# Writing Center Online Resource Guide

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**USEK Writing Center**

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The Online Resource Guide was developed to help students in their writing tasks. It provides a set of writing, punctuation and grammar standards and concise instruction on a variety of writing skills. Writers can independently use these resources during any phase of the writing process.

It is noteworthy that the writing conventions and standards suggested below should be flexibly interpreted, as they are general guidelines, not commandments. Some writers may adopt different approaches depending on the required type of the writing task. The below guide simply suggests a common approach to organize formal and scientific writing.

# Writing the Paper

## *Research Paper*

**Definition**

A research paper is a piece of academic writing that provides analysis, interpretation, and argument based on in-depth independent research (Scribbr, n.d.).

The aim of the research paper is to analyze a perspective or argue a point. It reflects the writer's own thinking backed up by scientific information.

**Structure**

- Title page
- Abstract
- Table of contents
- Table of figures (if applicable)
- Introduction
- Literature review
- Research Methodology
- Analysis
- Results
- Discussion/Conclusion
- References
- Appendices (if applicable)

**Steps to Write a Research Paper**

1- Choose a topic of your interest.

2- Search for reliable sources to gather information about your topic.

3- Define your research goals.

4- Develop a thesis statement and choose your methods.

5- Write a draft outline for your paper.

6- Choose a writing format (USEK follows the APA writing style).

7- Check the spelling and proofread if need be.

**Typical Problems**

- **Lack of Organization:** Papers that are weakly organized are confusing and sometimes redundant. Drafting an outline is crucial as it helps you organize your paper.

- **Sentence Inflation:** In other terms wordiness, is the use of more words than necessary to convey an idea. Reduce wordy sentences and avoid unnecessary words. Keep it simple.

- **Informal Writing**: Writing should be formal. Do not mix speech (familiar style) with academic writing. Avoid using colloquialism or slangs.

- **Excessive Errors:** Spelling and grammar check is necessary. You may use an online software (such as grammarly.com) that offers automatic correction of spelling and suggests alternatives.

**Final Tips**

- Be clear and specific (avoid ambiguity).

- Double check your information, references, etc.

**Reference**

*Scribbr.* (n.d.). Retrieved on May 1st, 2022, from [How to Write a Research Paper | A Beginner's Guide (scribbr.com)](scribbr.com)

## *Analytical Research Paper*

### Definition

"An analytical research paper states the topic that the writer will be exploring, usually in the form of a question, initially taking a neutral stance. The body of the paper will present multifaceted information and, ultimately, the writer will state their conclusion, based on the information that has unfolded throughout the course of the essay. This type of paper hopes to offer a well-supported critical analysis without necessarily persuading the reader to any particular way of thinking" (Piedmont College, n.d.).

### Types

Prior to analysis, a description of a situation is needed (a process, policy, problem…). The description is the first step towards analysis as it helps the writer to define the analytic purpose of the research that could be:

- Question/Answer

- Problem/Solution

- Hypothesis/Proof

- Cause and effect links

- Contrast (with a previous situation)

### Writing Steps

- Write an introduction with a thesis statement on your topic (no stand is taken).

- Organize the body of your essay (depending on your research scope).

- Write the topic sentences of each paragraph/part depending on the type you opted for.

- Support each topic sentence with analysis (evidence, examples, proof, reasoning…).

- Summarize your analysis to discuss results and draw conclusions (take your stand).

### Reference

Arrendale Library, Piedmont College (n.d.). *Types of Research Papers.* Retrieved on May 1st, 2022, from Types of Research Papers - Writing a Research Paper - Arrendale Library at Piedmont College

## *Argumentative Research Paper*

**Definition**

In an argumentative research paper, a writer "both states the topic they will be exploring and immediately establishes the position they will argue regarding that topic in a **thesis statement**" (Piedmont College, n.d.). The goal of an argumentative research paper is mainly to persuade readers to adopt the view presented.

**Example**: Early exposure to social media has a negative impact on children. (The writer must make this statement valid)

It consists of an introduction ending with a thesis statement that clearly shows the stand of the writer. The topic should therefore be debatable and controversial; however, the writer must only take one stand to defend.

**Structure**

- Introduction:

State your topic; identify your thesis statement and where do you stand.

- Body paragraphs:

    1- Support your main argument (thesis statement) with evidence. Provide statistics, figures, facts, scientific opinions, previous research studies on the topics, reports….).

    2- Acknowledge opposing views or what is called counterclaim: Provide data that refute your main argument.

    3- Rebuttal: Provide evidence to refute the counterclaim.

- Conclusion:

Validate your main argument and restate your position.

**Reference**

Arrendale Library, Piedmont College (n.d.). *Types of Research Papers.* Retrieved on May 1st, 2022, from [Types of Research Papers - Writing a Research Paper - Arrendale Library at Piedmont College](#)

## *Scientific Laboratory Report*

**Definition**

"A scientific report is a form of academic writing explaining a technical or scientific research. It is a specialized type of report that adheres to the scientific method characterized by attention to detail, reliance on test procedures, objective analysis, documented research, careful report and observations based on evidence" (Smith-Worthington & Jefferson, 2011). It describes the process, progress, development, and results of a scientific research problem. It also provides, if applicable, recommendations to improve the process. It is usually required of sciences and technical fields students.

**Structure**

Title Page

Table of Contents

Introduction

Methods and Materials

Results

Discussion

Conclusion

References

**Guidelines for Writing a Scientific Laboratory Report**

**1- Title**

It should be concise and specific. It simply introduces the topic of your experiment.

Example: *The role of temperature in ecosystem*

**2- Introduction**

- State the aim/purpose and objectives of your research (Why are you investigating?).

- Provide background information about the topic, a brief overview of previous research to underline relevant facts (Why is it important?).

- State your hypothesis: It is the idea or concept that will be tested. It should be specific and must show the relationship between the different objects of your study (What are you investigating?).

**Wrong hypothesis:**

"It was hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between temperature and the ecosystem." (too general)

**Correct hypothesis:**

"It was hypothesized that as the temperature increases, the disruption of the ecosystem increases." (specific)

**Example of an introduction:**

"The purpose of the experiment was to test [purpose] . . . According to [scholars] … It was suggested that [relate to previous research] . . . Therefore, it was hypothesized that as the temperature increases, the disruption of the ecosystem increases."

## 3- Methods and Material

- Describe how you tested your hypothesis (the methods)
- Describe the process step by step including all crucial details for a potential experiment replication (the process)
- List all used materials, equipment, experimental conditions, controls, timeframes…
- Use subsections to organize this part (methods, steps, materials, controls…)

TIP: Use the past tense as you are describing what happened and the third person pronoun (try to opt for the passive voice): The bicarbonate pump was initiated.

## 4- Results

This section should be short as it only describes the results of the experiment. The writer should:

- Provide a summary of the collected data in the form of tables, figures, charts, diagrams…
- Underline what the data shows (this part should not be debatable).

**Tips**

Use the past tense in this section as the events you are reporting have already occurred.

Number your tables, diagrams, charts, graphs (Do not forget to label each axis) as it is easier to refer to them and give them titles.

**5- Discussion**

This section must answer the question: What do the results mean?

- Interpret and evaluate your results: Describe and interpret the patterns or trends you have observed and link them to the objectives of your research and your hypothesis.

- Describe results that were unexpected or may have caused limitations to your research.

**6- Conclusion**

- Sum up your experiment and relate back to the introduction and hypothesis.

- Suggest how the experiment, procedure could be improved (if applicable) and what additional experiments could be useful.

**7- References**

List all cited resources.

**Reference**

Smith-Worthington, D. and Jefferson, S., 2010. *Technical writing for success*. Cengage Learning.

# *Scientific Progress Report*

## Definition

A progress report is exactly what it sounds like – a document that explains in detail how far you have gone towards the completion of a project. It outlines the activities you have carried out, the tasks you have completed, and the milestones you have reached vis-à-vis your project plan (Balmaceda, 2018).

