capabilities and fulfilled my requirements for under \$2000.00. In all fairness, I did need, at the very least, a Pentium 133. The costs do not end with the price of the computer. I needed another phone line and it would cost \$25.00 a month for unlimited access to the [I]nternet. Then there is the subject of the computer that you just purchased becoming obsolete. You see, a computer is not a lifelong possession. After a few years, say five, your computer will be outdated. To reap all the benefits of this new science, you must always be up to date. This is one of the drawbacks of such a fast[-]growing science. I'm surprised that salespeople can keep a straight face when they tell you how "affordable" computers have become.

I can't remember the last time I curled up in bed with my P.C. and read the latest *[Sports Illustrated]*, or took my laptop into the bathroom ~~the bathroom~~ and read *[NBA Inside Stuff]*. Oh wait! That's right, I never did. Newspaper and magazines are simply more convenient than browsing through the [I]nternet. There are no restrictions. You read what you want, when you want, and the newspaper never freezes on you, unlike a computer.

The [I]nternet will never make printed material obsolete. Newspapers and magazines are simply cheaper, more convenient and more enjoyable than using the [I]nternet. When I want to relax and read the paper, I just don't feel like staring at a flo[u]rescent, gimmick[-]filled screen; I just want to read the paper.

- **Italicize** newspaper and magazine titles

Using the proofreading checklist, you should have caught the fact that the writer forgot to *italicize* (or underline) the newspaper and magazine titles that appear in the essay.

- **Use figures** for numbers over 10

The proofreading checklist should have helped you find that "eighty-four" should be written in figures (84) as it is a number that is greater than 10.

- **Use Canadian spelling**

Did you catch the spelling error in the essay? *Favorite* should be spelled with a "u" in it (*favourite*), as that is the Canadian spelling. Perhaps the writer forgot to select or didn't have a Canadian dictionary option in his word processing program. By the way, if your word processing program offers you a choice of two British dictionaries, choose the "-ize" dictionary over the "-ise" one as this will be closer to Canadian spelling.

- **Capitalize proper nouns**

*Internet* should be capitalized whenever it appears in the essay because it is a name. In other words, you should capitalize *Internet* because it is a proper noun. A **proper noun** names a *particular* person, place or thing (e.g., Uncle Bob, University of Windsor, the Internet). Common nouns are *not* capitalized (e.g., your uncle, some universities, a computer network).

For more on capitalization, see your textbook or discuss your questions with the instructor.

- **Avoid repetition**

Did you notice that the writer accidentally repeated the phrase “the bathroom” in the second-last paragraph? This is an error that some spell checkers will not catch.

- **When do I hyphenate?**

I would be very pleased if you caught some or all of the hyphen (-) omissions in the essay.

The hyphen is used to connect words that work together to describe another word. In other words, the hyphen is used with a compound that serves as an adjective preceding the noun that it modifies:

home-cooked meal

fast-growing science

gimmick-filled screen

To learn more about the hyphen, see your textbook or discuss your questions with the instructor.

If you missed many of the above errors, try using some of the proofreading techniques discussed in section 13.6 of the lesson.

## **What's Next?**

Turn to the Textbook Key and complete the instructions for Lesson 13.

## **Notes**

- 1.O'Hare, F. & Memering, D. (1990). *The Writer's Work: A Guide to Effective Composition*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- 2.O'Hare, F. , & Memering, D. (1990). *The Writer's Work* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- 3.Source unknown.
- 3.Distributed by Peter Lui, Business & Professional Research Organization, at the Successful Proofreading & Editing Techniques seminar held in Toronto, Ontario in September 1994.
- 4.Adapted from a business letter distributed by Peter Lui distributed at the aforementioned seminar.
- 5.Many of the tips are adapted from Francine Fein and John R. Hamilton's *A Nit-Picker's Guide to Proofreading*, as well as suggestions made by Peter Lui during his Successful Proofreading & Editing Techniques workshop held in September, 1994 in Toronto.
- 7.Green, B. & Norton, S. (1995). *Essay Essentials*. (2nd ed.). Toronto: Harcourt, Brace & Company.
- 8.Thanks to Colleen Cassano for this suggestion.



## **UNIT 4 GUIDE**

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### **WRAPPING UP**

Congratulations upon reaching this last unit of the course! Unit 4 contains one lesson -- Lesson 14. This lesson will help prepare you for exams that contain essay questions. Although the lesson is especially suited for this course, it will be helpful as you prepare for and write any exam with essay questions.



# LESSON 14

## APPROACHING ESSAY EXAMS

...nothing fights exam anxiety better than effective preparation.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Several times a year, my colleagues and I offer study-skills seminars for part-time University of Windsor students. I remember beginning a session on exam study skills by passing out some papers and asking participants to keep them face down on their desk. The chatty, jovial atmosphere sobered quickly. Simply reminding the participants of a testing situation made them nervous!

Being prepared for an examination can help to defuse anxiety. This lesson will provide some suggestions for preparing for and writing essay exams. The lesson will also review some ideas we explored during the course. Consequently, by completing this lesson, you will have begun to prepare for the final examination.

#### Notice

By this point in the semester, you should have received an examination information letter from Continuing Education. The letter indicates the date, time, location and duration of your final exam for this course. If you have not received this letter, please contact Continuing Education immediately.

### Objectives

Upon completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- apply two to three study strategies listed in this lesson;
- follow the recommended plan for completing an essay exam successfully.

### 14.1 Preparing for an Essay Exam or Test

How do you usually prepare for an essay test or exam? Which study strategies do you employ?



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Compare your study strategies to those that follow. Do you see any in the following list that might be useful for you?

1. *Prepare a list of course themes*, that is, a list of those ideas or tasks that crop up repeatedly in the course. A recurring idea or activity is usually important enough to be tested. Also, it's easier to remember the various ideas explored in a course when you can find connections among them. The course goals, schedule and assignments may help you identify these connections.
2. *Try to predict the questions that the instructor might ask*. Your list of course themes should help you compose these practice questions. The assignments might also be useful, because they provide samples of the questions asked by the instructor.
3. *Answer your practice questions*. Answering the questions you have composed will give you practice responding to a test situation. Also, some of your questions may prove to be variations of questions that appear on the exam. When writing the exam, you can often draw on the same ideas and examples you used to answer your practice questions.
4. *Study with a classmate*. Exchanging a list of course themes with a classmate may be useful. It will boost your confidence if he or she identifies the same themes, and may prove helpful if he or she thinks of some that you didn't. You could also swap a list of predicted exam questions, and discuss the answers together.
5. *Ask the instructor what to expect*. Sometimes, the instructor will indicate how many exam questions will be asked, and how much each question is worth. Knowing the grading scheme will help you plan how much time to spend on each question -- the more a question is worth, the more time you should allot to it.
6. *Spread out exam preparation over several sittings*. This will help you avoid information overload and the panic that accompanies last-minute cramming. Decide what you will study during which session -- for example, you may decide to prepare a list of course themes one evening, a list of possible exam questions the next, answer the questions on the third evening, and review with a classmate on the fourth evening.
7. *Review*. At the beginning of each study session, remember to review the ideas or questions you studied during the previous sessions -- this will help fix what you've studied into your memory.

## 14.2 Strategize for Success

The exam for this course will be comprehensive, so a useful study strategy is to look for connections among the lessons and text chapters. This exercise will help you identify the ideas and activities that hold the course together.

1. Which ideas came up often in the lesson notes and assigned readings? Were there certain types of activities that I and the instructor asked you to do often? List these themes below. (*Hint: You may wish to look at course schedule to remind yourself of the lesson topics. The course goals and assignments should also provide clues.*)





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2. Now, compare your list of course themes to mine. (Keep in mind that my list is a *sample* — you may have listed additional themes to mine):
- writing process (prewriting, writing, rewriting).
  - global versus local revisions.
  - analyzing writing samples for strengths and weaknesses.
  - composing arguments; supporting arguments with evidence.
  - connecting personal experience to course ideas.
  - recognizing the validity of other viewpoints.
  - writing involves making informed decisions.
  - selectivity: choosing the writing strategies that will work best in a given situation; concentrating on finding and correcting a few patterns of error.
3. Next, based on your list of course themes, try to predict at least three questions that the instructor could ask on the final exam.



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4. Compare your list of questions to those asked on the practice final exam in the Assignment File.

Chances are you didn't guess *exactly* which questions were on the exam, but you may have been pretty close. I've often found that I could modify the answers to my

practice questions to suit the ones asked by the instructor. For example, say you predicted the instructor would ask, "Describe the model of the writing process" and practiced answering this question. You should be able to draw from the ideas and examples you used while studying to answer the actual exam question that follows:

The following analogy demonstrates the importance of a particular phase of the writing process. What is this phase? Is the analogy a good one? Why or why not? Support your answer with reference to the lessons/text and your personal writing experience.

A hungry diner sits down in a carefully selected restaurant to eat a delicious meal. The diner is paying for, and has every right to expect, a meal that is tasty and well prepared. He expects the courses to be presented in an orderly fashion — dessert doesn't come first nor soup last. While he may be willing to try the unknown, sample a new recipe, he does not want to have to pick too many fine bones out of the fish nor eat with dirty silverware. At the conclusion of the meal, he should be able to say that the individual dishes were enjoyable and that the entire meal was satisfactory. A good restaurateur knows that if a diner goes away unhappy, he will not soon return. (Analogy adapted from Bodie & Brock Thoene, *Writer to Writer*, 1990.)

Here's another example. Say you predicted the instructor would give you a writing sample on the final exam, and ask you to analyze it for strengths and weaknesses (e.g., the author establishes a central argument clearly/not clearly, supports the argument adequately/inadequately, or could improve significantly by addressing a certain pattern of mechanical error). You may have practiced critiquing several writing samples from the lessons or text. It is unlikely that the same writing sample would appear on the final exam. However, when critiquing the exam sample, it is probable that you could apply the same method of analysis and look for the same features that you did in your practice samples.

### 14.3 Exam Checklist

If exams make you anxious, you might find the following checklist useful. Tape it to your fridge or bathroom mirror so that you'll be sure to see it.

#### The week before

- Have I confirmed the date, site, and time of my exam by rereading the examination information letter from Continuing Education?
- Have I contacted the instructor for clarification if I am unsure if the exam is "open book"?
- (If possible,) have I visited the exam location so that I know where to find it on exam day?

### The day of the exam

- ❑ Do I have my exam information letter in case I forget the name of the building and number of the room in which I will write my exam?
- ❑ Do I have two or three pens in case one runs dry?
- ❑ Do I have a watch so that I can budget my time?
- ❑ If I am permitted to use my notes or textbook during the exam, do I have these items with me?
- ❑ Have I decided when to leave for my exam so that I will arrive several minutes early (or in plenty of time to scout out the location if I couldn't do so earlier)?

### Exercise 14.4: In the Exam Room

Ahmed bites his pencil nervously, and fidgets with the exam paper that is face down in front of him. His stomach growls. What time is it? C'mon, let's get started! At last, the invigilator indicates that it is time for the examination to begin. Ahmed flips over the paper, and reads the first question quickly:

Author William Zinsser writes, "Only by repeated applications of process -- writing and rewriting and pruning and shaping -- can we hammer out a clear and simple product." <sup>2</sup> Do you agree or disagree with Zinsser? Support your position with examples from the course materials and your personal writing experience.

Aha! *Process!* That's a familiar word! Relieved, Ahmed begins to write. When he has exhausted everything he can remember about the writing process, he begins the second question.

Which suggestions would you make to Ahmed to improve his exam-taking technique? Compare your response to the discussion that follows.

### 14.5 Developing a Plan

In your answer to Exercise 14.4, you might have suggested that Ahmed concentrate on remaining calm, bring a watch to the exam room, eat a good breakfast, or maybe even write in ink for greater legibility (arguing that neat writing means a happier evaluator!). While these are important points, I'd like to focus on a plan that Ahmed could have followed to complete his exam successfully.

#### When you turn over the exam paper...

Many instructors recommend that you complete the following steps before beginning the first exam question.

1. *Skim the entire exam.* Make sure you understand the questions and directions.
2. *Jot in the margins* or on the back of the paper your memory aids or facts you will need and might forget.

3. *Calculate the time* you should allot to each question. Base your time allotments on the grade value for each question. Leave time to proofread. For example, if I had three questions to answer in two hours, and the questions were worth equal weight, I would budget 40 minutes per question (120 minutes ÷ 3 questions). In each 40-minute segment, I would set aside, say, 10 minutes to review and proofread my answer.

The above steps apply to multiple-choice exams and exams with a variety of questions, as well as to essay exams.

### **When answering a particular essay question...**

Once you've oriented yourself to the exam and decided how much time to spend on each question, you should choose the question you wish to answer first. (I do the easiest questions first. This builds confidence and allows more time for difficult questions.) The following steps may help you complete each question successfully.

4. *Underline key task words* in the instructions (e.g., explain, argue, support) so that you understand clearly what you're being asked to do and will stay focused in your answer. What are the key words in Ahmed's instructions? I would underline *agree/disagree*, and *support*. Ahmed is being asked to take a position and support it, not to regurgitate every detail he knows about the question. (See the glossary of key task words in section 14.7.)
5. *Jot down a rough outline* or concept map that you can follow while writing your answer. This will help you to avoid rambling. If you need some time to gather ideas before preparing an outline, you could brainstorm by listing key words or points related to the question. The list might help you focus your thoughts and construct an answer. (See Lesson 2 for examples of outlines, concept maps, and brainstorming lists.)
6. Remember the traditional essay model we explored in Lesson 3? You can use it to *structure your answers*. Organize your ideas with an opening statement, include supporting evidence, and state a conclusion. (By the way, if you run short of time, answer in point form so that you can get part marks.)

You might find it useful to restate the question in your opening and concluding statements. This will help to keep you focused as you write. For example, Ahmed could have begun his answer by writing, "I agree [or disagree] with Zinsser that we can only hammer out a clear and simple product by repeated applications of process."

7. *Write on every other line*. Double spacing your answers will allow you to insert points that you remember later, and make corrections while proofreading.

## **14.6 Riding a Bicycle on a Tightrope**

The exam situation is tough in that you don't have time to develop and revise ideas like you do for your assignments. Nevertheless, the principles of writing you learned during the course still apply!

Return to steps 4-7 above. How do the steps reflect the principles of writing that we explored during the course?

The writing process that you experience over several hours or weeks for an assignment is condensed into minutes for an exam question. As American novelist William Faulkner said, “Some kinds of writing must be done very quickly, like riding a bicycle on a tightrope.”<sup>3</sup>

- Steps 4 and 5 deal with prewriting or generating the ideas you need to answer the question.
- During step 6, you draft and support an argument, much as you did in the exercises and assignments throughout the course.
- During step 7, you revise, edit and proofread your answer before it is passed on to the reader.

## 14.7 Glossary of Key Task Words

Essay questions often use certain task words. You can help yourself to focus more quickly and avoid misinterpreting a question by familiarizing yourself with these task words. Don't feel you must memorize the definitions that appear below, and don't panic during the exam if you can't define them precisely. A general familiarity will do. Perhaps your instructor will tell you which of these terms (that is, what kinds of tasks) will appear on the final exam...why not ask? Here are some of the most frequently used task words and their meanings.<sup>4</sup>

- *Analyze* — to divide something into its parts in order to understand it better, then to see how the parts work together to produce the overall pattern. For example, you might analyze the strength of a written argument by looking at the number of its examples, the typicality of its examples, the accuracy of its examples, the relevance of its examples to its sub-claims, and the relevance of its sub-claims to its main claim/thesis (STAR test).
- *Criticize* — to point out errors or weaknesses. Criticize also means to point out strong points.
- *Define* — to give a short, clear and accurate statement. It does not mean to discuss in detail.
- *Evaluate* — to judge the worth or truthfulness of something. Evaluation is similar to criticism, but the word *evaluate* places more stress on the idea of making some ultimate judgment about how well something meets a certain standard or fulfills some specific purpose. Evaluation involves discussing strengths and weaknesses.
- *Explain* — to tell “how” in order to give a clear picture. Often an example will help.
- *Illustrate* — to give a good, clear and relevant example.
- *List* — to write only a simple series of items. Do not discuss or illustrate.