## Aim

The scientific progress report states the work that has been accomplished and the phases that still need to be completed. It gives an overview on what was done, what is being done and what will be done.

Its aim is to inform the report recipient of your progress and to state the expected date of completion. Progress reports give recipients the opportunity to assess your work and reflect on it (in cases anything needs to be changed).

## Structure

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Introduction
- Work Progress
- Roadblocks/Challenges
- Next steps
- References
- Appendices (if applicable)

## Guidelines for Writing a Scientific Progress Report

### 1- Introduction (a couple of sentences)

- Provide overview about the purpose of the project and its timescale.
- Provide a brief overview on the carried-out work and a brief work plan for the coming phases.

**2- Work Progress**

- Provide details about your research/project objectives.

- State your research/project accomplishments so far.

- Include explanations of your analysis, the adopted methods/steps… (how you got here).

- Include information about key findings in this section.

**3- Roadblocks/Challenges**

- Mention the roadblocks that prevented you from achieving your goals or may prevent you from reaching your target.

- Describe how you solved these issues or how are you planning to overcome these challenges. If you need to bring changes to your project, provide the reasons in this section.

**4- Next Steps**

Give a summary on what you will be working on next and when you forecast to complete the tasks (you can make an outline of future tasks and with specific deadlines).

**5- References**

Mention all used sources.

**6- Appendices**

Include any graphic that might be useful to highlight your findings or to make your work clearer.

**Useful tips**

- Progress reports are relatively short (1 to 2 pages) as they should only highlight the main key accomplishments and the next steps to be undertaken towards the research goal. Avoid lengthy reports.

- Use simple and straightforward language.

- Be specific.

- Stick to facts.

- Use graphics (tables, charts…) when needed.

**Reference**

Balmaceda, K. (2021). *Progress Report: How to Write, Structure, and Make It Visually Attractive.* Retrieved on May 2, 2022, from [Progress Report: How to Write, Structure, and Make It Visual (piktochart.com)](piktochart.com)

## *Internship Report*

### Definition

An internship report is an overview of your experience working for a company as an intern. Internship reports identify milestones in your professional development, highlighting which skills you used most frequently and key moments where you got to put those skills into practice. They combine the personal reflection of a journal entry with the strategic perspective of performance evaluation, giving you the chance to look holistically at our internship experience and identify the lessons you learned (Glassdoor, 2021).

### Aim

The main purpose of an internship report is to provide students with a chance to reflect on this professional experience and on the skills learned during the internship. It helps students reflect on the initial internship goals and describe how they were (or not) achieved.

### Structure

- Title Page

- Table of Contents

- Introduction

- Description of Activities/Duties

- Reflection on Learning

- Conclusion

### Guidelines for Writing an Internship Report

### 1- Introduction

It should give a description of the internship site and scope of work completed during the internship. Additional background information that may be necessary to understand the work performed are to be included.

### 2- Description of Activities/Duties

List the objectives of the training and describe your duties and the tasks you performed. Give details on the project you worked on (unless the project is confidential. If so, the student must have all information disclosed approved by the mentor). Focus on the techniques and the skills you put in practice.

**3- Reflection on Learning**

State what you learned during your internship and detail any new skills or programs you learned during your experience. Include significant examples of lessons learned or new skills that you were able to develop.

This part should provide answers to the following questions:

- Were the objectives achieved?

- What are the new skills you learned?

- Were you adequately prepared for the internship?

- What are the challenges you met? How did you overcome them?


**4- Conclusion**

End your report with a conclusion that reflects on your overall internship experience. Share how you plan to apply this experience in the future and highlight the things that you want to learn more about. You can also share feedback on how you would improve the experience.


**Reference**

*Glassdoor* (n.d.). Retrieved on May 2, 2022, from How to Create an Internship Report You Actually Use - Glassdoor Career Guides

## *Abstract in Scientific Research Papers*

### Definition

"An abstract is a 150- to 250-word paragraph that provides readers with a quick overview of your essay or report and its organization. It should express your thesis (or central idea) and your key points; it should also suggest any implications or applications of the research you discuss in the paper" (George Mason University, n.d.).

### What to include in an abstract?

Importance of research: What is the importance or purpose of your research?

Statement of the problem: What is your main argument/thesis statement or claim?

Research Methods: Which methods were used to conduct the research?

Findings/results: What were the major findings?

Conclusions reached: What conclusion can you come up with?

Keywords: List the most important key words that reflect on the methods and content.

### Useful Tips

- Your abstract is an overview of the research you already conducted. It is not a proposal; therefore, avoid using the future tense (the paper will study…. Or I will examine…). Use the present tense instead (the paper studies ….)

- Draft your abstract after you have finished drafting your whole paper.

### Reference

George Mason University (n.d.). *Writing an Abstract*. Retrieved on May 3, 2022, from [The Writing Center | Writing an Abstract | Guides (gmu.edu)](#)

## *Introduction in Scientific Research Papers*

The aim of the introduction is to announce the main topic, expose the writer's motivation, the reasons behind the topic choice and the added value of the work. It provides some background information on the topic and announces what the paper will tackle, analyze, resolve… For an essay, it should be one paragraph but for a research paper, it should be longer and might constitute a chapter at the beginning of the work.

**How to Write an Introduction?**

1- Start with a hook (start with an exciting opening to get your readers' attention: ask questions, provide interesting facts, provide historical backgrounds, tell a personal story, compare two things, describe an experience…).

2- Mention your purpose, motivation, reasons behind this topic choice and the added value of your work.

3- Write your thesis statement (this is the most important part as your paper/essay will bring answers to your thesis statement. You can find information on how to write a thesis statement on the next page) and share your hypotheses (for analytical research papers).

4- State your methods and approach.

5- Announce the plan of your essay/paper.

**Tips to Write a Good Introduction**

- Start with a broad statement and then narrow down your focus: Move from general to specific.

- Think about your audience: it should be interesting to spark the readers' curiosity.

- Make it specific (no digressing).

- Make it smooth and clear.

- Introduce ideas your will be developing throughout your paper (announce your paper plan).

- If it is hard for you to start with the introduction, write the body of the paper first then you can go back to the introduction.

- Reread your introduction after you finish writing your paper to make sure it matches with the plan, information… you initially mentioned. Rereading is also important to check if all questions have been answered and if the provided background information leads to the thesis statement in a logical way.

**Things to Avoid When Writing an Introduction**

- Assuming that your readers know nothing about the topic and providing unnecessary information.

- Providing answers to your thesis statement.

# *Thesis Statement in Scientific Research Papers*

## Definition

A thesis statement is a sentence (or sentences) that narrows down a wide topic to concentrate the attention towards specific areas that will be covered in an essay/paper. It is a question or claim that will be answered, investigated, or analyzed in the paper. It states the direction adopted by the writer to prove a certain point/claim (compare, contrast, analyze, etc.).

## Characteristics

- A thesis statement is debatable. It often answers HOW and WHY questions related to the topic in question. It can never be answered by yes or no.

- It is concise and clear. Focused on specific areas of the topic.

- It is not neither a fact, nor an opinion or observation; it is an idea that should be supported.


## Types of Thesis Statements

- **Argumentative:**
An argumentative thesis statement states the claim and the reasons or evidence supporting it and the order in which the writer will presenting them. It could be an opinion, a statement, a proposal, an assessment, a cause-effect relationship. The aim of the paper is to convince the audience that the claim is valid based on the reasons and evidence that will be presented.

- **Analytical:**
An analytical thesis statement states the topic for analysis, the analysis parts and their order.

- **Expository:**
An expository thesis statement states the topic that will be explained and the topic key aspects that will be developed in the paper.

## Process

- Before, you develop your thesis, you need to conduct research to gather information and collect evidence.

- Narrow down your research and define the areas you want to cover.

- Look for similarities and contrasting points and think about the significance of the topic.

- Develop your thesis statement by stating your topic and providing a main idea to support it.

**Useful Tips**

- Thesis statements vary depending on the purpose of the paper and the discipline. Ask your instructor for further details on how to proceed.

- Thesis statement could be of one to three lines or around 50 words.

- Your writing plan might change as you write, so you may need to bring changes to your thesis statement to reflect the points discussed in your paper.

**Examples:**

Weak thesis statement: Is there a relation between a consumer surplus and prices?

Strong thesis statement: How does a consumer surplus affect prices?

Weak thesis statement: Do the economy and politics affect the environment?

Strong thesis Statement: How do economic, political and social factors contribute to the aggravation of the environmental crisis?

**Reference**

The University of Arizona (n.d.). *Writing a Thesis Statement.* Retrieved on May 3, 2022 from [Writing a Thesis Statement | UAGC Writing Center](Writing a Thesis Statement | UAGC Writing Center)

# *Literature Review in Scientific Research Papers*

## Aim

The literature review is an overview on the existing research on a specific topic. It provides insights into the most important information on a particular subject. It shows what has been already done and helps define the research gaps.

It usually comes after the introduction. At the end of the literature, the writer identifies the gap and poses research questions to be addressed in the paper. This question highlights the added value of the paper.

## Process

- First step is research. The writer needs first to learn what is already known about the topic to avoid duplicating knowledge and to try to identify a gap in the existing knowledge (if any). The gap could be what was overlooked or misinterpreted in previous studies. It could be a flaw or weakness in the existing literature.

- Second step is the selection of the most relevant material from your sources. You may extract information as it is (direct quotations) or you can paraphrase ideas.

- Third step is the arrangement of collected information and grouping them by making connections (showing similarities, contrasting views, complementary views…). Give labels to each group, according to the theme, topic, or approach…

- Order the labels in a logical way to build the structure of your literature review and start drafting it. You can opt for different patterns to organize your literature review:

  - Chronological: less recent to most recent

  - Topical: according to the different topic or subtopics groups

  - Generic to specific

  - Seminal: the most influential studies to the less influential ones

  - Debate: shows criticism and opposition of different opinions

- You may state (if applicable) how the paper will expand the knowledge and lists the steps aiming at solving the problem or answering the research questions.

- Cite your sources using the appropriate documentation style.

**Tips**

- Before you start drafting the literature review, take into consideration that readers may not be specialists in the discipline and keep in mind that specialized concepts or terms must be thoroughly defined or explained.

- A literature review is not a series of summaries. It is not the summary of each of your sources; it is a synthesis work in which you reassemble different sources and present them from a new perspective. It requires analytical skills.

- Start each paragraph with a topic sentence to define its content. You may use headings to make it clearer for your readers.

**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *Writing a Literature Review*. Retrieved on May 4, 2022, from [The Writing Center | Writing a Literature Review | Guides (gmu.edu)](gmu.edu)

## *Paragraph Structure*

### Overview

A paragraph develops one idea that is usually introduced by what is called the topic sentence. The idea is developed further through a series of related sentences.

The length of the paragraph depends on its purpose (definition, explanation, comparison, contrast…) and the type of the paper.

Paragraphs play a crucial role in writing as they organize ideas in a logical order and make writing more readable.

### How to Construct a Paragraph?

An effective paragraph typically contains three parts:

1- Topic sentence: the sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph.

2- Supporting sentences: these are the sentences that elaborate the topic sentence, explain it, provide evidence to support it, illustrate it, show its relevance…

3- Concluding sentence: it makes a link between the main idea of the paragraph and the research question or topic of the paper and announces the next paragraph.

4- The first two parts are essential in every paragraph; however, not all paragraphs have a concluding sentence.

### Types of Paragraphs

There are different types of paragraphs depending on the purpose of your essay. In a paragraph, you may:

- expose a point of view and give evidence to support it.

- argue against a point of view.

- organize information into categories or groups.

- compare or contrast ideas.

- define a concept.

- explain the steps of a process.

**Tips**

- Start a new paragraph when you want to start a main idea or a main point within an extended idea.

- If you feel your paragraph is too long, ask yourself if all information relate to the same main idea. If not, add new paragraphs around each identified idea.

**Reference**

University of New Castle Library Guides. (n.d.) *Writing Strong Paragraphs: Types of Paragraphs*. Retrieved on May 4, 2022, from [Types of paragraphs - Writing strong paragraphs - LibGuides at University of Newcastle Library](#)

# *Conclusion in Scientific Research Papers*

**Overview**

A conclusion should echo the main purpose of the paper and provide a summary of what has been done in the paper. It restates the main points of the paper.

**How to Write a Conclusion?**

- Start by restating the aim of your paper and your research questions.

- Briefly restate the methodology and summarize the main findings (if applicable).

- Suggest the implications for the topic field in question.

- Demonstrate the significance or added value of your research.

- Acknowledge the research limitations.

- Provide recommendations for future research or call for further study.

**Remark:**

This is the case of conclusions in research papers. Some components may or may not be present depending on the discipline or purpose of paper you are working on.

## *In-text Citations and Full Citations*

A referencing style is a set of guidelines for in-text citations and full citations used in a scientific work. It also determines other technical aspects of a scientific paper (fonts, margins, page numbering…).

There are many styles for in-text citations (Harvard, Chicago, MLA (Modern Language Association). The referencing style adopted by USEK is the APA (American Psychological Association) Style.

Whenever you refer to, summarize, paraphrase or quote from another source, you will need to include an in-text citation to give the author(s) credit of their ideas. Every in text-citation should have a corresponding entry in the reference list, known as bibliography.

In-text citations and full citations (references) follow a specific outline, depending on the source that is being used. Please refer to the APA guide (available in helpful links) for more information on citing different types of sources.

**Tips**

- During the research phase, document every source you might want to select for your research so that you have everything needed for the in-text citation and full citation once you decide to draft your paper.

- Remember that you must cite every single source you use otherwise it will be considered as plagiarism.

- You can ask a Librarian for referencing assistance.

### *Writing a PowerPoint Presentation: The Do's and Don'ts*

PowerPoint Presentations are used to enhance oral presentations and to provide a visual support to share information with a group. They allow you to reinforce your main points, but they do not serve as speaking notes.

Below you will find some of the PowerPoint presentations best practices:

1- Before you start your presentation, make an outline.

2- Use a single background for the whole presentation.

3- Choose simple fonts. Make sure the font size is readable (Titles size: 36 to 44 pt/Text size: 28 to 32 pt).

4- Add essential information only. Avoid text-heavy slides or continuous paragraphs. Organize information into shorts statements or key terms or concepts.

5- Use bullet points.

6- Add definitions or explanations when needed. Keep text to a minimum of 6 lines per slide.

7- Use consistent sentence structure when listing.

8- Include a heading for each slide. If two or more slides have the same heading, add a number next to each heading. Example: Causes of Pollution (1) / Causes of Pollution (2) …

9- Use visuals to support what you are saying. Provide titles or captions for images graphs or tables… Make sure the images you add are significant to your topic.

10- Use contrasting colors: dark text with light background or vice versa. Avoid bright or neon colors.

11- Start your PowerPoint with a title page that includes the title of the presentation, your name, instructor's name, semester, etc.

**12-** Include in-text citations.

**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *Writing a PowerPoint Presentation*. Retrieved on May 7, 2022, from The Writing Center | Writing a PowerPoint Presentation | Guides (gmu.edu)

# Writing as Process

## *Reading and Note Taking*

Reading and note taking are two crucial steps in any research process. This handout provides you with tips and strategies to help you read and take notes efficiently.

- Before reading the whole document, skim through the text to identify the main ideas and purpose. This step aims to build a mental map that helps you read and process the article in a more efficient way.

    The abstract helps you identify the purpose, the main questions, and the major findings.

    The introduction gives insight into what the paper will be tackling.

    The conclusion gives answers and reflects on the paper key points.