- *Outline* — to give the main points only, with little or no discussion. Show the relative importance of and relationship(s) between items.
- *Prove*— to list the arguments in favour of something. Sometimes a similar list of arguments against the objections will be helpful.
- *State* — to express ideas briefly and concisely.
- *Summarize* — to sum up the main points in a brief and concise manner.

## **Conclusion**

Being prepared is one way to relieve exam anxiety. This lesson suggested study strategies for the essay exam, as well as a plan to follow in the exam room.

The final exam in this course will give you a chance to both discuss and demonstrate what you've learned. You will discuss what you've learned in your answers to the exam. You will demonstrate what you've learned as you compose your answers (e.g., you will generate ideas, state and support an argument, and revise, edit and proofread your writing).

## **Where to Go from Here**

Following the guidelines presented in this lesson, prepare for the final exam (Section 14.2 may prove especially helpful). Then, complete the practice final exam in the Assignment File under exam-like conditions -- set aside the allotted time to write it and keep the course materials in another room so you aren't tempted to peek at them. Model answers are provided to help you evaluate your work.

Congratulations upon completing the final lesson in the course! Best wishes for the final exam.

## **Notes**

1. Gardner, J.N. & Jewler, A.J., eds. (1991). *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, p.101.

2. Zinsser, W. (1988). *Writing to Learn*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

3. Cited in O'Hare & Memering, 1990.

4. The glossary of tasks words and the introduction to the glossary are adapted from Gardner & Jewler, 1991, p.103, and the Institute of Canadian Bankers, *How to Study at a Distance* (1991, May), p.11.





# **READER**

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## **01-26-100-91**

This Reader contains samples of student writing that we will explore during the lessons. The lessons will instruct you when to refer to the Reader.



## Sample A: Unscrambling Exercise

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- 1 As many computer salespeople are quick to point out, computers are getting cheaper and cheaper. Computer scientists are continually making computers more efficient and affordable. Unfortunately, there is still no comparison between the cost of a computer and the \$1.00 it cost for an edition of the *Windsor Star* or the \$3.95 for a copy of *Newsweek*. When I tried to buy a computer three months ago, the only obstacle was the enormous price tag. I could not find a computer system which included a CPU, monitor, printer, had multi-media capabilities and fulfilled by requirements for under \$2000.00. In all fairness, I did need, at the very least, a Pentium 133. The costs do not end with the price of the computer. I needed another phone line and it would cost \$25.00 a month for unlimited access to the Internet. Then there is the subject of the computer that you just purchased becoming obsolete. You see, a computer is not a lifelong possession. After a few years, say five, your computer will be outdated. To reap all the benefits of this new science, one must always be up to date. This is one of the drawbacks of such a fast-growing science. I'm surprised that salespeople can keep a straight face when they tell you how "affordable" computers have become.
- 2 Computer technology is growing faster than any other technology. Unfortunately, because of all the advancements, the Internet seems to favor the technologically elite. My grandmother, an 84 year old retiree, has no interest in learning how to use the Internet, but she loves reading her favourite newspaper and magazines on her old, yet comfortable, Lay-Z-Boy recliner. Many people, especially retirees, don't have the know-how, or the resources to use the Internet.
- 3 The world is moving at a feverish pace and the appreciation of life's simple joys, such as eating a home-cooked meal or reading the morning newspaper, have been lost. The latest "advancement" in society is to read your favourite newspaper on the Internet instead of buying it at the local newsstand. Reading the newspaper is like drinking your favourite cup of coffee in the morning, it helps to bring you out of your sleep-induced, dull, lazy, coma-like condition and you feel alive. Creating this feeling is a task that no computer can mimic and that is why reading the morning paper is far better than clicking on gizmos and watching countless gimmicks while trying to extract the news from the Internet.
- 4 The Internet will never make printed material obsolete. Newspapers and magazines are simply cheaper, more convenient and more enjoyable than using the Internet. When I want to relax and read the paper, I just don't feel like staring at a fluorescent, gimmick-filled screen, I just want to read the paper.



- 5 I can't remember the last time I curled up in bed with my P.C. and read the latest *Sports Illustrated* or took my laptop into the bathroom and read *NBA Inside Stuff*. Oh wait! That's right, I never did. Newspaper and magazines are simply more convenient than browsing through the Internet. There are no restrictions. You read what you want, when you want, and the newspaper never freezes on you, unlike a computer.



## Sample B: Dinner with Dr. Death

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- 1 There are so many people in the world I just do not understand. People do things for reasons that make no sense to me. If I were given the opportunity I would like to have dinner with Dr. Kevorkian. This “medical professional” has a lifestyle I cannot imagine living. I would like to spend one hour with him to see how his mind works. To me, Dr. Kevorkian’s claims of assisted suicide are nothing short of murder.
- 2 Death is such a perplexing issue in our lives. There is no way to discover its secrets, so should we try? I think we should not interfere in the life and ultimate death of another human being. Everyone has endured, or will endure, some sort of suffering in their life. Dr. Kevorkian believes that he is capable of deciding when they have suffered enough. Pain is a part of life and we all must go through it. One person should not be able to say, “that’s enough” and kill someone to end the suffering. No matter what a person goes through, ending his/her life is murder.
- 3 Dr. Kevorkian is supposed to be a respected and trusted doctor. He takes this privilege and twists it in order to suit his own desires. He has no right to take the trust of his patients and make such an irreversible decision. He has no authority on when, or how, someone should die. I would like to ask if he enjoys the power this gives him. Anyone that decides someone will die today at his/her hands is a murderer.
- 4 Murder is an immoral sin in our society. No matter what circumstances surround the situation, there is no ethical way to justify ending someone’s life. I would like to ask Dr. Kevorkian what his views are. Is it acceptable to kill a sick person but not a healthy person? If this is really what he believes, what other laws is he willing to make exceptions for? Any moral person will not murder another human being no matter what.
- 5 Everyone was born into this world for a reason. This predetermined fate should dictate when, and how a person dies. Life and death are much larger issues than we can begin to comprehend. For this reason, no one should attempt to change fate. Ending someone’s life before their time is murder — nothing else.
- 6 Death is real; it is permanent. No one should be able to play with the lives of others and determine when death should come for them. If I were able to spend an hour with Dr. Kevorkian I would like to ask one question, “How can you live, knowing how many you have killed?”





## Sample C: Opportunity to Discover

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1 Can you just imagine being given the chance to speak with anyone that ever  
2 existed? What would you say, and better yet, who would you choose? Posed with  
3 these questions I thought long and hard, yet I still could not choose anyone on  
4 earth who could sufficiently answer my impossible questions, no one on earth I  
5 truly felt needed to hear why I had to say. So, instead I looked to the heavens and  
6 chose, if it were possible, to talk to God. I would sit down with God and get him  
7 to answer the questions I am yearning to have answered, and also tell him the  
8 things that I believe He needs to know; that I do not always agree with or  
9 understand the way He does things, and that I believe He could improve His ways.  
10 The main area in which I question God's actions is with suffering. I simply do not  
11 understand why He lets horrible things happen to innocent people. Why does He  
12 let children slowly starve to death till their bodies dry up and their ribs protrude  
13 from their tiny chests? Why does He let innocent people burn up in flames? Why  
14 does He stand by and watch a man's life slowly dwindle away as cancer chews up  
15 his insides? Why? Why? Why? If I was with God, these are the questions I would  
16 yearn to have answered more than any others. I simply cannot think of any  
17 possible good that can come from the pain of others. It makes absolutely no sense.  
18 If I had the chance, I would tell Him that I really do not agree with him allowing  
19 innocent people to suffer, and He should find other ways of doing things that do  
20 not involve hurting people. Another thing I wonder about God is if He actually  
21 guides our lives or just sits back and watches us like an interesting television show.  
22 For it often seems to me that He does not give us enough guidance. It is like we are  
23 just dropped in this big dark world with no map or light to direct our way. This  
24 results in our whole lives being a chaotic journey where many get lost along the  
25 way. He does not give us any hints as to what we should be doing with our lives,  
26 what He wants from us, or what His purpose for us is (if He even has one). So  
27 many people wander through life trying to find themselves and their purpose, and  
28 many never find it. I feel that if He just give us a little more guidance and direction  
29 then this world would be a much better place to live in. Perhaps if everybody felt  
30 they had a true purpose and that they belonged, then there would not be so much  
31 chaos or violence. I truly feel that if God aided us in this area then we as a people  
32 would greatly improve. One more area in which I am confused by God's actions is  
33 with prayer. I often wonder if He actually hears our prayers. If so, then why does it  
34 seem that so many go unanswered? I do believe that God often works in  
35 mysterious ways, and I know that He cannot always give us everything we want.  
36 Yet it does not seem fair to me that someone can pour their hearts and souls out,  
37 get down on their knees and beg, and still be completely ignored. If I had the  
38 opportunity, I would tell God that I believe He should take more time to listen to  
39 the pleas of his people. There are certain things that He should not just ignore. I  
40 guess the main thing I would say to God if I could would be stop for a minute and  
41 take a look around You and see what You have created — death, war, suffering. If  
42 You have any power at all then end the misery, allow us to live in peace and  
43 harmony. Somehow wake up your people and make them realize what they are

44 doing to each other. Let them know that You are up there, and that You are  
45 actually listening. Let them know that You do hear their prayers and take them  
46 into consideration. Ease the pain and suffering and let them know You care. I  
47 believe that it will truly make a world of difference. Having the chance to talk to  
48 God is an opportunity that I would love to be given. As you can tell I have many  
49 unanswered questions, and many things to say. Yet after thinking about it, I feel  
50 part of me may not want to know the answers to these questions, or the responses  
51 to my suggestions. What if He tells me what I do not want to hear? Sometime  
52 having to wonder is better than knowing the truth. I guess the only thing I can do  
53 is live life unknowing, and find out only when He decides the time has come. Until  
54 then I will try to do as it says in the Bible, and “trust in the Lord with all [my]  
55 heart and lean not on [my] own understanding” (Romans 8:31-39).

## Sample D

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- 1 Can you just imagine being given the chance to speak with anyone that ever existed? What would you say, and better yet, who would you choose? Posed with these questions I thought long and hard, yet I still could not choose anyone on earth who could sufficiently answer my impossible questions, no one on earth I truly felt needed to hear why I had to say. So, instead I looked to the heavens and chose, if it were possible, to talk to God. I would sit down with God and get him to answer the questions I am yearning to have answered, and also tell him the things that I believe He needs to know; that I do not always agree with or understand the way He does things, and that I believe He could improve His ways.
- 2 The main area in which I question God's actions is with suffering. I simply do not understand why He lets horrible things happen to innocent people. Why does He let children slowly starve to death till their bodies dry up and their ribs protrude from their tiny chests? Why does He let innocent people burn up in flames? Why does He stand by and watch a man's life slowly dwindle away as cancer chews up his insides? Why? Why? Why? If I was with God, these are the questions I would yearn to have answered more than any others. I simply cannot think of any possible good that can come from the pain of others. It makes absolutely no sense. If I had the chance, I would tell Him that I really do not agree with him allowing innocent people to suffer, and that He should find other ways of doing things that do not involve hurting people.
- 3 Another thing I wonder about God is if He actually guides our lives or just sits back and watches us like an interesting television show. For it often seems to me that He does not give us enough guidance. It is like we are just dropped in this big dark world with no map or light to direct our way. This results in our whole lives being a chaotic journey where many get lost along the way. He does not give us any hints as to what we should be doing with our lives, what He wants from us, or what His purpose for us is (if He even has one). So many people wander through life trying to find themselves and their purpose, and many never find it. I feel that if He just give us a little more guidance and direction then this world would be a much better place to live in. Perhaps if everybody felt they had a true purpose and that they belonged, then there would not be so much chaos or violence. I truly feel that if God aided us in this area then we as a people would greatly improve.
- 4 One more area in which I am confused by God's actions is with prayer. I often wonder if He actually hears our prayers. If so, then why does it seem that so many go unanswered? I do believe that God often works in mysterious ways, and I know that He cannot always give us everything we want. Yet it does not seem fair to me that someone can pour their hearts and souls out, get down on their knees and beg, and still be completely ignored. If I had the opportunity, I would tell God that I believe He should take more time to listen to the pleas of his people. There are certain things that He should not just ignore.

- 5 I guess the main thing I would say to God if I could would be stop for a minute and take a look around You and see what You have created — death, war, suffering. If You have any power at all then end the misery, allow us to live in peace and harmony. Somehow wake up your people and make them realize what they are doing to each other. Let them know that You are up there, and that You are actually listening. Let them know that You do hear their prayers and take them into consideration. Ease the pain and suffering and let them know You care. I believe that it will truly make a world of difference.
- 6 Having the chance to talk to God is an opportunity that I would love to be given. As you can tell I have many unanswered questions, and many things to say. Yet after thinking about it, I feel part of me may not want to know the answers to these questions, or the responses to my suggestions. What if He tells me what I do not want to hear? Sometime having to wonder is better than knowing the truth. I guess the only thing I can do is live life unknowing, and find out only when He decides the time has come. Until then I will try to do as it says in the Bible, and “Trust in the Lord with all [my] heart and lean not on [my] own understanding” (Romans 8:31-39).

## Sample E: The Schizophrenic and Language

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- 1 Language is usually a means to an end for most of us. We use it to communicate our needs and our wants. We also use it to maintain a sense of security. In our world, security is at best a temporary gift. It is something society cannot provide with any regularity. This state of affairs is most difficult for the people who literally need security in order to live. The people I am referring to are schizophrenics. These people also use language to acquire a sense of security and stability. Language is their only link to the outside world which is at most times frightening and unacceptable. The schizophrenic uses language as a cry for help and truth but at the same time there is a recoiling from the truth because of the fear it brings.
- 2 The world of the schizophrenic is one of uncertainty and insecurity. It is very subjective and as the disease itself progresses, this world becomes more and more vague and strange to people who live with the schizophrenic. This is not done by accident. The schizophrenic wishes to distance himself from the outside world and all of its uncertainties. This serves doubly as a punishment for himself and for those who have unwittingly helped him become distanced. Most of the time, the schizophrenic feels the need to establish a false self which faces the outside world and deals almost mechanically with its demands. The "true" self of the vulnerable being is kept locked inside. While this process fulfills itself something happens to the language of the schizophrenic:

The more completely one become self-centred, the more utterly he becomes cut off from integration with more or less real people, and the more utterly novel, perfectly magical, and wholly individual become the symbols which he uses as if they were language.<sup>1</sup>

The language of the outside world becomes inadequate as the schizophrenic searches for a way to express the complexity of distorted emotions and their images. Often, the persons develop a language of their own which is totally unique to them and therefore highly obtuse for others. In the novel, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, we have the story of Deborah who is a sixteen-year-old schizophrenic. The language of her own inner-kingdom is basically a Latinate tongue. At the age of nine, Deborah discovered a large book at her grandfather's house which contained the pictures and words for Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Her subconscious retained some of the words and images in the book and these became the first building stones that would form her paradise and her jail. The secret language of this kingdom she calls Yei forms part of her security. It is totally unique to her because it expresses total experiences of her life. Because this language envelops what is in her heart, it can never be revealed to others outside her inner world, to do so is to risk the tottering sense of security she maintains. We see this risk become a reality in one of her first interviews with her new psychiatrist. Deborah is relating an incident which took place when she was five. At that point in time she had to go to the hospital to have a tumour in the urethra removed. The manner in which she

was treated created difficult emotions which she carried with her ever after. Deborah has a Yei word which is a symbol for the memory and emotion of that day — “upuru”. Unwittingly, Deborah says the word aloud to the psychiatrist and as a result of this show of vulnerability, she flees to her inner kingdom and “locks the gate.” Even the language of Ye has its own rules just as any other language. Each word is a metaphor for a feeling. However, the Yei language has boundaries, again just like any other language. In the Yei language, there is no word for gratitude. This demonstrates the fear of and loathing for human contact apparent in Deborah and all schizophrenics.

- 3 There is a significant characteristic to the language of the schizophrenic which reflects his thinking patterns. This characteristic has been called the concrete concept. It is roughly comparable to the stage which all of us pass through in our development of thought and at which many of us remain. This is the stage at which a person needs to involve himself in the immediate environment in order to solve a problem or involve himself in a situation. Most of us progress through this stage to abstracted thinking with which we are able to hypothesize. For the schizophrenic, however, the concrete poses a special hazard. Many schizophrenics identify with the immediate concrete environment around them. Kurt Goldstein, M.D., writes about this situation and his experience with it and schizophrenics. He says that this tendency is marked in the schizophrenic to an abnormal degree because this person has such a tenuous identity that is always in fear of impingement from the outside worlds.<sup>2</sup> In *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, we see this phenomenon in Deborah Blau. When Deborah is speaking to another patient about the privileges accorded to the recovering patient, she expresses this abstract concept of freedom in concrete words. At this point, Deborah has the right to walk alone on the grounds of the hospital. Deborah says that “I’m a hundred square yards sane.”<sup>3</sup> We see this concrete concept again when Deborah speaks about her suicide attempt just before coming to the hospital. She had slit one wrist and she tells her psychiatrist when asked why she hadn’t bled into the sink that she hadn’t wanted her blood to go too far way.<sup>4</sup> The concrete image is Deborah’s way of expressing her desire to live and her need for help. In Deborah’s own secret language of Yei, she has private terms which also reflect the need for a concrete image to express a feeling or abstract concept. One of these words translates into English as “locked eyes.” This word is meant to symbolize the feeling of a sarcophagus which, in turn, is a concrete image for Deborah’s feeling of being dead to the outside world and existing only in the immediacy around her.<sup>5</sup> In this we see reflected a certain passivity. There is the sense of helplessness and lack of control.
- 4 There is a tendency for the schizophrenic to view what in art is termed as negative space instead of the positive space. This is also expressed as passivity instead of activity. The schizophrenic sees the world as acting against him — he has no part in it. This passivity is an extension of the concrete concept in that objects around us are passive. Schizophrenics often see themselves as vessels smashed by the world’s hate, fear, and misunderstanding. The only way to gain some control over the inevitability of the world’s destruction is to “beat them

to it". This is seen in the example of the schizophrenic who inflicts pain on himself and when asked why he does so replies: "Why, before the world does them....Don't you see? It always comes at last, but this way at least I am master of my own destruction".<sup>6</sup> Deborah also sees the world in this way. She watches a fight on the ward which was started by some of the patients against one of the attendants. This attendant is a man who doesn't understand the insane around him and as a result fears them. The patients are perceptive to this fear and strike back. Deborah is present and she wishes to involve herself but not in an active manner. She sticks out her foot secretly hoping that an attendant will trip over it but this doesn't happen. Even asked later by doctor about the events of the fight she replies: "Lucy Martenson's fist intruded into Mr. Hobb's thought processes, and his foot found some of Lee Miller. I had a foot out, too, but nobody used it."<sup>7</sup> Deborah sees her own effect on people as beyond her control. She feels that her self is poisonous and that all those who come in contact with her will be contaminated. In her passive way, she has separated herself from actively engaging with the people around her by distancing them with something she can't control. Deborah sees herself as an obstacle in the path of nurses and attendants. In this capacity as an object, actions are performed against her with which she feels she has no involvement. When she is touched on the arm by her psychiatrist, Deborah feels her skin sizzle and burn. This points again to passivity because she does not see the "burning" as a result of her fear of human contact. On the contrary, as far as Deborah is concerned, her psychiatrist is the only cause. Deborah must fight the need to be indifferent and this means fighting fear. The schizophrenic can only react when he has secured his own identity in his environment.

- 5 The words of schizophrenics must be listened to closely. There are many messages available to the listener. They are often messages of fear and vulnerability which are buried beneath strange remarks and sentences. The words of schizophrenics are metaphors for a special kind of terror and desperation. As Deborah says "English is for the world — for getting disappointed by and getting hated in. Yei is for saying what is to be said."<sup>8</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> J.S. Kasanin, M.D., ed. *Language and Thought in Schizophrenia* (New York: Sullivan, 1944) 9.

<sup>2</sup>Kasanin 23.

<sup>3</sup>Hannah Green, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (New York: Penguin, 1964) 21.

<sup>4</sup>Green 40.

<sup>5</sup>Green 48.

<sup>6</sup>Green 42.

<sup>7</sup>Green 65.

<sup>8</sup>Green 56.



## Sample F: Dear Ann...

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- 1 **Dear Ann:** What is wrong with men? Every day you read about men who beat up their wives and children, murder girlfriends, torture animals and commit atrocious crimes.
- 2 Driving with a man is enough to make you a nervous wreck. We've all seen men who shake their fists and scream at other motorists. Last week I saw a man get out of his car at a stoplight and punch a stranger in the face because he slowed down at a yellow light and stopped at a red one. The guy screamed, "I could have made that light if you weren't such a dumb !?&X!" and then he socked him. Women don't do things like that.
- 3 It's standing room only in the prisons for men, and more are being built. In fact, some prisoners have been let out early to make room for the new ones coming in. There is no such problem in the prisons for women.
- 4 Why don't our scientists do some serious studies and find out what is in the genetic makeup of males that makes them so vicious? Perhaps if we could come up with some answers, we might be able to put an end to war, which we should know by this time is a senseless and horrible way to try to settle differences.
- 5 Unfortunately, until we come up with some answers, we have to live with these bozos. Anyway, I'd like to know what you think about this.

### **Enough Already in D.C.**

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## Sample G

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- 1 Language is usually a means to an end for most of us. We use it to communicate our needs and our wants. We also use it to maintain a sense of security. In our world, security is at best a temporary gift. It is something society cannot provide with any regularity. This state of affairs is most difficult for the people who literally need security in order to live. The people I am referring to are schizophrenics. These people also use language to acquire a sense of security and stability. Language is their only link to the outside world which is at most times frightening and unacceptable. The schizophrenic uses language as a cry for help and truth but at the same time there is a recoiling from the truth because of the fear it brings.
- 2 The world of the schizophrenic is one of uncertainty and insecurity. It is very subjective and as the disease itself progresses, this world becomes more and more vague and strange to people who live with the schizophrenic. This is not done by accident. The schizophrenic wishes to distance himself from the outside world and all of its uncertainties. This serves doubly as a punishment for himself and for those who have unwittingly helped him become distanced. Most of the time, the schizophrenic feels the need to establish a false self which faces the outside world and deals almost mechanically with its demands. The "true" self of the vulnerable being is kept locked inside. While this process fulfills itself something happens to the language of the schizophrenic:

The more completely one become self-centred, the more utterly he becomes cut off from integration with more or less real people, and the more utterly novel, perfectly magical, and wholly individual become the symbols which he uses as if they were language.<sup>1</sup>

The language of the outside world becomes inadequate as the schizophrenic searches for a way to express the complexity of distorted emotions and their images. Often, the persons develop a language of their own which is totally unique to them and therefore highly obtuse for others. ¶ In the novel, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, we have the story of Deborah who is a sixteen-year-old schizophrenic. The language of her own inner-kingdom is basically a Latinate tongue. At the age of nine, Deborah discovered a large book at her grandfather's house which contained the pictures and words for Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Her subconscious retained some of the words and images in the book and these became the first building stones that would form her paradise and her jail. The secret language of this kingdom she calls Yei forms part of her security. It is totally unique to her because it expresses total experiences of her life. Because this language envelops what is in her heart, it can never be revealed to others outside her inner world, to do so is to risk the tottering sense of security she maintains. We see this risk become a reality in one of her first interviews with her new psychiatrist. Deborah is relating an incident which took place when she was five. At that point in time she had to go to the hospital to have a tumour in the urethra removed. The manner in which she

was treated created difficult emotions which she carried with her ever after. Deborah has a Yei word which is a symbol for the memory and emotion of that day — “upuru”. Unwittingly, Deborah says the word aloud to the psychiatrist and as a result of this show of vulnerability, she flees to her inner kingdom and “locks the gate.” Even the language of Ye has its own rules just as any other language. Each word is a metaphor for a feeling. However, the Yei language has boundaries, again just like any other language. In the Yei language, there is no word for gratitude. This demonstrates the fear of and loathing for human contact apparent in Deborah and all schizophrenics.

- 3 There is a significant characteristic to the language of the schizophrenic which reflects his thinking patterns. This characteristic has been called the concrete concept. It is roughly comparable to the stage which all of us pass through in our development of thought and at which many of us remain. This is the stage at which a person needs to involve himself in the immediate environment in order to solve a problem or involve himself in a situation. Most of us progress through this stage to abstracted thinking with which we are able to hypothesize. For the schizophrenic, however, the concrete poses a special hazard. Many schizophrenics identify with the immediate concrete environment around them. Kurt Goldstein, M.D., writes about this situation and his experience with it and schizophrenics. He says that this tendency is marked in the schizophrenic to an abnormal degree because this person has such a tenuous identity that is always in fear of impingement from the outside worlds.<sup>2</sup> ¶ In *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, we see this phenomenon in Deborah Blau. When Deborah is speaking to another patient about the privileges accorded to the recovering patient, she expresses this abstract concept of freedom in concrete words. At this point, Deborah has the right to walk alone on the grounds of the hospital. Deborah says that “I’m a hundred square yards sane.”<sup>3</sup> We see this concrete concept again when Deborah speaks about her suicide attempt just before coming to the hospital. She had slit one wrist and she tells her psychiatrist when asked why she hadn’t bled into the sink that she hadn’t wanted her blood to go too far way.<sup>4</sup> The concrete image is Deborah’s way of expressing her desire to live and her need for help. In Deborah’s own secret language of Yei, she has private terms which also reflect the need for a concrete image to express a feeling or abstract concept. One of these words translates into English as “locked eyes.” This word is meant to symbolize the feeling of a sarcophagus which, in turn, is a concrete image for Deborah’s feeling of being dead to the outside world and existing only in the immediacy around her.<sup>5</sup> In this we see reflected a certain passivity. There is the sense of helplessness and lack of control.
- 4 There is a tendency for the schizophrenic to view what in art is termed as negative space instead of the positive space. This is also expressed as passivity instead of activity. The schizophrenic sees the world as acting against him — he has no part in it. This passivity is an extension of the concrete concept in that objects around us are passive. Schizophrenics often see themselves as vessels smashed by the world’s hate, fear, and misunderstanding. The only way to gain some control over the inevitability of the world’s destruction is to “beat

them to it". This is seen in the example of the schizophrenic who inflicts pain on himself and when asked why he does so replies: "Why, before the world does them....Don't you see? It always comes at last, but this way at least I am master of my own destruction".<sup>6</sup> ¶ Deborah also sees the world in this way. She watches a fight on the ward which was started by some of the patients against one of the attendants. This attendant is a man who doesn't understand the insane around him and as a result fears them. The patients are perceptive to this fear and strike back. Deborah is present and she wishes to involve herself but not in an active manner. She sticks out her foot secretly hoping that an attendant will trip over it but this doesn't happen. Even asked later by doctor about the events of the fight she replies: "Lucy Martenson's fist intruded into Mr. Hobb's thought processes, and his foot found some of Lee Miller. I had a foot out, too, but nobody used it."<sup>7</sup> Deborah sees her own effect on people as beyond her control. She feels that her self is poisonous and that all those who come in contact with her will be contaminated. In her passive way, she has separated herself from actively engaging with the people around her by distancing them with something she can't control. Deborah sees herself as an obstacle in the path of nurses and attendants. In this capacity as an object, actions are performed against her with which she feels she has no involvement. When she is touched on the arm by her psychiatrist, Deborah feels her skin sizzle and burn. This points again to passivity because she does not see the "burning" as a result of her fear of human contact. On the contrary, as far as Deborah is concerned, her psychiatrist is the only cause. Deborah must fight the need to be indifferent and this means fighting fear. The schizophrenic can only react when he has secured his own identity in his environment.

- 5 The words of schizophrenics must be listened to closely. There are many messages available to the listener. They are often messages of fear and vulnerability which are buried beneath strange remarks and sentences. The words of schizophrenics are metaphors for a special kind of terror and desperation. As Deborah says "English is for the world — for getting disappointed by and getting hated in. Yei is for saying what is to be said."<sup>8</sup>



## Sample H: Analysis of “The Nuclear Winter”

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- 1 The threat of nuclear war is one that is real and apparent to almost everyone. We all know from Hiroshima that the effects of nuclear bombs are horrifying. Yet how many of us actually realize and accept the true implications and dangers of a nuclear war? How many of us really understand just how devastating and destructive it would be to this entire planet? Carl Sagan attempts to make us realize just that in his essay, “The Nuclear Winter.” His use of shocking details, strong diction [word choice], disturbing images, and supporting facts all presented in a clear and organized manner effectively awaken the reader to the urgency and seriousness of this deadly topic.
- 2 One thing Sagan does to help get his point across is by using strong, disturbing details. One such example would be when he states “. . . more than 2 billion people -- almost half of all the humans on earth -- would be destroyed . . .” This is a very frightening thought that not many of us want to consider. Instead of holding back on the dreadful topics that are rarely discussed in society, Sagan brings them out and slaps them in our faces. By making us hear these things and accept them, Sagan is forcing us to come to terms with this possible dreadful outcome. His use of strong details makes readers realize what would actually happen to earth if a nuclear war were to occur.
- 3 Sagan also uses disturbing images to awaken readers to the tragic results of nuclear war. He paints a frightening picture in readers’ heads that tends to stick with them long after the essay is read. One image that shocked and disgusted me is how death and disease would be rampant after a nuclear war, “especially after the billion or so unburied bodies began to thaw.” This is a horrid image to portray in readers’ heads. It really scares us into thinking about what would actually happen to this earth in such a situation. It shocks us into realizing just how devastating nuclear war would be.
- 4 Sagan’s use of disturbing imagery really aids the reader in comprehending the devastating effects of nuclear war. Another example of such an image is when he describes the fall-out after a nuclear bomb, saying that “. . . buildings would be vaporized, people reduced to atoms and shadows . . .” This is a very disturbing image of destruction and death. The thought of people being reduced to nothing and buildings simply blown to ashes is horrifying. It is a strong image that sticks with the reader and causes him or her to think about just how serious nuclear war would be. Sagan’s use of disturbing images truly gets the reader thinking seriously about the effects of nuclear war.
- 5 Another effective technique that Sagan uses in this essay is his choice of diction. He chooses words that stand out and give greater meaning to his argument. The words he picks influence readers and make his point stick in their heads longer. Some examples of such words are “catastrophe,” “vaporized,” “raging,” and “horrifying.” If he had chosen other words, his essay might not have been so effective. These words are strong image-forming words that stick with the reader. Word choice is very important in distinguishing a good essay from a

great one. Sagan's choice of diction not only helps to relay vital disturbing images that touch the reader, but also adds an element of interest that keeps his readers involved in the essay.