- Keep a pen in hand when you read to underline key ideas, important figures or statements. You can also write in the margins to add notes, questions, or comments.

- Look up difficult words that may hinder your understanding and try to reformulate using your own words. This will make it easier for you to process information.

- Summarize the main idea of each paragraph that you read and state its function in relation to the entire article (contrast, analogy, contradiction, etc.). For example, this paragraph uses a comparison to illustrate the idea developed in the previous one.

- Outline or number key ideas to organize information based on specific pattern (general to specific, most important to less important…).

**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *Strategies for Reading Academic Articles*. Retrieved on May 7, 2022, from [The Writing Center | Strategies for Reading Academic Articles | Guides (gmu.edu)](gmu.edu)

## *Brainstorming*

Brainstorming is a crucial part of the writing process. It is essential to generate ideas and improve writing. Most people tend to think that brainstorming is a group activity; however, it can also be done individually using the same approaches or strategies listed below.

Here are some brainstorming strategies that will help you get started.

### 1- Free Writing

Once you have chosen a topic, write down every idea that comes to your mind without censuring yourself even if it may seem illogical or odd. Add all ideas and you may decide later on, which ones are good to keep and which ones are not.

Write these ideas as they come without worrying about grammar or spelling. You can edit them later since the goal is to gather ideas as much as possible.

After freewriting, you can decide if your ideas are too expansive (in this case, you will need to narrow down your focus) or the opposite, too narrow, so you may want to broaden them to cover the chosen topic.

Make an outline of these ideas and you can start writing the draft from there.

### 2- Listing

Make a list of ideas that come to your mind. You may simply write words or short sentences and once you finish this step, you can review the list and choose the ideas that you wish to remove or develop.

You can make different lists, one for example for the ideas supporting your claim and another for the ones refuting it.

Using multiple lists gives you more perspective on the topic and make it easier for you to decide if your claim is solid or full of holes.

### 3- Mind Mapping

Mind maps are useful to help you organize information.

To create a mind map, write in the middle a blank paper, white board or screen your subject or topic.

Draw lines that extend from your central subject and add information related to your topic. Cluster together the ideas that seem related.

These lines can extend into smaller lines to make additional connections that might be relevant to your topic.

This will help you create a map of ideas and generate new ideas of the missing parts. You will be able to examine information more clearly thanks to the clusters and connections that you made.

## 4- Conversation

Asking yourself questions is another useful brainstorming technique. Try to look for answers to stimulate thinking and find other potential ideas.

You can also think aloud and have a conversation with a peer, a friend, an instructor…This will give you feedback on your ideas and help you explore new areas or perspective that you have not thought of before.

## 5- Cubing

Cubing is **a tool to look at one thing from six (each side of a cube) different ways**. Often, we think about a topic in one or two ways alone, preventing us from fully understanding its complexity. Cubing also allows you to focus on each side a bit longer than you may have with other forms of brainstorming (Kent State University, n.d).

This technique enables you to look at a certain topic from 6 points of view; you must therefore respond to these questions:

- Describe it
- Compare it
- Associate it
- Analyze it
- Apply it
- Argue it (for or against it)

This technique will result in several approaches to the topic and will help you notice patterns and connections among the different ideas. It gives you a broader and comprehensive overview on your subject.

## 6- Star Bursting

This technique focuses on generating questions rather than answers. Write your main topic in the middle of the paper and draw a 6-point star. Each point of the star refers to one of the 6 standard questions: who, what, where, when, why and how.

Answer the questions that are relevant to your main topic. The starburst provides you with an insight into the angles of your topic that should be developed.

**Reference**

The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (n.d.). *Brainstorming*. Retrieved on May 10, 2022, from [Brainstorming – The Writing Center • University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (unc.edu)](#)

## *Outlining*

Crafting an outline is an important part of the writing process. The outline is the map of your paper as it visualizes its structure; it enables you see the big picture and decide how to arrange your ideas.

There are different ways to organize ideas and therefore different formats of outlines. You may use numbers, bullet points, flowcharts, timeline… You can try any organizational pattern and decide what suits you best as long as it is clear and makes sense. The choice of a specific format might also depend on the nature of the writing task (thesis, report, research paper….).

An outline is a draft of the structure of your paper; it may be rearranged or adjusted during the writing process.

**How to Create an Outline?**

First, you need to have a clear thesis statement, purpose, or claim. After you finished brainstorming ideas, you are ready to craft your outline.

Remember, your outline must be as specific as possible. The questions below will help you get started:

1- Can some of the ideas be grouped together?
2- If yes, how many groups of ideas are there?
3- Which ideas are the most important?
4- Which ones seem to be secondary ideas?
5- What order would be best to organize them?

Once you have the answers, you can draft your outline putting the main ideas at the top level and the secondary ones below them.

Once you finish this step, look at your outline and check if:

- Some parts seem to be missing or do not fit.

- There is repetition.

- There are enough secondary ideas to support the main ones.

- The order seems logical or it is better to rearrange some ideas.

## *Reverse Outlining*

Reverse outlining is a process whereby you make an outline <u>after</u> a paper has been written.

**How to Do it?**

Read the paper, essay, article… and write the main idea or main arguments briefly in the margin next to each paragraph. This will enable you to see the progress of the document in a clearer way. Once you have completed the step, write on a separate sheet of paper the ideas that you have extracted from each paragraph in the order of their appearance in the document. This is the reverse outline.

Reverse outlining is a useful skill that writers can use to:

1- revise their work;

2- take notes.

**Reverse Outline for Paper-Writing Revision**

Once you have created your reverse outline, ask yourself:

- Is the ideas flow logical and clear? If not, you will need to reconsider the order.

- Do ideas connect with each other? Do they all relate back to the thesis statement or main argument? If no, then you might be off topic or you might need to explicit further.

- Is there a gap in logic or missing information?

Bear in mind that you must extract one main idea or argument from each paragraph. If there are more than one, then you should break up the paragraph into two or more paragraphs.

**Reverse Outline for Taking Notes**

When you are conducting a large research project, you might get confused or forget what you have read. Creating a reserve outline will enable you to keep ideas clear and allow you to remember the main ideas of your sources without having to reread everything all over again.

The process is easy. Writer after each paragraph, one sentence to summarize its gist while asking yourself: What is the purpose of this paragraph? You can also add personal notes (interesting, agree, disagree) should you need to refer back to these sources later.

**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *Reverse Outlining*. Retrieved on May 10, 2022, from [The Writing Center | Reverse Outlining | Guides (gmu.edu)](#)

## *Paraphrasing*

Paraphrasing is using your own wording to present someone else's ideas. It requires analytical and writing skills to be able to understand and interpret other's ideas and information. Words and sentence structure must significantly change. Paraphrased ideas or passages must be attributed to the original source and therefore must be noted with in-text citations.

Paraphrasing is:

- an alternative to using direct citations (to avoid the excessive use of quotations);

- a way to integrate information in your writing and avoid plagiarism;

- a way to explain someone else's ideas without changing the meaning;

- useful to take notes;

- a way to explain numerical information present in tables, charts…

### How to Paraphrase?

- Read the original passage carefully to understand it.

- Highlight the main ideas.

- Cover the original passage and rewrite it using your own wording. Make sure to include all main points, respect the relationship between them and to maintain the meaning.

- Compare your paraphrase to the original passage to see if your version reflects it and make adjustments to make it similar.

- Cite your sources according to the documentation style that you have adopted for your writing.

### Writing Tips

- Use synonyms where appropriate.

- Change the sentence structure. Change the active voice to passive or vice versa or the words forms (adjectives into nouns, nouns into verbs…).

- Start the passage with a different point of view. Change the order in which ideas are presented. Make sure your paraphrase is logical.

- up long sentences or combine short sentences.