- 6 Another thing Sagan does to strengthen his argument is to provide many strong facts from reliable sources. This strengthens his argument and makes it even more believable to his readers. Sagan himself is truly a reliable source with credentials ranging from being a professor of astronomy and space sciences, receiving the NASA Medal for Exceptional Scientific Achievement, and even winning the Pulitzer Prize. Other sources include Sune K. Bergstrom (who won the 1982 Nobel Laureate in physiology and medicine), James B. Pollack, Brian Toon (both of NASA's Ames Research Center), and various others. It is clear to see that these are all highly respected and intelligent sources that can be trusted. Knowing this, readers can have confidence that what Sagan writes is indeed true. These strong sources give credibility to Sagan's essay and this influences readers even more.
- 7 The way in which Sagan organizes and presents his ideas is another thing he does to make his essay a good one. He starts out with a capturing introduction that hooks the readers right from the start. He then proceeds to lay out his disturbing facts and details in a logical manner that keeps the readers interested without confusing them. He tells the story flat out without dancing around the topic. His conclusion is particularly effective. He closes by returning to his introduction ("Except for fools and madmen . . .") by saying that "fools and madmen do exist, and sometimes rise to power." This technique not only ties together the entire essay, but also provides a shivering conclusion and a realization among readers that this type of catastrophe is actually possible. His entire essay is well organized and clear. It captures readers right from the start and makes them keep on reading.
- 8 Carl Sagan's essay is a very interesting and thought-provoking piece of work. His shocking images, strong details, effective diction and reliable sources all wrapped up in a neat, well-organized paper cause his essay to be one which readers will not soon forget. He uses all these techniques to effectively fulfill his purpose to awaken readers to the real and pertinent danger of nuclear war. This puts a necessary fear in the readers, perhaps enough so that they will react to his call to action and actually try to do something about this real and possible nightmare. Sagan's paper truly is an essay that fulfills its purpose easily and effectively. It should be read by anyone who cares about life on this planet.



## Sample I: Animal Experimentation

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- 1 [1]The thought of cute, innocent creatures suffering horrific pain needlessly is a thought that pulls on the heartstrings of almost everyone. [2]Considering this, it is easy to see why the animal rights movement has increased over the years to protect the rights of these creatures. [3]However, many of those who are fighting for the elimination of animal experimentation do not actually know what they are fighting for. [4]Ending animal experimentation would have devastating and drastic results in the medical field. [5]Animal experimentation is a vital tool that is essential in today's medical field for the health of all humans . . . and other animals.
- 2 [1]Those against animal experimentation often argue that animal experimentation serves no actual purpose in today's medical field; that many of the treatments or cures found using animal tests would have been discovered anyway. [2]They say animal research has made no contribution to medical progress (O'Donnel, 1997). [3]Research proves otherwise, however. [4]Researchers themselves contend that animal studies remain the key to virtually every major scientific breakthrough (Morgan, 1989, p. 2). [5]Animals are needed to test new medical treatments for efficacy, test new drugs for toxicity, and carefully develop and test new surgical techniques (Paris, 1997). [6]Without these tests, new medical advances would be near to impossible. [7]How would new drugs or techniques ever be developed? [8]Experimentation on humans is simply out of the question, so animal testing remains the primary resource. [9]Simply by looking at the number of cures and treatments discovered through animal experimentation we can tell how vital it is. [10]Without animal research, polio would cripple thousands of unvaccinated people each year, millions of insulin-dependent diabetics would not have their insulin to depend on, chemotherapy that can now save 70% of children with lymphocytic leukemia would not exist, and millions of people would lose vision in at least one eye because cataract surgery would be impossible (Paris, 1997). [11]The list goes on and on. [12]It is clear to see that if researchers did not have animal experimentation to depend on, then the medical field would be far behind its current level of understanding. [13]Animal experimentation is still vital in making advancements in the medical field today.
- 3 [1]One argument that those opposing animal research often pose is that the pain and suffering animals go through is too extreme and severe. [2]They feel that the pain we put these innocent animals through is not worth the advancements that are made. [3]Animal research, however, does not inflict as much pain on these animals as one may think. [4]The animals are taken very good care of in laboratories. [5]In 1985, Congress enacted the Health Research Extension Act, and in the same year, the Animal Welfare Act of 1966 was amended (Breen, 1993, p. 44). [6]These laws have encouraged much more efficient use of animals. [7]By looking at various laboratories, we can see the measure they go through to ensure the comfort of their animals. [8]The MSU Institute of Environmental Toxicology has a lab that holds rabbits in stainless

steel cages costing more than 4000 dollars apiece; rats are bedded down in aspen wood chips; and mice breathe air that is purified by filters (Breen, 1993, p. 44). [9]It is not hard to tell that these animals are treated in the most humane way possible. [10]While it is unfortunate that they have to suffer at all, we can take comfort in knowing that they are taken good care of, and that they are not suffering needlessly. [11]The pain these creature go through is kept at a minimum. [12]It would not be done unless it was absolutely necessary for medical advancements.

- 4 [1]A common argument for the abolishment of animal research in today's medical field is that with recent advancements in technology, it is no longer necessary. [2]Many against animal research are claiming that alternate methods such as cell cultures or computer models can produce just as good results as animal testing, if not better. [3]Researchers, however, disagree. [4]Alternative methods are incapable of replacing all animal testing because "computers and cell cultures cannot completely mimic the complex biochemical interactions that occur in a well animal" (Breen, p. 43). [5]The Americans for Medical Progress Education Foundation (AMPEF) agrees that "it is impossible to explore, explain or predict the course of many diseases or the effects of many treatments without observing and testing the entire living system" (<http://www.ampef.org/news>). [6]Cell cultures are only isolated tests, and the information and technology to build a true computer model do not yet exist. [7]Real, living, breathing animals are needed. [8]How could a few cells ever provide enough information to apply to our complex systems? [9]Not only that, but computer systems are not even "alive." [10]How could a pile of metal ever give an accurate representation of a living organism? [11]There is just no substitute for testing on animals. [12]It is obvious that there is no alternative method to animal research and it is essential in the medical field for advancements to continue.
- 5 [1]Despite all these facts pointing to the great advancements due to animal research and the obvious necessity of it in the medical field, there are still those who claim that it is not worthwhile. [2]Many animal rights activists have stated that animal research serves no purpose because animals are so different from people that treatments and cures cannot be applied from one to another. [3]Rich, a spokesman from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) stated, "our use of animals has actually retarded our medical research and knowledge" (Morgan, 1989, p. 3). [4]Their most common argument is that penicillin is toxic to guinea pigs, and had it been tested on them it may never have been found to be the great antibiotic that it is (<http://www.navs.org/biomed.htm>). [5]However, when time is taken to look at the facts, it becomes clear that this claim is untrue. [6]During an initial study done in 1943, 60% of the guinea pigs tested did die, but this was attributed to impurities in the sample. [7]Further tests were done and when given the same dose as human receive, with no impurities in the sample, no toxic effects were observed (O'Donnell, 1997). [8]We have already seen the good that has come from animal research. [9]All mammals have the same basic organs performing the same functions and coordinated in the same way. [10]If animals and

humans are so different, then how could pig insulin be used to treat human diabetics for several decades (O'Donnell, 1997)? [11]Animals are a vital part of the medical community and probably always will be.

- 6 [1]Another argument that those fighting for animal rights use is that animals are “wasted” and used too often for unnecessary tests. [2]They contend that many pointless, unnecessary experiments are carried out on animals. [3]This claim, however, can easily be countered. [4]Animal studies are time consuming, tedious, and expensive. [5]Why would companies, charities and under-funded scientists want to waste their time and money like that? [6]Not only that, but strict regulations govern the use of animals in laboratories, preventing unnecessary tests from being performed. [7]In the U.S., there are actually two federal agencies -- the Public Health Service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture -- that oversee the treatment of animals in laboratories (Morrison, 1992, p. 22). [8]Both of these uphold the highest standard of humane animal care. [9]They even enforce this through laboratory inspections. [10]Also, before any tests can be performed at all, researchers must get a protocol approved, which is not an easy thing to do. [11]All of these guidelines exist to ensure that no creature is ever wasted or used unnecessarily.
- 7 [1]Another common argument that animal rights activists use is that we do not have the right to use other animals to better ourselves. [2]Morrison stated “All animals are created equal; therefore, all use of animals is inherently wrong” (1992, p. 20). [3]However, how many of the people who have claimed this have trod on a beetle or squished a fly? [4]As Breen asked “Is there an animal rights activist who would refuse vaccines for polio or tetanus; who would say no to insulin for diabetics or chemotherapy for cancer . . . just because they’ve all been researched and tested on animals” (1993, p. 41)? [5]How many of us would actually try to stop Pasteur’s experiments with rabies which, through animal testing, led to a vaccine that spared millions of people and dogs from agonizing deaths? [6]How would animal rights activists feel if a cure that could have been developed that would save their children’s lives down the road was never created due to their own animal rights movement? [7]There comes a time when we have to make that kind of choice. [8]As David Myers stated, “In deciding which animals have rights we must draw a cut-off line somewhere” (1995, p. 34). [9]Is the life a child not more important than that of a rat? [10]John D. Aquilino certainly thinks so. His son was born with a heart defect, and was allowed to live due to techniques developed through animal research. [11]As he said, “What enlightened animal rights activist can honestly compare the life of one or a thousand rats to that of my son?” (Paris, 1997). [12]It is obvious that all animals are not created equal. [13]Sometimes sacrifices have to be made to better the health of all.
- 8 [1]The biggest technique that those fighting for the elimination of animal testing use is the displaying of pictures of animals in pain. [2]They show pictures of rabbit with oozing skin, of monkeys with electrodes in their heads, of puppy dogs in agonizing pain. [3]These pictures are aimed at triggering our

emotions, at enraging us with the shocking use of these animals.

[4]Researchers, however, can easily counter this technique. [5]Pictures of tiny babies with heart defects hooked up to monitors and tubes; pictures of a child crippled with polio; or pictures of a young man suffering the horrific last stages of AIDS. [6]Animal research can either prevent these situations from occurring, or can take steps to prevent them in the future. Which pictures are more devastating? [7]What hurts more, the thought of 100 rats in pain, or the thought of one child suffering because the 100 rats did not? [8]The compromise of using other animals is one that has to be made for the health of all.

- 9 [1]Animal research is the source of a heated debated that will be around for a long time. [2]Those who strictly disagree with it will probably never change their minds. [3]However, those who are not sure if animals should be used in experimentation need only to do one thing: look at your child, your lover or yourself and ask “How much do I value that life?” [4]If you care at all about the well being of others, then you have to support animal experimentation. [5]It is a vital tool in the medical field, and essential to advancement in new drugs, treatments and surgeries. [6]The pain these animals suffer is unfortunate, but it has to be done for the betterment of all humans, as well as other animals. [7]A choice has to be between the life of a rat and that of a child. [8]Which would you choose?

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## Sample J: The True Deceiver

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- 1 [1]Marriage is supposed to be a sacred bond that lasts forever, a bond of love and unconditional trust. [2]Yet in the story “The Drawbridge,” the Baroness destroys this loyal bond in the worst possible way. [3]She lies to her husband, deceives him, and even commits adultery. [4]She lies with no remorse and deceives without even caring, as long as she does not get caught. [5]While the other characters in this story are all guilty in one way or another, the Baroness is most guilty of committing moral wrongs. [6]It is clear the Baroness is guilty of being nothing but a sham -- a lying, deceitful, sneaky adulteress who will stop at nothing to hide her dirty secrets.
- 2 [1]One of the 10 commandments states “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” [2]The Baroness is definitely guilty of committing this moral wrong. [3]Her husband only leaves her for a few hours and she has to rush to the arms of a lover to satisfy her lustful desires. [4]She cannot wait for her husband to return to take comfort in his arms; she instead wants sinful passion. [5]We can also tell that this is a frequent hobby of hers as she can call him her “lover.” [6]Doing this once would be bad enough, but to repeatedly commit this act is much worse. [7]She shamelessly fools around on her husband, and this is an unforgivable sin.
- 3 [1]Some may take pity on the Baroness and feels that she only cheated because her husband left her alone and longing for company. [2]I feel, however, that this is no excuse for cheating. [3]No married couple is ever together 24 hours a day, and many still manage to be loyal to their spouse. [4]Her husband cannot even trust her enough to leave her alone for a few hours! [5]Any decent wife would have waited home for her husband to return, instead of cheating the minute he turns his back. [6]Her cheating is simply inexcusable, no matter how lonely she was.
- 4 [1]Another thing the Baroness is guilty of is of being deceptive and trying so hard to cover up her tracks. [2]As if it is not bad enough that she is cheating, when threatened that her husband may find out, she stops at no length to conceal her secrets. [3]A decent person would admit that she had done wrong and ask for forgiveness. [4]Yet the Baroness does not even consider telling the truth. [5]She does all she can to ensure that the Baron will never find out about her deception. [6]She goes to innocent people and begs them to help her get away with her unforgivable acts. [7]It is no wonder they did not want to get involved. [8]By soliciting these people to help cover up her tracks, the Baroness shows us just how deceptive and guilty she really is. [9]She does not care about hurting other innocent people, as long as she does not have to take responsibility for her own actions.
- 5 [1]Some people may feel that the only reason the Baroness went to such extreme measures to cover up her lustful deceit is because she was afraid of the Baron. [2]He does say that he will punish her severely when he gets back if he finds out she left the castle. [3]However, it is a possibility that the Baron did

not mean that he would physically punish her, but that he would end their relationship and kick her out of the castle. [4]Perhaps he knew she was cheating and was giving her one last chance to change. [5]If this is indeed the case, then the very fact that she tried so hard to prevent the Baron from finding out and kicking her out makes her seem even more cold and unfeeling. [6]She did not care about hurting her husband or other innocent people, only about getting caught. [7]Yet even considering if her husband did intend to beat her, it was obviously a chance the Baroness was willing to take. [8]He told her what would happen, and she went ahead and left anyway. [9]Therefore she should have been ready to deal with any consequence. [10]She should not have tried to involve others to cover up when her plans did not work out. [11]She is clearly guilty of being deceptive and uncaring about anyone but herself.

- 6 [1]Another thing the Baroness is guilty of is of being sneaky and planning her deceptive actions. [2]She did not just take her lover due to the passion of the moment, which would have been a little more understandable. [3]Instead, she thought about her actions, planned them out, and then went ahead and did them. [4]She figured that she would be safe vesting her lover because her husband would not be back before dawn, and then walked to her lover's house. [5]She had plenty of time to think about what she was doing, yet she never once hesitated. [6]This shows how completely remorseless she is. [7]We all know that a premeditated crime is worse than one committed on the spur of the moment. [8]It is clear to see that the Baroness is guilty of this.
- 7 [1]Those who feel that the Baroness is not guilty tend to argue that if the Baron was not so possessive or jealous, then she would not have been driven to the arms of another. [2]However, if the Baron was possessive or jealous, he had good reason to be -- after all, his wife was having an affair. [3]As stated before, perhaps he knew she was cheating. [4]If so, no wonder he was jealous and did not want her to leave the castle. [5]Yet, even if he did not know she was cheating, his being possessive and jealous does not justify her actions. [6]Marriage vows are forever, for better and for worse. [7]The Baroness breaks these with no remorse, and no reason could possibly excuse her behaviour. [8]She shamelessly cheated on her husband and is guilty.
- 8 [1]It is clear to see that the Baroness is guilty of a number of inexcusable moral crimes. [2]She lies, she cheats, and she shows no remorse except when faced with being caught. [3]She truly seems to be cold, unfeeling and selfish. [4]She does not care about hurting her husband or other innocent people; she care only about herself. [5]The moral wrongs she has committed make it apparent just what type of person she is. [6]If she had just been honest and loyal to her husband, then she would not have been murdered. [7]Because of her deception and adultery, she is clearly guilty of her own death.