### Reference

University of New South Wales. (n.d.). *Paraphrasing, Summarizing and Quoting*. Retrieved on May 10, 2022, from https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/paraphrasing-summarising-and-quoting

## *Summarizing*

A summary is an overview of the source material. It provides a brief understanding of the major ideas and essential points of a source. It does not include details and examples and therefore it is shorter than the original source. Summaries must be noted with in-text citations.

**When to Summarize?**

Summarize when you:

- want to keep notes to remember what you have read;

- write an abstract;

- want to provide an overview of a topic without mentioning details and examples (for a literature review for instance);

- determine the key ideas of a source to support your claim.

**How to Summarize?**

- Read the original material and highlight the main ideas.

- Skim the material again to make sure you have understood all key points.

- Break the material down into sections to make it more manageable and restate the main idea of each section in the margin using your own wording.

- Write your summary: now that you have all important ideas and key points, you can link them together in one text in a way that reflects your own understanding of the original author's key points.

- Cite the source.

**Writing Tips**

- Be selective. A summary is not essentially a paraphrase of every single paragraph of the original material. Your aim is to keep the essential points leaving out supplementary details.

- The length of a summary depends on the original source and how much information you include.

- To avoid plagiarism, you should paraphrase the author's ideas. If you are summarizing lots of article, you can use a plagiarism checker to make sure your text is original.

**Reference**

University of New South Wales. (n.d.). *Paraphrasing, Summarizing and Quoting*. Retrieved on May 10, 2022, from https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/paraphrasing-summarising-and-quoting

### *Avoiding Plagiarism*

Plagiarism is using someone else's ideas or work as your own. It can be intentionally or unintentionally when you forget to cite your sources or when you cite them incorrectly.

Copying, paraphrasing, or summarizing without crediting the original author are all considered as plagiarism.

**Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism**

- Keep track of all consulted sources in your research: You might forget where an idea came from and might consider it as yours. Keep your sources organized when researching and compile a list of all your sources.

- Correctly integrate your sources when quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing (add in-text citations and a reference list according to the adopted documentation style.

- Use a plagiarism checker before final submission. This could help you detect accidental plagiarism such as missing quotation marks.

**Reference**

University of Nottingham. (n.d.). *Avoiding Plagiarism*. Retrieved on May 11, 2022, from
https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studyingeffectively/writing/plagiarism/index.aspx

## *Connecting Ideas through Transitions*

An organized paper depends on the order you have chosen to present the different parts and on the relationships between these parts.

These relationships are defined by transitional words or phrases that make the writing's organization clearer and easier to follow.

Transitions serve as bridges between the different parts of your paper. They play a crucial role in ensuring cohesion and coherence as they logically link sentences and paragraphs together. Transitions establish clear relationships between ideas and make it easier for readers to follow the paper progression. They help the writer to smoothly carry over an idea from one sentence, paragraph, or section to another.

There are different types of connections between ideas and therefore different types of transitions. Some transitions are used to indicate similarity; others contrast or cause and effect relationship….

It is therefore important to ask yourself how the idea relates to the one that came before to choose the appropriate transitional word or phrase. Is it supporting the same claim or suggesting a contrasting one? Are the ideas dependent or do they present a different point of view…?

Transitions can be used at the beginning of the sentence, and they might be inserted between words as well.

Below is the list of common transitions organized according to the type of relationships they frequently develop:

**Addition:** and, again, and then, besides, equally important, finally, further, furthermore, nor, too, next, also, moreover, in addition, first, second, third, additionally, as well, etc.

**Comparison or Similarity:** by the same token, in like manner**,** in similar fashion, in the same way also, in the same way, just as … so too, likewise, similarly, whereas, compared to, against, vis a vis, conversely, likewise, …

**Cause or effect:** therefore, consequently, as a result, thus, because of, due to, because, since, accordingly, consequently, …

**Contrast:** however, on the other hand, on the contrary, nevertheless, nonetheless, in comparison, notwithstanding, but, yet, despite, in spite, even though, although, though, whereas, while, and yet, in contrast, …

**Sequence or order:** after, as, before, afterwards, as soon as, by the time, once, first, second, third, next, then, finally, previously, simultaneously, concurrently, following this, subsequently, now, at this point, afterward, in the meantime…

**Example:** for example, for instance, in this case, to illustrate, such as, namely, specifically…

**Summary:** to conclude, in conclusion, as a result, consequently, in brief, in short, to sum up, hence, therefore, accordingly, thus, finally, in a word, in summary…

**Condition:** otherwise, if, unless, whether, in case, in the event

**Emphasis:** even, indeed, in fact, of course, truly, definitely, naturally, certainly, undeniably, without reservation, absolutely, surprisingly, always, undoubtedly…

**Purpose:** for this purpose, in order to, so that, to this end…

**Reference**

The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (n.d.). *Transitions*. Retrieved on May 11, 2022, from Transitions – The Writing Center • University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (unc.edu)

## *Cohesion and Coherence*

Cohesion and coherence may sound similar but there is difference between them. "Cohesion is achieved when sentences are connected at the sentence level, whereas coherence is achieved when ideas are connected" (Enago Academy, 2021).

Cohesion focuses on the grammar and style of your paper. It is achieved when the last few words of a sentence indicate information that will appear in the next sentence.

Coherence is also called unity and is achieved when your whole writing contributes to the same main topic.

An academic or professional writing is considered well-organized when it uses techniques that establish cohesion and coherence within and between its parts. Without coherence and coherence, the main writing goal cannot be achieved and the writing could be confusing.

**Tips and Strategies to Maintain Cohesion and Coherence**

- Repeat keywords or concepts as they strengthen the organization of the paper and make it easier to follow.

- Use transitions to establish relationships between ideas.

- Use synonyms. The use of the lexis broadens your word choice and gives variety to the paper avoiding thus monotony.

- Ensure thematic consistency and progression. Each sentence must bring new information that relate back to the previous one.

- Use pronouns to refer to something previously mentioned.

- Use ellipsis which means the omission of words because their meaning can be implied by the context (e.g., He quit smoking. I hope I will too.)

- Use parallel structures as they help readers understand complicated ideas.

- Use correct punctuation.

**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *Cohesion and Coherence*. Retrieved on May 12, 2022, from The Writing Center | Cohesion and Coherence | Guides (gmu.edu)

### *Reading Aloud*

Reading aloud has many benefits for the writer. It helps getting information in a new way and enables the reader to notice things s/he did not pay attention to before, speeding up the revision process. Reading aloud can be one of the best proofreading techniques.

You can read your draft yourself or ask the tutor to read it aloud for you. Technology offers different means for reading aloud such as text-to-speech software applications, e-readers…

**Benefits of Reading Aloud**

Reading aloud helps you:

- Focus on the order of information since you cannot go back and check again the information like when you are reading.

- Identify gaps in your explanation.

- Check if your draft lacks transitions or if you have moved from one idea to another abruptly.

- Spot grammatical errors, missing words (when the sentences sound wrong), typos, etc.

- Spot redundancies (when they are repetitive sentences).

**Strategies for Reading Aloud**

- Try reading hard copies instead of soft ones as this will give you the chance to add notes or marks that you can go back to later

- Read at a moderate pace to allow you brain detect mistakes, fill in missing words or make some corrections

- Follow along with your finger to make sure you don't skip anything and to remain concentrated.

**Reference**

The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (n.d.). *Reading Aloud.* Retrieved on May 12, 2022, from Reading Aloud – The Writing Center • University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (unc.edu)

## *Writing Concisely*

Writing concisely is the basic rule of good academic writing. Using straightforward language can help you see things more clearly. Writing concisely is communicating relevant information in as few words as possible. It is more appreciated by readers since they get information quickly. Wordiness and redundancy confuse writers and readers; thus, it is important to be precise and concise while writing.

**Tips for Writing Concisely**

- Convey the information you want to deliver. Nothing more and nothing less.

- Read your draft as a whole and look for redundancies. Delete any repetitive content.

- Make sure that all sentences in a paragraph support the topic sentence and remove sentences that do not.

- Look for words or sentences that you can remove without affecting the meaning. Delete empty phrases, unnecessary negative constructions and "to be" verbs, weak qualifiers…

- Choose words that are more specific. Choose the word that most clearly convey your meaning.

- Opt for the active voice rather than the passive voice.

Examples:

Wordy: *However, **it is important to note** that passive smoking could have negative health effects on people* (Unnecessary metadiscourse).

Concise: *Passive smoking, however, negatively affects people.*

Wordy: *We found the idea **quite** interesting. The comments were **extremely** accurate.* (Weak intensifiers such as very, fairly, definitely, entirely…)

Concise: *We found the idea interesting. The comments were accurate.*

Wordy: *You can **randomly** pick any card* (redundant: randomly means any card)

Concise: *You can pick any card.*

Wordy: *The technical aspect is **not unworthy** of consideration (unnecessary negative construction. Change it to positive one).*

Concise: *The technical aspect is worthy of consideration.*

**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *Writing Concisely*. Retrieved on May 13, 2022, from
https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/writing-concisely

## *Hedging*

Hedging is "the use of cautious language in order to express your claims in a more neutral tone and to acknowledge a degree of uncertainty in your claims" (University of Wisconsin, n.d.). In academic writing, hedging is crucial to show scientific distance and to make claims, criticism or opinions less harsh.

**Why is Hedging Important?**

- Using "hedges" can help writers soften their statements and avoid being too radical or overconfident. Hedges leave space for other possibilities.

- Using cautious language instead of bold statements makes the writing more analytical, detached and therefore scientific.

- Using "hedges" reduces the possibility of being criticized. Consider this example:

*Children of divorced parents develop disorders.*

Do all children of divorced parents develop disorders? Not sure, some of them might not. Someone who has an opposing view can easily argue or refute this statement. However, if the statement is the following "*Children of divorced parents tend to develop disorders*", it will provoke less disagreement.

Adding the verb "tend" means that the writer is highlighting a tendency rather than presenting a fact.

- Using hedges makes your draft more professional and credible. Hedging adds the sense of uncertainty to your draft since absolute certainty means that there is no need to conduct research.

**Types of Hedges**

These include:

Verbs: appear, seem, tend, suggest, indicate…

Modal auxiliaries: can, could, might, may, should, …

Nouns: probability, possibility, likelihood, …

Adjectives: likely, unlikely, possible, probable, some, many, much, most, …

Adverbs: probably, possibly, perhaps, presumably, relatively, occasionally, generally, typically, frequently, usually…

Hedged expressions: According to preliminary research, based on the limited information, in the view of different scholars, many scholars agree…

**Additional Tip**

Avoid using *always, never, everyone, all and none* because absolutes incite people to point out exceptions.

**References**

Alex, Z. (2021). *Hedging, Softening and Writer's Distance.* Retrieved on May 13, 2022 from https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/docs/handouts/Hedging-Softening-Distance.pdf

George Mason University. (n.d.). *Hedges-Softening Claims in Academic Writing*. Retrieved on May 13, 2022, from https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/hedges-softening-claims-in-academic-writing

University of Wisconsin Pressbooks. (n.d.). *Hedging.* Retrieved on May 13, 2022, from https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/chapter/controlling-tone-through-hedging/

## *Revising Drafts*

Below you will find some tips to revise your draft:

1- Revisit your draft and ask yourself if it fulfills its purpose and meets the requirements (style, organization, tone…).

2- Check your thesis statement and make sure that you presented enough arguments to validate or refute it.

3- Make sure all paragraphs relate to your thesis or main claim. Remember each paragraph should be arguing one main idea of your larger claim.

4- Make sure your conclusion lines up with your introduction and thesis. Your conclusion must end with a provocative thought or with new questions.

5- Check if your paragraphs are linked. Add transitions where needed.

6- Check if your quotations are cited properly.

7- Check for repetitive content (of words, sentences constructions…).

8- Replace vague words or sentences with specific ones.

9- Catch fragments, run-on sentences, grammatical mistakes and typos.

10- Make sure verb tenses are used consistently.

11- Read your draft aloud or have someone read it for you. Adjust the parts that look awkward or sound wrong.

**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *23 Ways to Improve your Draft.* Retrieved on May 14, 2022, from The Writing Center | 23 Ways to Improve Your Draft | Guides (gmu.edu)

# Writing Mechanics

## *Active and Passive Voice*

The active and passive voices are both used is academic writing. The active voice adds emphasis on the person or object (the agent) performing the action while the passive voice puts emphasis on the person or object being acted upon.

Choosing the active or passive voice depends on what you wish to emphasize.

**When to Use the Active Voice?**

The active voice is direct, clear, and concise. It can be easier to understand since it places emphasis on the agent.

Writers are encouraged to limit the use of passive voice constructions to make the text clearer for readers.

If there is no compelling reason to choose passive voice, use active voice constructions.

**When to Use the Passive Voice?**

The passive voice is indirect. It is used to emphasize the research, experiment, or action instead of the researcher or the scientist. It is frequently used in lab reports to describe the scientific methods or process since the aim is to describe the experiment itself rather than the researcher.

Example:

Active: *The researcher dissected the mouse's pancreas for histological analysis.*

Passive: *The mouse's pancreas was dissected for histological analysis.* (It omits the agent as it is considered irrelevant information in this case)

The passive voice is also used when the agent is unknown.

Example:
*My car was stolen.*

**Reference**

Graduate Writing Center, University of California. (n.d.). *Scientific Writing: Active and Passive Voice.* Retrieved on May 15,2022, from [Microsoft Word - Scientific Writing-Active and Passive Voice.docx (ucr.edu)](ucr.edu)

### *Capitalization Rules*

The rules of capitalization may seem simple. Everyone knows that proper nouns and the first word of every sentence should be capitalized. However, there are more rules to be taken into account.

Below you will find some capitalization that are useful for academic writing:

- Capitalize the first word a text and the first word after a period.
- Capitalize proper nouns.
- Capitalize words when they are used as a form of address.
  *My dad is coming tonight.*
  *Wait until Dad finds out.*

- Capitalize the first word of a quote (when the quote is a complete sentence).
  *The president replied, "We are facing unprecedented challenges".*
  *He described this period "way to busy" to tackle such issues.*

- Capitalize titles when they precede names. Do not capitalize when they serve as a description.
  *Director Dumois will attend the conference.*
  *Mr. Dumois, the director of the social service, will attend the conference.*

- Capitalize after a colon only when what comes after is a proper noun, or when the words after the colon form a complete sentence.
  *I have three favorite colors: blue, green, and red.*
  *Simon cannot drive at night: He suffers glare from headlights*.

- Capitalize most words of a title (verbs, nouns, adjective, and adverbs) and lowercase prepositions and conjunctions and articles.
  *Commodity Crisis to Worsen: Soaring Prices Stoke Fears of Recession*

- Capitalize days, months, and holidays but not seasons
  *See you on Monday.*
  *I love winter.*

- Capitalize the titles of high-ranked persons when used before their names.
  *The governor will address the board.*
  *Governor Dallowsy will address the board.*

- Capitalize the four cardinal points when they refer to specific regions.
  *Go south two blocks and take the first exit.*
  *We have three branches in the South.*

- Capitalize words like department, bureau, bank, or office when you use them to refer to a specific institution.

  *The Central Bank will switch to quantitative tightening. The Bank has tried to slam the monetary stimulus to curb inflation.*

- Capitalize periods and events.

  *World War II has taught countries numerous lessons.*
  *The Middle Age was marked by an economic and territorial expansion.*

- Capitalize the names of specific course titles but not general academic subjects.