## Sample K: Why Course Journals?

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- 1 This past semester in a university English course I was introduced to the “course journal,” a relatively new phenomenon within the classroom. I was intrigued with my journal writing, and for my final paper in “Theory of Composition” I jumped at the chance to research and write about something which I was experiencing firsthand. In preparation for my paper I decided to conduct an experiment: I would throw myself into my journal writing (I even began to keep journals in my other courses), do everything I could to make it work, and see if my professor and the articles I was reading were telling me the truth. They were. Journal writing, I discovered, was both enjoyable and enlightening; not only did it improve the quality of my learning, but it also taught me a lot about myself. At the end of the semester, I distributed a questionnaire to my Theory of Composition classmates to see if they shared my enthusiasm about course journals. I was pleased when most of them reported that journal writing had been beneficial for them in a number of ways. Because the overall response of my classmates was positive, I was surprised that so few of them decided to incorporate course journals into their future course. (Only 2 out of 23 students who responded to my journal questionnaire disliked journal writing; only 1 of these 2 found the activity to be a “waste of time.”) By pointing out a number of the benefits which we experienced as a result of our journal writing, I hope not only to encourage my classmates to continue to use this learning tool, but also to encourage those university students who have never experienced it to conduct a journal-writing experiment of their own. It’s worth the effort.

### What is the course journal?

- 2 When most people talk about a “journal” they’re usually talking about a diary, a private book in which they write their daily experiences and deepest feelings. When I talk about a journal I’m talking about something completely different. I keep journals for and in my classes at university! There are several ways that my course journals differ from the diary I keep locked up at home. One is that the writing of my course journals, unlike my diary, is not necessarily recorded within a single book. Although for my Theory of Composition class I chose to record all my journal entries within one notebook (which I called a “journal”), I noticed that a number of my classmates intermingled their entries with their lecture notes. The second way my course journals differ from my diary is in their content. Writing instructor Toby Fulwiler (1982) points out that the course journal is situated at a midpoint between the diary and the class notebook. The diary is a record of the “private thought and experience of the writer,” and the class notebook is a record of “the public thought and presentation of the teacher.” But the course journal combines the personal expression of the diary with the impersonal topics of the class notebook. In short, the course journal, as my classmates and I experienced it in Theory of

Composition, may be defined as a record of the student's responses to and/or interaction with the subject matter of the classroom.

### **Why course journals?**

- 3 But why the course journal? How has it proven worthwhile for my Theory of Composition classmates and me? Several of my classmates felt that our professor required us to keep a course journal "to get us writing." "Any kind of writing is beneficial," one woman wrote. "Practice always makes one improve" (Questionnaire #17). She's right! Robert H. Weiss (1980), an English professor from West Chester State College, has said that "composing skills tend to atrophy if they are not used." As a result, one of the virtues of the course journal is that it allows the student to practice writing, a skill which plays an important part in many disciplines and occupations. Because the entries within the course journal are not meant to be corrected, the course journal allows teachers to assign more writing assignments without having extra work to grade. (It is generally accepted that the entries of the course journal are not to be corrected or evaluated, but instructors often give a participation mark.)
- 4 For the most part, students don't seem to mind the extra writing load. In fact, many students find that journal writing exercises are more enjoyable than the traditional easy assignment. This is because the essay emphasizes correctness in spelling, grammar, form, diction, and style, which often creates anxiety within student writers. They become inhibited in their writing because they're afraid of making mistakes. On the other hand, many students find that they are more relaxed when they write in their journals. "[Journal writing] gave one a chance to 'unwind'," one of my Theory of Composition classmates wrote (Quest. #9). Instead of causing him to become tense when he sat down to write, another classmate noted that "[The journal] has assisted in [alleviating my] writer's block" (Quest. #4). Yet another commented: "I enjoy writing in my journal because it gives me a chance to express my ideas freely without inhibitions pertaining to errors in spelling and punctuation" (Quest. #19). The course journal not only "gets students writing," it also helps to abolish their fear of writing which has resulted from having their handiwork defaced by a teacher's red pen! "It's just *you* and your thoughts," I wrote about journal writing earlier this semester, "you don't freeze knowing that your work will be marked." "[Journal writing] has helped me write more freely," another classmate reported. "[It] has let me 'cut loose' with a pen" (Quest. #6).
- 5 In learning to write in our journals without inhibition, my classmates and I were also learning to think without inhibition. Toby Fulwiler (1982) points out that "By using the journal as the place to record, students go one step beyond thinking vaguely about their response but stay short of a formal written assignment which might cause unproductive anxiety over form or style." Much of the "unproductive anxiety" produced in the student by the formal written assignment results from trying to find the "right answer" or, in other words, trying to find out what the teacher thinks about the topic or question. In contrast, the course journal became a place where my classmates and I could

develop our own ideas and thoughts independent from those of our instructor; it became a place where we could write what we felt without fear of being penalized for having the “wrong answer.” Instructor Anne Ruggles Gere (1985) has written about a conversation she had with Terry, a social studies student who avidly enjoyed his daily in-class journal writing. According to Gere, part of the reason Terry liked journal writing so much was because “It was not the kind of writing to which a teacher could respond with ‘right’ or ‘wrong.’ Writing in his journal was something Terry did for himself, to ‘get more thoughts’ about what he was reading.” The journal allowed Terry to express what he felt about what he was reading; it allowed him to develop his own thoughts about the material. It is because she has experienced what Terry has experienced that one of my classmates wrote: “[Journal writing] has helped me to ‘open up’ my feelings and helped me to express my feelings on paper” (Quest. #18).

- 6 As we can see, the journal, in which students record their own responses to and thoughts about class material, is radically different from the class notebook, in which students merely copy down material presented by their instructor. The journal can transform students from being passive note takers to active learners; it can provoke students to dig deeper than their lecture notes and become involved with course material. I experienced this result from the journal that I kept in my Chaucer class this past semester. As I read *The Canterbury Tales*, I jotted down my responses to what I was reading in my journal. Thus, I rarely daydreamed as I read, for writing in my journal forced me to remain alert, to concentrate on what was before me. I no longer read hurriedly and half-heartedly with the lofty goal of “getting the reading done,” for writing about my own feelings imbued *The Tales* with a new interest. I interacted with what I was reading by responding to it with my thoughts and questions. Because journal writing encouraged me to read more carefully and to think about what I was reading, I had already personally discovered much of what my Chaucer professor presented before I came to class. When my instructor began to talk about how women were classified as “objects” or “male property” in the Middle Ages, I could nod agreement, having already commented in my journal upon how Chaucer’s Theseus, Arcite and Palamon treated Emely. “[Keeping a journal] for Chaucer is forcing me to read carefully and actively,” I reported in my journal. “I’m going to class with some ideas of my own, not just waiting to copy down everything the prof says.”
- 7 Like my Chaucer journal, my Theory of Composition journal has also helped me to transcend the role of passive note taker to that of active learner. A number of my classmates seemed to experience the same thing. One man felt that the reason we had been required to keep a journal for Theory of Composition was to “give [practical] experience in the application of the theories discussed in class, in order to reinforce our understanding and increase our familiarity on a personal level” (Quest. #4). One of the “theories” discussed in our class was that writing is a process composed of series of interacting stages. My classmates and I were able to put this theory into practice in our journals. Through our journals we experienced every stage of

the writing process about which we were learning in class. As directed by our instructor, we generated ideas for our writing assignments, drafted essay outlines, responded to peer review of our essay drafts, wrote of our feelings regarding the finished product, and summarized the overall “coming into being” of our papers. Not only did the greater awareness of the writing process enable us to become better writers, but my classmates and I also experienced a “greater intensity of learning through our writing,” because we were “personally involved and affected by what [we] studied” (Stevens, 1985). I suspect that we will remember much more of the theories which were presented in our composition course than those presented in other courses because we put them into practice within our journals.

- 8 The fact that the course journal helps students to remember what they have learned is another one of its benefits. I found that my Chaucer journal helped me commit what I had read and learned to memory. When it was time to study for the next quiz, I did not have to study as long as usual. I had already “studied” and retained much of the material through my journal writing. The reason that journals help students to remember is twofold: first, the act of writing helps them remember what they have written; and secondly, the fact that they are writing their own responses to class material helps to seal it into their memories. “Personal reflections recorded in a . . . journal can help the student identify with, and sometimes perhaps make sense of, the otherwise distant and confusing past,” Toby Fulwiler (1982) notes. It is for this last reason that one of my classmates who uses journals in her literature and drama classes intends to read over her entries when it is time for final exams; they help her to “remember what [she] did during the semester” (Quest. #8).
- 9 In reviewing our journal entries, my classmates and I discovered that they not only helped us remember what we had learned in class, but they also became a source of ideas for our assignments. In fact, this was one of the reasons our instructor required us to keep a journal for Theory of Composition. Pat Juell (1985) is only one of a number of writing teachers who calls journals “seedbeds,” a place where ideas take root, grow and develop. My classmates and I discovered that our journals were “seedbeds” of essay ideas early in the semester when our professor asked us to read Andrew Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress” and write our responses to the poem in our journals. Later, our professor gave us some questions to answer in our journals, questions like “Does this old poem have relevance for a new audience?” and “What significant cultural issues does this poem cause me to think about?” When we reread our responses to the poem and our answers to these questions, my classmates and I were able to pinpoint some issues which we had unconsciously isolated as important to us. My response to the poem was anger; I was particularly angry with the male speaker of the poem for ridiculing his girlfriend’s desire to maintain her virginity as “quaint” or old-fashioned. When I realized that her response resulted from my regard for premarital chastity, I wrote a paper for my fellow single university students which defended abstinence in an age when it is unpopular but growing in acceptance. The

entries of my journal had become a “seedbed” from which a “more public [kind] of writing emerg[ed]” (Fulwiler, 1982).

- 10 My journal became not only a source of ideas for my writing assignments, but also a workshop where my ideas could be refined, organized and clarified. For my second Theory of Composition assignment, a paper which compared my experience of writing an essay in the “new” composition classroom to my experience of writing in the traditional classroom, I used my journal as a place to organize my ideas. One page, in particular, illustrates this: on one side I listed the characteristics of writing in the traditional classroom, and on the other side, the characteristics of writing in the new. Often, while writing a draft of this essay, I would discover that an idea which I was trying to explain to my audience wasn’t even clear to me. I would then retreat to my journal and try to explain to myself what it was that I was trying to say. As William Zinsser (1988) points out, “Putting an idea into written words is like defrosting the windshield: The idea, so vague out there in the murk, slowly begins to gather itself into a sensible shape.” Some of my classmates seem to have used their journals for the purpose of organizing and clarifying ideas as well. Journal writing has “helped me to organize my thoughts for writing papers,” one reported. “I like writing in my journal as it helps me to realize exactly what I’m thinking about certain things” (Quest. #20).
- 11 Course journals enable students to grow academically: they offer a place for practising writing; they encourage independent thinking; they promote active involvement with course material; they help commit course material to memory; they provide ideas for assignments; and they become a workshop for exploring, organizing and clarifying ideas. But the course journal does more than just encourage students to grow as students. Journal writing has a lot to do with personal growth as well; it has a lot to do with self-discovery, with getting to know yourself better. Scattered throughout my Theory of Composition journal are responses to articles that I researched for this paper, such as “This guy’s writing style is great! He’s so *clear*! I know exactly what he’s talking about,” and “This makes so much sense -- it’s so practical. I’d *love* to try this out in the classroom!” As a result, when I read Toby Fulwiler’s (1982) statement that “The journal encourages writers to become conscious, through language, of what is happening to them . . . personally”, I could look back of my entries and respond:
- In my journal I’m ‘meeting’ me -- how I value clarity and organization; how the aesthetic value of English isn’t enough for me (I need a practical, applicable side of it if I’m going to teach it); how I’m discovering that I *am* a “teacher” -- I’m excited about teaching, and I think I want to teach writing (because it’s practical and it appeals to me)!
- 12 I was not alone in the experience of “getting to know myself better” this semester. “I liked writing in the journal,” a classmate wrote, “it got me thinking about myself, and my feelings toward whatever topic we had to write about” (Quest. #2). “It’s always beneficial to [keep a] journal -- whether on your own

or in a class about a subject,” another commented. “It’s good therapy and it’s very good looking back, especially if you date your journals, to see any growth” (Quest. #16). Fulwiler is convinced that the “personal entries” of the course journal “remain, for most students, their most important writing” (Fulwiler, 1982). The importance that my classmates place on the personal writing of their course journals is revealed in the fact that at least one quarter of those who responded to my questionnaire expressed a desire to keep a personal journal or diary in the future. In keeping a course journal, you do not only get to know the material better, but you get to know yourself better as well, and as Fulwiler (1982) concludes: “What students write to themselves, about themselves, as they journey through the academic curriculum has a lot to do with ‘education’.” “Without an understanding of who we are, we are not likely to understand fully why we study biology rather than forestry, literature rather than philosophy.”

### Why *not* journals?

- 13 Journal writing has proven to be both a tool for learning and a record of personal growth for my classmates and me. Why then are so few of my classmates willing to incorporate journal writing into their future courses?
- 14 One deterrent to journal writing which my classmates and I have experienced is a lack of time. One woman, for example, wrote in her journal regularly and found her writing to be helpful yet concluded that she would not continue to keep a journal in future courses due to time restrictions (Quest. #19). I should point out that the longest my classmates and I ever spent writing an in-class journal entry was 10 minutes. Many of my classmates did not write in their journals outside of class, yet their questionnaires reported that they found their journal writing to be beneficial. No matter how hectic one’s schedule, surely taking 10 minutes to write while waiting for a professor to come to class or while riding the bus to campus is not an impossibility. Especially if those 10-minute writing sessions yield positive results. As I wrote in my Theory of Composition journal:

At first I balked at adding journal writing to my daily study routine; I thought it would take up/add too much time. But I’m *enjoying* it! And it is helping me -- I can see how it has/is helping me prepare for my essays.

In actuality, journal writing does not consume valuable time; rather, it *saves* time. I found that by writing down my responses to *The Canterbury Tales* in my Chaucer journal, I was studying for the next test as I “went along”:

[Keeping a journal] in Chaucer *is* helping me -- very few things [that] the teacher points out in class are entirely unfamiliar. I’m studying as I read. I think that the time is worth it -- I’ll be saving time in the end when I study. And the stuff stays in my head because I’ve “interacted” with it, made it personal, written it down.

- 15 Next to lack of time, another major deterrent to journal writing is **impatience**. At the beginning of my Theory of Composition course, I felt like I was “failing” my journal: “I don’t seem to be experiencing any miraculous insights in *my* journal so far. I feel panicky -- I don’t have any ideas for a paper yet! . . . I’m scared. I feel like I’m going to fail.” The ideas for the paper *did* come eventually, and I enjoyed writing it. After this experience, I scrawled in the margin of my journal, “I think my journal’s working [now]”, and concluded, “You have to *stick* with your journal to make it work.” Journals are “seedbeds” of ideas, Pat Juell (1985) writes, and seeds need time to grow. Committed, frequent journal writing is the only way to tell whether it “works” for you or not. It is interesting that the classmate who felt that journal writing was a “waste of time” did not write in her journal outside of class assignments (Quest. #15). Perhaps her opinion would have been different if she had consistently spent extra time writing in her journal. In fact, I found that the writing I did outside of class was more beneficial than that which I did during class time. You mustn’t pass off the course journal as a failure until you have patiently spent time trying to make it “grow.”
- 16 But “cultivating” your course journal is hard work; commitment to journal writing requires self-discipline. Lack of motivation is another deterrent to journal writing. During classroom discussion and on their questionnaires, several classmates commented on their need for that extra “shove” to motivate them to sit down and write in their journals. One woman, immediately after commenting that “It’s always beneficial to [keep a] journal,” wrote that she wouldn’t keep journals in future courses unless they were assigned by the teacher (Quest. #16). Another woman felt that journal writing was helpful, but concluded that she would not continue to keep a journal in future courses because she didn’t have the “motivation without coaxing from class discussion or teacher assistance” (Quest. #19). To be honest, I may not have written in my journal as frequently without the “encouragement” of knowing my final paper was to be a discussion of course journals. But I’m glad I had that knowledge to motivate me; a lot of good resulted from my “journal-writing experiment.” I’ve experienced the benefits of the course journal, and I’ve written about those benefits in the hope that they will stimulate my classmates to continue their journal writing. If keeping a course journal was as helpful to my classmates as their questionnaires suggest, perhaps pushing themselves to continue keeping course journals would be worth the effort. And perhaps those students who have never experienced the course journal would find it worthwhile to conduct a journal-writing experiment of their own. Surely the benefits of better writing, a greater intensity of learning, and personal growth would make it worthwhile.

**Appendix**  
**Journal Questionnaire**

Gender -- \_\_\_\_\_

Year of Study -- \_\_\_\_\_

Major/Other -- \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why do you think Dr. L. required you to keep a journal for 26-295?
2. Did you like or dislike writing in your journal? Please explain your answer.
3. Did you write in your journal outside of in-class assignments? Frequently or infrequently? What was the nature of your entries (e.g., personal, response to class and class readings, preparation for essays, etc.)?
4. Has journal writing been beneficial for you in any way? Has it presented any problems?
5. Will you continue to keep a course journal *after* 26-295? If so, why and for what classes (e.g., literature courses, creative writing, math, history, etc.)?
6. Thank you for your time. Please use the back of this paper for any other comments you may have.



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## **TEXTBOOK KEY**

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### **01-26-100-91**

This Textbook Key assigns readings and exercises from the textbook (Clouse, *The Student Writer*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 1996). The lessons will indicate when you should refer to this key.



# Instructions for Lesson 1

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Please complete the following steps.

1. I have designed this course so that the textbook supplements those ideas presented in the lesson notes. Accordingly, please do *not* read further in these instructions unless you have completed Lesson 1.
2. The required textbook for this course is Barbara Fine Clouse's *The Student Writer (1996)*. To familiarize yourself with the contents of the book, I suggest you read the blurb on the back cover. Also, you may wish to flip through the table of contents and read the coloured headings. You may find Appendix 1, "Solving Writing Problems," to be particularly useful as you work through the course.
3. Lesson 1 introduced the writer's audience and purpose, and explained how they can affect the way a text (a piece of writing) is written. Read the first page of Clouse's preface and look for answers to these questions:
  - Who is Clouse's *audience*?
  - What is Clouse's *purpose* in writing the textbook?
  - How have the audience and purpose affected her *code* (that is Clouse's choice of words and the way she has written and organized the textbook)?
4. Compare your responses to the above questions to mine:
  - a. Clouse's *audience* is *you*, the writing student.
  - b. Her *purpose* in writing the text is to (1) help you develop your own successful writing processes (see paragraph 1, sentence 1), and (2) help you become skilled at revision (see paragraph 2, sentence 1).
  - c. Clouse's audience and purpose have affected her *code*. For example, to help you develop your own successful writing processes and become skilled at revision, she:
    - describes various procedures for handling writing processes so that you can develop your own successful writing processes (see par. 1);
    - invites you to sample different procedures so that you can find the writing techniques that work well for you (see par. 1);
    - includes sample student essays for you to critique (see par. 2); and
    - includes the words *editor* and *critic* in the text's subtitle (see par. 3). Since editing and critiquing are part of revising, these words reflect the purpose of the text to help you become skilled at revision.

You may have noted some different examples of how the textbook's code is influenced by its audience and purpose.

5. **Assigned reading.** Complete the following readings. You may wish to write in the margins of Lesson 1 (or in a separate notebook) those ideas or examples from the text that help you better understand the ideas expressed in the lesson.
- Read Chapter 3, “From Ideas to Essay,” pp. 61-66.
  - Read Chapter 1, “Shaping Topics and Discovering Ideas,” pp. 24-25.
  - Skim Appendix 2, “A Student Essay in Progress.”
6. How does Clouse’s model of the writing process compare to the one I described in sections 1.10 and 1.11 of Lesson 1? Which model do you prefer? Why?
7. **Self-test.** Lesson 1 lists some terms that we will use throughout the course:

claim      text      audience  
code      purpose      planning  
drafting      revising

To see whether you understand what these terms mean, try to come up with a least one example to illustrate each. For instance, an example of *planning* is finding a topic for a paper, and an example of *code* is using slang expressions in your writing. If you have difficulty coming up with examples, refer to the relevant sections of the lesson and, where possible, the assigned reading for ideas. When you can give an example for each term *without* looking at the course materials, you’re ready to move on to the next step in these instructions. Try to give different examples to the ones that Clouse and I give.

*Note:* Clouse does not use all the same terms that I do in the lessons. For example, she does not use the word *code*. Instead, as you can see from the textbook’s table of contents, she refers to the “structure” or “organization” of a piece of writing, to “diction” (word choice) and to “style” (the unique way each writer composes sentences). All these things are encompassed by the word *code*.

8. Remember to copy the due dates of the assignments from the Instructor and Assignment Information page to your course outline and daily planner. Schedule time to work on an assignment each week so that you are able to meet the due dates.
9. If you have questions regarding the course, Lesson 1, the assigned reading, or the assignments, contact the instructor for clarification. You might need to list your questions on a piece of paper, put this list aside for a day or two, and continue working on the course until it is time for your instructor’s telephone contact hours.
10. Congratulations! You have now completed Lesson 1 and are ready to proceed to Lesson 2.

## Instructions for Lesson 2

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Please complete the following steps.

1. I have designed this course so that the textbook supplements those ideas presented in the lesson notes. Accordingly, please do *not* read further in these instructions unless you have completed Lesson 2.
2. If an instructor has asked you to prepare a research paper for this or another course, scan Chapter 15 of Clouse, “Research Writing.” Clouse concentrates on gathering information in the library, but don’t forget the resources available to you through the Internet. See <http://uwindsor.ca/> to learn about the services the University of Windsor’s Leddy Library offers through the Internet. You might find it helpful to search the Internet for information on your research topic or the services offered by a library in your area.
3. *Assigned reading.* Read Clouse Chapter 1 (“Shaping Topics and Discovering Ideas”) and Chapter 3 (“From Ideas to Essay”). If you’re overwhelmed by this reading assignment, here are some ways to make it less intimidating:
  - You might find it helpful to “preread” each chapter by reading its introductory and concluding paragraphs, and all the headings in between — this will acquaint you with the main ideas of the chapters.
  - I find it useful to divide lengthy reading assignments into manageable chunks — after all, we can only handle so much reading at a single sitting! If I want to read a total of  $x$  pages by Monday, then I will plan to read  $y$  pages per day in order to meet my goal. Of course, when I divide up my reading in this way, I refresh my memory of what I have read on previous nights by skimming the headings and the main ideas that I have highlighted.
  - Remember that the assigned readings are intended to provide you with more strategies to solve your writing problems and to help clarify the ideas presented in the lesson notes. Accordingly, mark the portions of the assigned chapters that look most useful for you and that overlap with the objectives listed at the beginning of Lesson 2. Focus on these portions when you read the chapters and skim the rest.

To keep your mind focused as you read, make response notes. (To learn more about the importance of response notes and how to take them, see Clouse’s section entitled “Marking a text,” pp. 338 - 343.)

4. *Self-test.* To follow are the objectives for Lesson 2. To assess how well you have learned the main ideas of the lesson, try to complete the Lesson 2 objectives without peeking at the course materials for “answers.” If you have difficulty completing an objective, and the lesson or assigned reading doesn’t clarify things for you, discuss the problem with the instructor.
5. Contact the instructor to discuss any ideas expressed in lesson or assigned reading that are unclear to you. For instance, you might give prewriting a try for your next assignment, but then get stuck — “What do I do with what I’ve

written?” Your instructor can help you bridge the gap between the course ideas and the way you put these ideas into practice. You might need to list your questions on a piece of paper and put this list aside for a day or two until it is time for your instructor’s telephone contact hours. Don’t hesitate to continue working on the course in the meantime, however!

6. Check the Instructor and Assignment Information page to see when your next assignment is due and set aside time to work on it.
7. Remember to apply what you’ve learned in this lesson to your assignments. Proceed to Lesson 3.



## Instructions for Lesson 3

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Please complete the following steps.

1. Read the writing sample called “The Human and the Superhuman: Two Very Different Heroes” which is found on pp. 240-241 of the textbook.
2. Do you think the writing sample is an essay? Why or why not? (*Hint: If you are completely puzzled by this question, try rereading the introduction to Lesson 3 — but only if you are stumped completely.*)
3. What did you conclude? — is “The Human and the Superhuman” an essay or not? To follow are some student responses to this question. Did you make some of the same observations?
  - i. No, it’s not an essay because it’s about Superman and Batman. Essays are only about important subjects like capital punishment or abortion, not comic book characters.
  - ii. No, it’s not an essay because it doesn’t have any quotations or a list of references.
  - iii. No, it’s too short to be an essay.
  - iv. Yes, it’s an essay because it “makes points.”
  - v. Yes, it’s an essay because the writer states an opinion in the first paragraph, and then talks about this opinion in the rest of the essay.
  - vi. Yes, it’s an essay, because it has five paragraphs. The first paragraph is an introduction and the last one is a conclusion, and each of the three paragraphs between develops a point related to the introduction.
  - vii. Yes, it’s an essay because the last sentence of the introduction is the “thesis.” The three middle paragraphs talk about the thesis.
4. If you said that “The Human and the Superhuman” was an essay, congratulations, you’re right! Hopefully, you were right for the right reasons! There are a few myths expressed above, including:
  - *The sample isn’t an essay because it’s about comic book characters rather than more important subjects.*

An essay can be written about any subject. If you find a subject to be interesting, this means that you will probably enjoy writing about it (and often, this means that your reader will enjoy reading what you’ve written).
  - *The sample isn’t an essay because it doesn’t quote other people or books, or have a bibliography.*

Quoting and citing sources is not always necessary. Later in course, you’ll learn when quotations and bibliographies are appropriate, such as writing an essay about literature, or writing an essay based on research.
  - *The sample is too short to be an essay.*

An essay doesn't have to be long. It can be a few paragraphs or a number of pages in length. If, like the student who made point vi, you thought the sample was an essay because it had five paragraphs, it may be because a teacher assigned you a five-paragraph essay: introduction, conclusion, three points discussed in between. The "five-paragraph essay" is a popular assignment in many schools.

5. If you made points like v-vii, they may have been based on what you've learned about essays in school or in the textbook. To learn more about the characteristics of the traditional essay, return to Lesson 3 and resume reading at section 3.2.

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6. Identify the theses of the following writing samples. If you have difficulty finding a thesis, see the clues listed in section 3.9 of Lesson 3.
    - a. "Athletes on Drugs: It's Not so Hard to Understand," pp. 261-263.
    - b. "What Is Writer's Block?", pp. 283-284.
  7. Were you able to identify the theses of the above samples successfully? Compare your findings to mine:
    - a. The thesis is the last sentence of the introductory paragraph (the traditional place for the thesis). It takes the form of a question which the writer answers in the body and sums up in the conclusion.
    - b. The thesis of this essay is "Writer's block is pacing, trying, doubting self, and anticipation." (You may have expressed the thesis in different words than I did; that's fine, as long as your words captured the same idea.) I had to construct this thesis from the introductory sentences of each body paragraph, since the thesis is *not* stated clearly in the introduction or conclusion. The title was helpful in constructing the thesis. The thesis is an answer to the question posed by the title, "What is Writer's Block?"
  8. Return to Lesson 3 and resume work at section 3.11.

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9. Read "Ban Those Traps," in the textbook (p.328).
  10. Now, based on what you've learned in the lesson, answer each of the following questions in a short paragraph. Please **don't skip** this exercise — you might *think* you have understood what you have read this far, but you won't know whether this is true until you try to apply what you've read!
    - a. What is the thesis of the essay? How do you know that it is the thesis? (*Hint: See sections 3.2 and 3.9 of Lesson 3 for help.* )
    - b. Does the writer fulfil the "promise" that he or she made in the thesis? If not, explain what improvements need to be made. (*Hint: See section 3.6 of Lesson 3 if you're confused by this question.*)
  11. Compare your responses to the model answers provided below:

- a. The thesis of the essay is the last sentence of the first paragraph. There are at least three reasons why this sentence is the thesis: (1) the last sentence of the first paragraph is the traditional place for the thesis, (2) the message of the title is the same as that expressed in the sentence, and (3) the conclusion repeats the message expressed in the sentence.
- b. The writer does *not* fulfil the promise made in the thesis. The thesis implies that three points will be discussed in the essay:

The techniques of trapping animals are cruel [point 1];

trapping can lead to the extinction of animal species [point 2];

and above all, there is no longer a need to trap because modern technology has introduced better ways to secure food and pelts [point 3].

(The conclusion also implies that three points should be discussed in the essay, since it repeats the same three points raised in the thesis — see paragraph 4, sentences 2 and 3.) Although the thesis introduces three points, the body paragraphs develop only point 1 (trapping is cruel, see par. 2) and point 3 (there is no longer a need to trap, see par. 3). There is no discussion of point 2 (trapping can lead to the extinction of animal species). To improve the essay, I suggest that the writer fulfil his or her promise to the reader and write a paragraph that develops point 2.

12. **Challenge.** Try to write the missing paragraph of “Ban Those Traps.” You might have to make up some facts to do so (I’m not expecting you to do any research). Your goal is to be able to read the “completed” essay to a colleague or friend without them being able to guess which paragraph you wrote! If your listener can guess which paragraph you wrote, ask what gave your writing away.
13. **Assigned reading.** Read Clouse Chapter 2, “Structuring the Essay.” This chapter will not only review the ideas I presented in Lesson 3, but also introduce some ideas that we will explore in Lesson 4. When reading the chapter, *focus on any sections that overlap* with the objectives listed below. Keeping response notes will also help you stay focused on the chapter.
14. **Self-test.** To assess how well you have learned the main ideas of Lesson 3, try to complete the objectives listed above *without* looking for “answers” in the course materials (you *will* have to use the course materials to find a sample essay, however). If you have difficulty completing an objective, and the lesson or assigned chapter doesn’t clarify things for you, make a note to discuss the problem with the instructor during his or her contact hours.
15. Check the Instructor and Assignment Information page to see when your next assignment is due and set aside time to work on it. Remember to apply what you’ve learned in this lesson to your assignments!
16. Proceed to Lesson 4.



# Instructions for Lesson 4

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Please complete the following steps.

1. **Transitions.** In Lesson 4, section 4.7, I mentioned that certain words or phrases can signal a new idea in a text, and in so doing, help you decide where a new paragraph should begin. These key words and phrases are sometimes called **transitional words and phrases**. Clouse discusses transitions between paragraphs in Chapter 4, “Revising for Sentence Effectiveness,” pp. 102-106.
  - I recommend that you skim these pages, paying particular attention to the Transitions Chart on pp. 104-105. In fact, you might want to flag this chart with a post-it note if you feel it will be useful for you as you complete your assignments.
  - Complete the Transitions Exercise on p. 107, and compare your answers to those provided at the end of this Textbook Key.
2. **Assigned reading.** In Chapter 2, “Structuring the Essay,” Clouse discusses three types of paragraphs: the introductory paragraph, the body paragraphs, and the concluding paragraph. Read pp. 31- 53 now, focusing on those portions that overlap with the objectives for Lesson 4.
3. **Review exercise.** Return to Sample E in the Reader. Based on what you’ve read in Clouse, what suggestions would you make to the writer for improving her introductory paragraph? For improving her concluding paragraph? Why?
4. **Challenge.** Take your own advice and rewrite the introduction and conclusion of Sample E. Remember, this is a writing course, and you can’t improve your writing without *writing*!
5. **Self-test.** Try to fulfil each of the objectives for Lesson 4. If you can’t fulfil an objective, review the corresponding section of the lesson and assigned reading. Then, if you’re still having difficulty, contact a classmate listed in the Distance Education Directory, or make a note to contact the instructor during his or her contact hours.
6. Remember to apply what you’ve learned in this lesson to your assignments! Proceed to Lesson 5.