  *He enrolled in history and Algebra 106.*

**References**

Lukyanchuk, M. (2021). *Capitalization. Retrieved on May 15, 2022, from* <u>Capitalization Rules–A Quick Guide | Grammarly</u>

Grammarbook. (n.d.) *Capitalization Rules. Retrieved on May 15, 2022, from* <u>Capitalization | Capitalization Rules (grammarbook.com)</u>

## *Fragments*

Fragments are incomplete sentences. They can either lack a subject or a main verb or, both. Most fragments occur at the level of dependent clauses since these clauses look like complete sentences (they have a subject and a verb) but their meaning is incomplete. Fragments are dependent clauses that are punctuated as full sentences.

Below are few examples of fragments:

- *Although it was raining*

- *When the dinner ended*

- *which highlights the importance of psychological support in early childhood.*

A full sentence must include an independent clause which consists of a subject, a verb, and other remaining elements. Independent clauses can stand on their own.

*Artificial intelligence is a subset of machine learning.*

*The board will vote to elect the president.*

*Millions of farmers were affected by the storm.*

Dependent clauses should be connected to independent clauses to deliver their complete meaning. Dependent clauses can be placed at the beginning of the sentence or at the end.

***Because of the heavy rain,*** *the driver hit the tree.*

*The driver hit the tree **because of the heavy rain.***

**Identifying Fragments**

To identify fragments, you need to scan for sentences that begin with words indicating the presence of a dependent clause. These can be:

**Subordinating conjunctions:** after, although, as, until, because, before, even though, if, once, since, though, unless, while…

**Relative pronouns:** that, which, who, whom, whoever, whomever, whose

**Participial phrases:** meaning that, resulting in, indicating that…

Make sure the dependent clause is attached to a full sentence. If it is not, then it is considered a fragment.

**How to Convert Fragments to Full sentences?**

- First option: join the fragment to the independent clause by replacing the period with a comma.

- Second option: revise the fragment into an independent clause.

*Inflation is a general rise in the price level over a period. When price level rises, consumer can buy fewer goods and services. *Meaning that this results in a reduction in the purchasing power* (This example includes two independent clauses with a fragment (marked with an asterisk).

First option: Inflation is a general rise in the price level over a period. When price level rises, consumer can buy fewer goods and services, meaning that inflation results in a reduction in the purchasing power.

Second option: Inflation is a general rise in the price level over a period. When price level rises, consumer can buy fewer goods and services. This means that inflation results in a reduction in the purchasing power.

**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *Converting Fragments to Full Sentences.* Retrieved on May 16, 2022, from The Writing Center | Converting Fragments to Full Sentences | Guides (gmu.edu)

## *Run-on Sentences*

Run-on sentence occurs when independent clauses are connected improperly.

Example:
*The assignment is too long I will continue it later.*

There are two independent clauses in this sentence without any punctuation or conjunction that show how these two complete sentences are related.

First independent clause: *The assignment is too long*
Second independent clause: *I will continue it later.*

**How to Correct Run-on Sentences?**

To fix a run-on sentence, connect its parts properly. Below are several ways to do so:

1- Use a period to split the two sentences:
*The assignment is too long. I will continue it later*.

2- Use a semicolon to establish a relationship between the two sentences:
*The assignment is too long; I will continue it later.*

3- Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction:
*The assignment is too long, so I will continue it later.*

4- Use a subordinating conjunction. You can turn an independent clause into a dependent one.
*Since the assignment is too long, I will continue it later.*

**Remark**

You cannot simply add a comma between two independent clauses because you will end up with what is called a comma splice. Comma splices are a common type of run-on sentences. They occur when two independent clauses are connected by a comma:

*The assignment is too long, I will continue it later.*

A comma splice can be fixed using the same ways listed above (changing the punctuation or adding a conjunction).

**Reference**
Academic Guides at Walden University. (n.d.). *Run-on Sentences*. Retrieved on May 17, 2022, from [Run-On Sentences and Sentence Fragments - Grammar - Academic Guides at Walden University](#)

## *Prepositions*

Prepositions are words used before nouns or pronouns to express a relation to other words in a sentence.

**Common Prepositions**

Of, for, at, on, in, above, across, against, among, around, over, between, into, under, toward, out, up, with, along, within, to, through…

Example:
*He lives in Virginia and works at George Mason University.*

Choosing the right preposition is challenging as its use is not governed by rules. Many adjectives, verbs, and nouns are followed by specific prepositions; therefore, the best way to use them correctly is to memorize them.

Below are few examples of specific combinations:

- According to
- Accustomed to
- Accused of
- Agree on
- Apply for
- Aware of
- By law
- Capable of
- Comply with
- Count on
- Credit for
- Depend on
- Decide on
- In charge of
- In advance
- Responsible for

**Some Useful Tips to Choose the Right Prepositions**

- Consult monolingual dictionaries to identify prepositions used with certain adjectives, verbs, or nouns...

- Use a collocation dictionary which shows the sets of words that usually come together.

- Search on google to check their usage.

**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *Prepositions.* Retrieved on May 17, 2022, from [The Writing Center | Prepositions | Guides (gmu.edu)](gmu.edu)

## *Conjunctions*

Conjunctions connect words and sentences together. Conjunctions establish relationships between words and sentences and improve the clarity of your writing.

There are different kinds of conjunctions:

**1- Coordinating Conjunctions:** for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

These conjunctions are used to connect:

- Group of words (nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs, prepositional phrases): *I love jazz and soft music.*

- Independent clauses: *The exam was very hard, but he managed to do well.*

2- **Subordinating Conjunctions:** after, as, as long as, since, because, although, even though, if, in order, once, so that, until, whenever, wherever, whereas, while…

They introduce dependent clauses (a clause that cannot stand by itself) and establish the relationship with the independent clause:

*He left early (independent clause) because of the bad weather (dependent clause).*

**3- Conjunctive Adverbs:** consequently, nonetheless, nevertheless, accordingly, therefore, thus, otherwise, nevertheless, however, furthermore, moreover, meanwhile, for instance, indeed, finally, briefly, also, in other words, in sum, suddenly, in addition, in conclusion…

These are adverbs that connect one clause to another showing the type of relation between them. They are usually preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma:

*Charles was facing many challenges; however, he was able to achieve his goals.*

*4-* **Correlative Conjunctions:** These conjunctions consist of two or more words that come in pairs: either… or; neither… nor; not only…but also; whether…or; both…and; not…but.

*She was not only driving too fast but also distracted on her phone.*

**Important**

When you use correlative conjunctions:

- Make sure the verb agrees with the sentence: *Both punctuality and flexibility <u>are</u> required for this work.*

- Make sure pronouns agree: *Neither Tom nor Lucas expressed <u>his</u> enthusiasm for this new project.*

- Use parallel structure: *He likes both <u>swimming</u> and <u>dancing</u>.*

- Make sure you use both elements to make them work: *He was <u>neither</u> rich <u>nor</u> famous.*

**Reference**

The University of Arizona. (n.d.). *Conjunctions.* Retrieved on May 18, 2022, from https://writingcenter.uagc.edu/conjunctions

## *Pronouns*

Pronouns are used to replace nouns. The noun that a pronoun replaces is called an antecedent. Pronouns should be used correctly so that readers can understand which nouns your pronouns are referring to.

**How to Use Pronouns Correctly?**

1- Make sure the pronoun agrees with the antecedent in person and number.

*Students should develop his writing skills* (Incorrect)
*Student should develop their writing skills* (Correct)

**Important Remarks:**

The pronoun "they" can function as a singular pronoun to avoid using his/her. This use became more popular especially with the adoption of a gender-inclusive language.

*Students must be accurate in their writing.*

- A plural pronoun is used for antecedents joined by the word *and*
  *Mom and Dad are selling **their** house.*

- A singular pronoun is used for antecedents joined by the words *or* or *nor*
  *Neither Tom nor James will publish **his** paper.*

2- Use pronouns consistently

Do not mix pronouns. If you are writing in the first singular person (I) for example, do not confuse readers and switch to the first plural person (we). Similarly, if you are writing in the second person (you), do not use the third person to refer to the same person (he, she, they, it).