## Instructions for Lesson 5

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Please complete the following steps.

1. **Assigned reading.** Work through the section entitled “The Body Paragraphs” in Chapter 2 of Clouse. You might want to flag the checklist on page 46 with a post-it note or paper clip as it can help you evaluate your essays before submitting them to an instructor for grading. As you read, pay particular attention to those ideas that overlap with the objectives for Lesson 5.
2. **Transitions.** In Lesson 4, I asked you to read pp. 102-106 of Clouse with the understanding that transitions described on these pages could help you move smoothly from one paragraph to another. You should now reread these pages from the perspective that transitions can help you move smoothly from one *sentence* to another within a paragraph. We’ll explore transitions further in Lesson 11, when you practice combining sentences.
3. **Review exercise.** Complete the Body Paragraphs to Evaluate Exercise that begins on p. 46 of Chapter 2. Answer guidelines are provided at the end of this Textbook Key.
4. **Self-test.** You should now test your grasp of the lesson by trying to fulfil each of the Lesson 5 objectives.
5. Remember to apply what you’ve learned in this lesson to your assignments. Proceed to Lesson 6.





## Instructions for Lesson 6

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Read Chapter 13, “Argumentation-Persuasion”. You should answer the following questions after reading the chapter.<sup>1</sup> As your answers will not be graded, you shouldn’t send them to the instructor, but please contact him or her if you have questions about the lesson or the assigned reading.

1. Why do so many students write arguments about standard topics like abortion and capital punishment rather than “fresh” topics (p. 309)? How can you identify some topics that interest you rather than topics that you feel the instructor wants to read about (see Lesson 2)?
2. Define the general purpose for all argumentative writing (310).
3. In considering audience, what exactly must you be aware of when developing an argumentative essay (310)?
4. Why must emotional appeals be used with care (311)?
5. In Lesson 6, I suggested that one way to handle opposing viewpoints is to write your thesis in the although/because form. Write a fully developed paragraph that summarizes Clouse’s suggestions for handling opposing viewpoints (312).
6. How do you decide what details to include/exclude in an argument (313-314)?
7. Describe one effective way to organize an argumentative essay (318-319).
8. Select one of the arguments on pages 319 to 330. What is the thesis of the argument? What type of claim is it (substantiation, evaluation or recommendation)? Write a full page that identifies, summarizes, and reacts to the strategies used by the author (consideration of audience, use of emotional appeals, method of raising and countering objections, and organization).

Remember to apply to your assignments what you’ve learned in Lesson 6 and the assigned reading! Proceed to Lesson 7.



## Instructions for Lesson 7

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Please complete the following steps.

1. **Assigned reading.** You should read Chapter 7, “Illustration,” and answer the following questions. The questions will help you pick out the most important ideas in the assigned chapter.
  - (a) What are some of the advantages of using illustrations/examples (p. 179-80)?
  - (b) In Lesson 7, you analyzed some writing samples to see whether the examples were *relevant* to the claims (theses or topic sentences) made in the samples. In addition to the claims you make in an essay, what two things influence the examples you provide in a paper (181)? Note that Clouse uses the word *generalization* instead of *claim*.
  - (c) In Lesson 7, you analyzed some writing samples to see whether they used *sufficient* examples. I recommended using three examples, but cautioned that this was only a rule of thumb; that your audience would determine the number of examples you needed. Write a brief paragraph that summarizes Clouse’s guidelines for deciding on the number of examples you use in an essay (181-182).
  - (d) What are some sources for examples (182-183)?
  - (e) Write a paragraph that summarizes Clouse’s suggestions for arranging examples (183-184).
  - (f) Complete the Tryout Exercise (184).
2. **Logical fallacies.** Reread the section in Chapter 13 on logical fallacies (316-318). Then, answer the following questions:
  - (a) Which fallacies did Enough Already commit (see Sample F in the Reader and section 7.5 in Lesson 7)?
  - (b) Which fallacies did the e-mail writer commit (see Lesson 7, section 7.5)?
3. Evaluate your responses to the above questions against the answer guidelines that follow. We identified most of the fallacies when we applied the STAR criteria to the letter and e-mail message in Lesson 7.
  - Enough Already commits fallacy 5 -- as discussed in section 7.5 of Lesson 7, Enough Already assumes what is true for some men and some women is true of all men and all women. She is guilty of fallacy 2 in that she calls men “bozos.” She is guilty of fallacy 7 in that she concludes from the overcrowding in male prisons that men are vicious (men can go to prison for non-violent crimes; some men never go to prison at all).
  - The anonymous e-mail writer commits fallacy 5. The writer assumes what is true of some strikers (vandalism) and some students (unsupportive of strike) is true of all of them. Also, the writer is guilty of fallacy 2 when he or she intimates that strikers are “bullies” and “liars.” The writer also

commits fallacy 7 — as discussed in Lesson 7, the thesis “the behaviour of strikers is jeopardizing the academic year” does not follow from the three sub-arguments.

**You needn't memorize the fallacies** — just recognize that the STAR criteria are useful because they can help you find errors in reasoning.

4. *Just for fun.* If you enjoyed identifying the fallacies in Enough Already's letter and the e-mail message, try to find the fallacies in the following “theories”<sup>2</sup>:
  - (a) The earth may spin faster on its axis due to deforestation. Just as a figure skater's rate of spin increases when the arms are brought in close to the body, the cutting of tall trees may cause our planet to spin dangerously fast.
  - (b) When a cat is dropped, it always lands on its feet, and when toast is dropped, it always lands with the buttered side facing down. I propose to strap buttered toast to the back of a cat; the two will hover, spinning inches above the ground. With a giant buttered cat array, a high-speed monorail could easily link New York with Chicago.

*Solutions:*

- (a) The writer commits fallacy 6 in the first sentence; he or she assumes a debatable point is true. The writer commits fallacy 4 (illogical comparison) in the second sentence.
  - (b) The writer commits fallacy 6 in the first sentence and fallacy 7 (non sequitor) in the remaining sentences.
5. *Review exercise.* Pick one of the student essays from Chapter 13 (p. 327+) and evaluate it using the checklist found at the end of Lesson 7.
  6. Remember to apply what you've learned to your assignments! Proceed to Lesson 8.

## Instructions for Lesson 8

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1. *Evaluation using ideal definition.* One method of evaluating a subject is to measure it against an ideal definition or set of criteria. If you'd like to learn more about composing definitions, see Chapter 11, "Definition."
2. *Evaluation using consequence.* Another method of evaluating a subject is to explore its consequences or *effects*. Clouse discusses cause and effect in Chapter 10, "Cause-and-Effect Analysis." Turn to page 252 and look at the three theses set out near the bottom of the page. All three deal with cause-and-effect (consequences), but only one is an evaluation claim. Which one is it? What type of claim are the others?

The second thesis is an evaluation claim because it makes a value judgement by using the label of "devastating"; it translates flatly into "Unemployment has a devastating [bad] effect on a person's self-image." The first and third theses are substantiation claims because they do not make value judgements; rather they set out simply to prove cause and effect.

3. *Using sources.* You can use sources to defend a point of view or to find examples or ideas about which to write. The following sections of Chapter 15, "Research Writing," will supplement what you learned in Lesson 7 about appealing to an authority, what you learned in Lesson 6 about using examples, and what you learned in Lesson 2 about finding ideas.
  - Skim Clouse's description of the various sources available in library such as periodicals, government documents and reference works (pp. 366-372). You may be able to find some of these sources on the Internet, since many libraries and institutions are moving resources on line. You can consider the references listed on page 372 to be "authorities" on particular subjects.
  - Read "Taking Notes" (pp. 375-380) to learn how to paraphrase or quote a source directly.
  - Read page 381 to the end of the chapter. This selection describes how to cite or document a source. If your instructor wants you to use the APA or MLA method of documenting borrowed material, he or she will have indicated this on the Instructor and Assignment Information page and/or in the Assignment File. If the instructor has not indicated a preference, you should choose one of the two methods. The writer of Sample I in the Reader, "Animal Experimentation," chose the APA method of documentation, whereas the writer of Sample E, "The Schizophrenic and Language," chose the MLA method.
4. Remember to contact the instructor or a classmate if you have any questions about Lesson 8 and the assigned textbook reading. Apply what you've learned from the lesson to your assignments. Proceed to Lesson 9.



## Instructions for Lesson 9

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1. *Practice exercise.* Turn to “The Old Ball Game” (p. 327) and “Ban Those Traps” (p. 328). For each of these recommendation arguments,
  - (a) Identify the parts.
  - (b) Explain why the selection or arrangement of parts works or does not work.After completing this exercise, move on to step 2 of these instructions.
2. Compare your answers for “The Old Ball Game” to the guidelines I provide here:
  - (a) The writer incorporates all four parts of the recommendation argument.

*Proposal/solution:* The writer’s solution or proposal is that six- and seven-year old children should not be permitted to play on an organized basement team (see the thesis, which is the last sentence of par. 1). Instead, they should have fun! (par. 5).

*Problem:* The writer describes the problem — the negative impact of organized baseball on young children — in paragraphs 2 to 4.

*Strengths of proposal:* The writer presents the strengths of the solution within the description of the problem. To convince us of the strengths of the solution, the writer points out the bad consequences of permitting young children to play on an organized baseball team -- for instance, they’re humiliated publicly (par. 2) and struggle emotionally (par. 3).

*Weakness of proposal/solution:* The writer admits a weakness in his or her solution when he or she acknowledges the viewpoint that organized sports are a good source of discipline. However, he or she then minimizes this weakness by arguing that children don’t need to learn discipline outside home and school.
  - (b) The sequence and selection of parts seems to work. You might have felt, however, that the writer did not minimize the weakness of his or her solution effectively. The weakness of his or her proposal is that, by preventing young children from playing organized baseball, you’re depriving them of an opportunity to learn discipline. Instead of stating flatly, “[Outside of home and school,] further sources of discipline are unnecessary”, the writer might have said in a more open and positive manner that, “Children have many opportunities to learn discipline at home and at school; they also need opportunities to have fun and enjoy themselves.” It is likely that more readers would be accepting of the second statement than of the first one.
3. Compare your answers to “Ban Those Traps” to the guidelines I provide here:
  - (a) The writer incorporates all four parts of the recommendation argument:

*Proposal/solution:* The writer proposes that we should take action to prohibit trapping (par. 1, sent. 5). Note that this is a general proposal,

designed to stir readers' emotions and convince someone with power to effect change.

*Need/problem:* The problem is presented in the thesis (last sentence of par. 1) and described in the two body paragraphs.

*Strengths of proposal:* The writer reveals the strengths of his or her solution as he or she describes the problem. For example, when describing the cruelty of trapping in detail (par. 2), the writer appeals to our sense of right and wrong. The writer assumes that we also believe that it is wrong to treat animals cruelly. Another strength of his or her "ban trapping" proposal is explained in paragraph 3 when the writer points out that modern technology has eradicated the need to trap and that fur ranches treat animals humanely.

*Weakness of proposal:* The writer addresses a weakness of his or her solution when he or she acknowledges that trappers claim their hobby allows them to enjoy the wilderness (see concluding par.). The writer then minimizes this weakness by pointing out that the trappers are actually contributing to the destruction of the wilderness.

- (b) The sequence of parts seems to work. However, in the combined problem/strengths part, the writer has forgotten to discuss how trapping can lead to the extinction of animal species, something which his or her thesis promises that he or she will address.
4. Now that you've evaluated your answers to the practice exercise, return to section 9.5 of Lesson 9 ("Different Ways to Arrange the Parts") and resume work.

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5. *Recommended reading.* There are a few things I'd like to point out about Sample K ("Why Course Journals?") which you analyzed during Lesson 9:
- The writer documents sources in APA style. APA and MLA guidelines are discussed in Chapter 15 ("Research Writing") of Clouse.
  - The writer begins the body of Sample K with a definition of the course journal (par. 2) so that her audience will understand what she means by the term. Opening with a definition is a common practice in research papers like Sample K, and in other essays which introduce ideas with which the audience may not be familiar. If you'd like to learn more about using definition, see Chapter 11 ("Definition").
  - The writer of Sample K talks about responding to course readings in the journal. To learn more about how to do this, see Chapter 14 ("Writing in Response to Reading").
6. Remember to apply what you've learned to your assignments! Proceed to Lesson 10.



## Instructions for Lesson 10

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1. *Supplementary exercise.* The Search & Destroy exercise at the beginning of the lesson invited you to look at subject-verb agreement. If you had difficulty with the exercise, or if your instructor has identified subject-verb agreement errors in a returned assignment, complete the Subject-Verb Agreement Exercise on pp. 429-30 of the textbook.

*Hint 1:* To decide which form of the verb is appropriate, you need to first identify the subject part of each sentence. I explained how to do this in Lesson 10 — see the answer guidelines for the Search & Destroy exercise.

*Hint 2:* If you “get stuck” on part of the textbook exercise, see the preceding pages of the chapter for assistance before you look at the answers provided at the end of this Textbook Key.

2. Have you finished Lesson 10? If so, you are ready to complete the remaining steps in these instructions. For starters, read the section entitled “Use Simple Diction” in Chapter 4 of Clouse.
3. Read the section on Specific Diction (pp. 95-97) and complete the Specific Diction Exercise (p. 97). Answer guidelines are provided at the end of this Textbook Key.
4. Read “The Human and the Superhuman” (p. 240+) Then, write a brief paragraph or two that answer these questions:
  - (a) What type of text is “The Human and the Superhuman” (e.g., essay, letter, report, poem, short story, magazine article)? Explain.
  - (b) What variety of language does the writer use? Explain.
5. Compare your paragraph(s) to the following model answer:

“The Human and the Superhuman” is an essay. We know that it is an essay because it has an introductory paragraph with a thesis (the last sentence of the first paragraph), a concluding paragraph, and three body paragraphs that begin with topic sentences and develop the thesis. In particular, the essay is a substantiation argument because the thesis makes a substantiation claim: it *compares* Superman to Batman (god vs. human powers) without making a value judgement about the superiority of one superhero to the other. The thesis also demonstrates *cause and effect* (the creation of the two superheroes → set the stage for subsequent superheroes) without making a value judgement about superiority of Superman and Batman to subsequent superheroes. In proving his or her argument, the writer uses general language that would be readily understood by the educated reader rather than using colloquial or formal language that would exclude readers unfamiliar with the writer’s particular dialect or jargon.
6. Now, read the recommendation argument, “Brownosing Your Way to Academic Success” (p. 216+). In a brief paragraph or two, explain what type of text it is and what variety of language is used by the writer.

7. Compare your response to the following answer guidelines:

You may have reasoned that “Brownosing” is an essay because it has an introduction, a thesis (the last two sentences of the introduction), body paragraphs that develop the thesis, and a conclusion. In particular, the essay is a recommendation argument because the writer implies that his or her readers should learn the art of brownosing.

“Brownosing” is an unusual essay in that it is written in colloquial language. For instance, the writer uses casual language that sounds like he or she is speaking directly to the reader (e.g., “Listen up you drudges because you’re working too hard. And where does it get you? Lonely Saturday nights in the library.”). The writer uses contractions like *there’s* (par. 1) and *you’re* (par. 4), and slang expressions like *brownosing*, *wise up* (par. 1), *flunking out*, and *party hearty* (par. 4).

*Course writer’s notes:* A theme of this course is that writing involves making informed decisions. There are certain guidelines to help you decide what your essays should look like, but good writers recognize that these are *recommendations*, not rules. Why did the writer of “Brownosing” choose to depart from convention by taking a casual tone rather than a general one?

Looking at the writer’s audience and purpose provides an answer:

- Who is the intended audience of “Brownosing”? In the introduction, the writer identifies his or her audience as those students who are studying hard. As he or she is writing for fellow students, this may be why the writer has chosen to use a conversational tone.
- What is the writer’s purpose in “Brownosing?” The writer says that he or she is trying to convince hard-working students that they should brownnose rather than study. Do you believe the writer is sincere? Or do you think he or she is *pretending* to sound sincere about brownosing?

Perhaps you believe that the writer is being ironic because he or she is recommending something that is obviously inappropriate. The informal language of “Brownosing” helps prove that the writer is *pretending* to be sincere — since writer is having some fun with his or her “purpose,” he or she may have chosen to have some fun by also departing from the language convention for essays. (By the way, if you agree that the writer is pretending to be sincere, this means that his or her stated purpose is a disguise for a real, implied one. What do you think the writer’s *real* purpose is in writing “Brownosing”?)

8. Look back at “The Human and the Superhuman.” What is the audience and purpose of the essay? How have the audience and purpose influenced the language of the essay?

9. Compare your response to the following answer guidelines:

Whereas the writer of “Brownosing” seems to recommends brownosing with tongue in cheek, the writer of “The Human and the Superhuman” seems to be sincerely trying to convince the reader that “Superman and Batman were the mythic creations that set the stage for all [comic book heroes] who

followed” (see par. 1). Since the writer of “The Human and the Superhuman” has a serious **purpose**, this may explain why the writer’s tone is more serious than that of “Brown nosing.”

Unlike the writer of “Brown nosing,” the writer of “The Human and the Superhuman” doesn’t explicitly restrict his or her **audience** to small group of students. Instead, he or she seems to be writing for a general audience, which may be why he or she chose a tone that is less colloquial than that of “Brown nosing.”

10. *Editing for word choice.* As part of Lesson 10, you suggested words and phrases that would be more appropriate for a university audience than the ones given by the writer. In Chapter 16 of the textbook (“Editing for Word Choice”), Clouse presents some troublesome words and phrases that might annoy an experienced reader as well as some words that writers confuse frequently.

Skim the chapter and identify two to three words or phrases that you often use inappropriately in your writing. Then, search your assignments for these words and phrases (easy to do if your assignments are saved on a computer) and make the appropriate revisions.

11. Remember to contact the instructor or a classmate to discuss any questions related to Lesson 10. Proceed to Lesson 11.



# Instructions for Lesson 11

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1. Pull out Thomas' essay, "Notes on Punctuation," from Lesson 11 (section 11.5). In a table, compare Thomas' statements about the various punctuation marks to those made by Clouse. When reading Clouse, don't get bogged down by detail. Instead, look for her comments on the *purpose* of the various punctuation marks and for any points of agreement or disagreement with Thomas.

PUNCTUATION MARKS	THOMAS' STATEMENTS	CLOUSE'S STATEMENTS
1. Parentheses ( )	Par. 1	p. 463
2. Exclamation points (!)	Par. 1 & 5	--
3. Question marks (?)	Par. 1	--
4. Commas (,)	Par. 2 & 10	p. 450
5. Semicolons (;)	Par. 3 & 9	p. 461
6. Periods (.)	Par. 3	--
7. Colons (:)	Par. 4	p. 461
8. Quotation marks (" ")	Par. 6	p. 468
9. Dashes ( -- )	Par. 7	p. 462

2. The primary difference between Thomas' and Clouse's statements is that Thomas offers advice to fellow writers in a playful manner, whereas Clouse presents rules that all writers should follow. Unlike Clouse, Thomas makes his personal preferences as a writer clear to his reader; for example, he enjoys semicolons, but dislikes exclamation marks and colons. For a detailed comparison, see Table 11.1 at the end of this Textbook Key.
3. Refer to section 11.4 of Lesson 11 ("Taking Inventory"). Which punctuation errors did you record? To learn how to correct the errors that you make most frequently, complete the relevant exercises from Clouse. The discussion on the textbook pages preceding each exercise should prove helpful. Compare your responses to the answers provided at the end of this Textbook Key.

IF YOU'RE MISUSING...	COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING EXERCISES IN <i>Clouse</i>
1. Semicolons (;)	p. 460
2. Colons (:)	p. 462
3. Dashes ( -- )	p. 462
4. Parentheses ( )	p. 464
5. Apostrophes (')	p. 467
6. Quotation marks (" ")	p. 468
7. Periods (.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentence fragments, p. 419+</li> <li>• Run-on sentences and comma splices, p. 424+</li> </ul>
8. Commas (,)	<p>To assess your understanding of commas in general, complete the exercise on p. 459.</p> <p>Do you frequently make errors in one or more of the following areas? If so, complete the corresponding exercises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run-on sentences and comma splices, p. 424+</li> <li>• Commas with items in a series, p. 451</li> <li>• Commas with introductory elements, p. 452</li> <li>• Commas with nonessential (or nonrestrictive) elements, p. 454</li> <li>• Commas with interrupters like <i>however</i>, p. 455</li> <li>• Commas with main clauses, p. 456</li> </ul>

If you have trouble understanding some of the terms used and defined by *Clouse*, the glossary of terms provided next may prove helpful.<sup>3</sup> You do not need to memorize the definitions; the table is a reference tool.

<b>GLOSSARY</b>	
<b>Verb</b>	The word or words that show action or a state of being. (See Lesson 10.) <i>Its muddy waters <u>picked up</u> speed.</i> <i>The raft <u>capsized</u> for a second time.</i> <i>He <u>is</u> lost.</i>
<b>Subject</b>	The word or words that tell who or what is doing the action or existing in the state of being. (See Lesson 10.) <i>Its muddy <u>waters</u> picked up speed.</i> <i>The <u>raft</u> capsized for a second time.</i> <i><u>He</u> is lost.</i>
<b>Clause</b>	A subject-verb unit. <i>its muddy waters picked up speed</i>
<b>Main (or independent) clause</b>	A clause that can stand alone as a grammatical sentence. <i>The raft capsized for a second time.</i>
<b>Subordinate (or dependent) clause</b>	A clause that cannot stand alone as a grammatical sentence. <i>before the raft capsized for a second time</i>
<b>Phrase</b>	A group of words that does not have a complete subject-verb unit. <i>early in the summer</i> <i>to sign up for a whitewater rafting trip</i> <i>hinting at death by drowning</i> <i>its muddy waters picking up speed</i>

4. In your assignments, correct any punctuation errors identified by the instructor. Remember to contact the instructor or a classmate for help if you experience difficulty.
5. Proceed to Lesson 12.





## Instructions for Lesson 12

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1. In Chapter 4, Clouse discusses some ways to vary the rhythm of sentences. Read the section of this chapter entitled “Vary Sentence Structures.”
  - Which of Clouse’s points overlap with those made in the lesson?
  - What additional points are made by Clouse?
  - Complete the Revising for Sentence Variety Exercise (p. 124), and compare your results to those provided at the end of this Textbook Key.
2. Varying the rhythm of your sentences is not the only the only way to invigorate your writing. Clouse makes some other recommendations that will help you hold a reader’s interest. If you’d like to learn more about these recommendations, or if your instructor has asked you to investigate one or more of them, see the following table.

CLOUSE’S RECOMMENDATIONS	TO READ	TO DO <i>Answer guidelines to most exercises are provided at the end of this Textbook Key.</i>
1. Eliminate wordiness.	p. 109+	“Eliminating Wordiness” exercise, p. 111.
2. Avoid clichés.	p. 111	“Revising Clichés” exercise, p. 112.
3. Avoid passive voice.	p. 113+	“Revising Inappropriate Passive Voice” exercise, p. 114.
4. Use parallel structure.	p. 114+	“Parallelism” exercise, p. 117.

3. If you experienced difficulty identifying or correcting the misplaced modifiers in Lesson 12, complete the Misplaced Modifiers Exercise on p. 449 of the text. Clouse’s explanation of misplaced modifiers on the preceding pages may also be helpful. Answer guidelines are provided at the end of this Textbook Key.
4. In addition to being misplaced, modifiers can “dangle.” Read the discussion of **dangling modifiers** at the beginning of Chapter 21; then, complete the Dangling Modifiers Exercise on p. 448. Answer guidelines are provided at the end of this Textbook Key.
5. Has your instructor identified any dangling or misplaced modifiers in your assignments? If so, correct these errors.
6. Proceed to Lesson 13.



## **Instructions for Lesson 13**

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1. Read Clouse's discussion of proofreading which begins on page 83.
2. Which proofreading tips suggested by Clouse did I mention in the Lesson 13 notes? Does Clouse suggest any additional tips that might be useful for you?
3. Answer "Essay in Progress" questions 1 and 2 on page 84.
4. Contact the instructor or a classmate to discuss questions you might have related to the lesson, text or an assignment.
5. You have now completed Lesson 13, and are ready to progress to the next and final lesson.



# **Answer Guidelines**

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## **for Assigned Textbook Exercises**

### **Body Paragraphs to Evaluate, p. 46**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

### **Specific Diction Exercise, p. 97**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

### **Transitions Exercise, p. 107**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

### **Eliminating Wordiness Exercise, p.111**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

### **Revising Inappropriate Passive Voice Exercise, p.114**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

### **Parallelism Exercise, p.117**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

### **Revising for Sentence Variety Exercise p. 124**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

### **Sentence Fragments Exercise, p. 419+**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

### **Run-on Sentences and Comma Splices Exercise, p. 424+**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

### **Subject-Verb Agreement Exercise, p. 429**

If you have difficulty understanding an answer, see pp. 426-429 of the textbook for help. Your instructor can provide additional clarification.

1. Stalk
2. Is
3. Have
4. Are
5. Knows
6. Disguise
7. Appears
8. Have
9. Is
10. Feel

- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| 10. Are      | 12. Has     |
| 13. Is       | 14. Are     |
| 15. Deserves | 16. Demands |
| 17. Decides  | 18. Needs   |
| 19. Were     | 20. Act     |

One of the islands in the Caribbean Sea is called Bonaire. A number of tourists are attracted to Bonaire because it is a nesting sight for pink flamingoes. However, the clear waters of the sea make the area a perfect spot for diving. There are numerous underwater attractions for either the experienced diver or the amateur who requires a guide. On the coral reef are groupies and moray eels. Also, there are small "cleaner fish," called hogfish, who eat the harmful parasites off the larger fish. The colourful reef itself is a spectacular sight where one can observe a variety of coral. Throughout the reef are sea anemones, shrimp, and crabs for the diver to observe. Although the underwater attractions of Bonaire are not commonly known, time and word of mouth will bring more vacationers to this island off the coast of northern South America.

**Dangling Modifiers Exercise, p. 448**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**Misplaced Modifiers Exercise, p. 449**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**Commas with Items in a Series Exercise, p. 451**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**Commas with Introductory Elements Exercise, p. 452**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**Commas with Nonessential Elements Exercise, p. 454**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**Commas with Interrupters Exercise, p. 455**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**Commas with Main Clauses Exercise, p. 456**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**Using Commas Exercise, p. 459**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**Semicolons Exercise, p. 460**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**Colons Exercise, p. 462**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**The Dash Exercise, p. 462**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**Parentheses Exercise, p. 464**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**Apostrophes Exercise, p. 467**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here

**Quotation Marks Exercise, p. 468**

!!!Insert solutions from Instructor's Manual here





## Table 11.1. Thomas and Clouse on Punctuation.

You might find it helpful to write in this table the additional points that you have learned from the instructor or lessons.

PUNCTUATION MARKS	THOMAS' STATEMENTS	CLOUSE'S STATEMENTS
1. Parentheses ( )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writers must close left-handed parentheses with right-handed ones.</li> <li>• Use stops rather than parentheses whenever possible; use parentheses sparingly (par. 1).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parentheses downplay the material that they enclose (p. 463).</li> </ul>
2. Exclamation points (!)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclamation points indicate the tone of the writer (par. 1).</li> <li>• Use exclamation points sparingly (par. 5).</li> <li>• <i>Comment:</i> At first reading of paragraph 5, it seems that Thomas is advising readers to never use exclamation points because they can be irritating. However, notice that Thomas actually uses an exclamation point to end the paragraph. He does this to demonstrate his point that exclamation marks can emphasize a trivial sentence. As a result, Thomas' advice actually seems to be to use exclamation points <i>sparingly</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None.</li> </ul>
3. Question marks (?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question marks indicate tone (par. 1).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No comments from Clouse.</li> <li>• Turn to Sample C in the Reader to see how one student writer used the question mark to both draw in her readers (par. 1) and show confusion (par. 2).</li> </ul>

PUNCTUATION MARKS	THOMAS' STATEMENTS	CLOUSE'S STATEMENTS
<p>4. Commas (,)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insert commas as you write rather than afterward. (Note that this recommendation does not disallow comma changes when revising or editing a draft.)</li> <li>• Use commas sparingly (par. 2).</li> <li>• Commas tell you how the different parts of a complicated thought fit together, but because they propel sentences onward, they don't give the reader a mental "breather" (par. 10).</li> <li>• <i>Comment:</i> Did you notice that Thomas ends the essay with a comma? Did this bother you because it didn't leave you with a sense of closure?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inserting commas where you pause when reading isn't always reliable; there are certain rules writers must learn (p. 450).</li> <li>• Inserting commas according to these rules will prevent readers from misreading your sentences.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Semicolons (;)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semicolons tell us that something needs to be added to the preceding full sentence to clarify it (par. 3).</li> <li>• Semicolons allow you to "catch your breath" (par. 9).</li> <li>• <i>Comment:</i> Thomas spends a lot of time praising the semicolon in his essay. This doesn't mean that the semicolon is the punctuation mark that you should use most frequently; rather, it is the punctuation mark that Thomas enjoys the most. Do you have a favourite punctuation mark?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A semicolon separates two main clauses not linked by a conjunction (that is, the semicolon separates units that can stand alone as complete sentences).</li> <li>• It can also be used to separate items in a series that already contains commas (p. 461).</li> </ul>
<p>6. Periods (.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thomas implies that periods end or give finality to a writer's thought (par. 3).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None.</li> </ul>

PUNCTUATION MARKS	THOMAS' STATEMENTS	CLOUSE'S STATEMENTS
7. Colons (:)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writers use the colon to introduce a series of numbered points -- don't forget to number <i>all</i> of these points. (par. 4).</li> <li>• <i>Comment:</i> If the semicolon is Thomas' favourite punctuation mark, the colon is one of his least favourite. Why?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The colon introduces examples or explanations related to something just mentioned (p. 461).</li> </ul>
8. Quotation marks (" ")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use quotation marks honestly, for example, when citing a genuine quotation.</li> <li>• Use quotation marks sparingly. For instance, don't use them around clichés (par. 6).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quotation marks are used to enclose the exact words somebody spoke or wrote, or to enclose words used in a special sense (this corresponds to Thomas's statement).</li> <li>• Quotation marks are also used to enclose titles of short published works, such as poems, essays and articles (p. 468).</li> </ul>
9. Dashes ( -- )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The dash tells you that you're about to take in a different direction that is still connected with the present course.</li> <li>• Remember to put a second dash at the end of the thought to let the reader know he or she is back on course -- or end the sentence (par. 7).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicates a pause for emphatic or dramatic effect -- use sparingly (p. 462).</li> </ul>

## **Notes**

1. These questions are modelled after some composed by Long, 1989.
2. Some results of a contest for “theories” sponsored by *Omni* magazine.
3. According to Weaver (1996), these are the basic grammatical concepts that students need to understand to eliminate frequently occurring grammatical errors in their writing. Weaver’s list of frequent and significant errors is compiled from studies conducted by Connors & Lunford (1988) and Hairston (1981). The definitions and examples in my table are adapted from Weaver’s book, *Teaching Grammar in Context*.

## **VITA AUCTORIS**

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