*When someone faces a problem, you must talk with a friend to seek advice.* (Incorrect)

*When someone faces a problem, he or she must talk with a friend to seek advice.* (Correct)

   3- Avoid using vague pronouns (like it, they and this)
Vague pronouns make your text ambiguous. Opt for identification that is more precise.

*Although the car hit the fence, it was not damaged (is it the car or the fence?)*
*I believe they should not broadcast such ads on TV (who are they?)*

*Joseph worked in a summer camp. This gave him the ability to deal with kids.*
*(Is it the type of job, his responsibilities, or the summer camp?)*

**Reference**

Purdue Online Writing Lab, Purdue University. (n.d.) *Using Pronouns Clearly.* Retrieved on May 19, 2022, from [Using Pronouns Clearly // Purdue Writing Lab](Using Pronouns Clearly // Purdue Writing Lab)

## *Apostrophes*

Apostrophes are used to form possessive forms, contractions, and the plurals of some letters and abbreviations.

**1- Possessive Forms**

- To form the possessive of a singular or plural noun that does not end with an "s", use an apostrophe and "s".
  *The boy's phone was stolen.*
  *Women's achievements*

- To form the possessive of a plural noun, add an apostrophe after the last letter of the word.
  *Students' requirements*

**3- Contractions (Contractions are used for informal writing):**

Use an apostrophe to form a contraction:
*It's fine/Don't drink, and drive/I've been working on it/ I'd like a cup of tea.*

**4- Omissions**

Use an apostrophe to indicate that figures or letters were omitted.
*The film was produced in the '80s (contraction of 1980s)*

- **Plural of Some Letters, Words and Abbreviations**

Use an apostrophe and s to form the plural of some letters, words and abbreviations.
*He got four A's/ Make sure you remove all the if's from your text.*

**Reference**

The University of Arizona. (n.d.). *Apostrophes.* Retrieved on May 19, 2022, from [Apostrophes | UAGC Writing Center](#)

## *Parallel Structure*

Parallel structure is using words or parts of a sentence, such as items in a list, which have the same grammatical form. Items in a list must therefore be all nouns, all adjectives, or all infinitive phrases…

Parallel structure can be at the level of words, phrases, and clauses. Maintaining parallelism in writing is crucial to avoid incorrect grammatical sentences and to make the text easier to process and read.

**Example 1:**

Not parallel:

*Thomas likes cooking, hiking and <u>to swim</u>.*

In this sentence, the objects of the verb "likes" are two gerunds (cooking and hiking) and one infinitive phrase (to swim) that breaks the parallelism and makes the sentences awkward.

Parallel:

*Thomas likes cooking, hiking, and swimming.*

**Example 2:**

Not parallel:

*The supervisor stated that James always <u>waited</u> the last minute to complete his tasks, submitted reports inaccurately and <u>his motivation was low.</u>*

Parallel:

*The supervisor stated that James always <u>waited</u> the last minute to complete his tasks, <u>submitted</u> reports inaccurately and <u>lacked</u> motivation.*

**Tips to Maintain Parallel Structure:**

- Do not mix forms and change patterns.

- Try to make a list of the mentioned items to see if they are parallel.

Example:

*The candidate's ability to learn, multitask and efficient communication, makes him the perfect fit for this position.*

The grammatical error becomes evident when you make a list of each item as the following:

*The candidate's ability to:*

- *learn*

- *multitask*

- *efficient communication*

"*The candidate's ability to efficient communication*" is grammatically incorrect since all words following the phrase "the candidate's ability" must be verbs. It should therefore be replaced by '*communicate efficiently*'.


**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *Parallel Structure.* Retrieved on May 20, 2022, from [The Writing Center | Parallel Structure | Guides (gmu.edu)](gmu.edu)

## *Avoiding Informal Language in Academic Writing*

Academic writing should be formal, concise, and precise. Writers should strive for formality to convey ideas accurately and efficiently. Reducing informality in writing is crucial to deliver information in a scientific way.

**How to Reduce Informality in Academic Writing?**

1- Reduce the use of "you" and replace it with a specific person. It is uncommon to address your reader in academic writing**.**
*When you work with children with disabilities, you must be patient. (Informal)*
*When psychologists work with children with disabilities, they need to be patient. (Formal)*

2- Avoid using two-word verbs or phrasal verbs. Use one-word verbs instead.
*I looked up information about emotional intelligence. (Informal)*
*I researched information about emotional intelligence. (Formal)*

3- Avoid using contractions.
*The research doesn't cover all technical aspects. (Informal)*
*The research does not cover all technical aspects. (Formal)*

4- Avoid adding questions (unless these are research questions).
*Why did this increase occur? (Informal)*
*Many studies have highlighted the reason behind this increase. (Formal)*

5- Avoid exclamation marks.
6- Avoid the use of *this* or *these* without recalling to what it refers.
*This can affect children's performance. (Informal)*
*This abnormal behavior can affect children's performance. (Formal)*

7- Avoid using coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) at the beginning of sentences.
*So, the aim of the study was to cover all cultural components. (Informal)*
*Therefore, the aim of the study is to cover all cultural components. (Formal)*

8- Avoid using vague or informal words. Use specific alternatives instead. Below is the list of some informal nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs along with their suggested specific alternatives.

| Informal words | Suggested Alternatives |
|---|---|
| **Nouns:** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Kids | Children |
| People | Participants, students, workers (or any other specific group) |
| Thing | Part, feature (or any specific word related to the context) |
| **Verbs:**<br>Get<br>Put<br>Let<br>Say | <br>Acquire, gain…<br>Place, add…<br>Allow, grant<br>Discuss, suggest, state… |
| **Adjectives and adverbs:**<br><br>Lot/ lots | <br><br>Several, many, a great number |
| Very/really/so | Considerably, significantly… |
| Sort of | Somewhat… |
| Good/bad | Considerable, positive, negative |

**Tips for a more formal word choice**

When you are unsure about a certain word:

- Search for it on Google to see if it used in academic writing such as magazines, journals, and articles.

- Look for synonyms in online dictionaries.

**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *Reducing Informality in Academic Writing.* Retrieved on May 20, 2022, from https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/reducing-informality-in-academic-writing

### *Commas, Semi colons, and Colons*

**When to Use Commas?**
1- To separate two independent clauses linked by a coordinating conjunction.
   *It started to rain, so he had to leave quickly.*

2- To indicate an introductory clause.
   *To my big surprise, she was married.*

3- To separate between items of a series or list.
   *I bought two pairs of socks, jeans, and two shirts today.*

4- To set off an appositive clause.
   *Donna, who was the love of my life, inspired me to write this book.*

5- To set off a transitional phrase.
   *On the other hand, this job taught him a lot.*

6- To indicate direct address.
   *I am afraid, Mila, this can't work anymore.*

7- To indicate direct speech (comma must go inside the quotation marks).
   *He replied, "We need to leave now," and that is what happened.*

**When to Use Semicolons?**

- To link two independent clauses (when there is a close relationship between them).
   *The study is comprehensive; it covers both practical and theoretical aspects.*

- To separate two independent clauses that are joined by a transition.
   *It is interesting to use this innovative feature; however, it must be tested first to ensure its efficiency.*

- To separate items in series or lists that already contain commas.
   *He likes small, cozy houses; blue, wooden window blinds; and red tiled roofs.*

**When to Use Colons?**

- to present an explanation or draw attention to a list, to announce or introduce something
   *The training covered several components: writing styles, strategies, and mechanics.*
- to introduce a quotation
   *He explained: "alcohol is soluble liquid".*

# *Common Verb Tenses in Academic Writing*

The most common verb tenses in academic writing are the present simple, the past simple and the present perfect.

## The Present Simple

It is the most common tense and is used to:

- to state the paper's objectives, focus, main argument
- to share what is already known about a topic
- to make general statements, conclusion, or present research's findings
- to present figures from tables, graphs…
- to describe a series of events (it is called in this case the narrative present).

## The Past Simple

It is used to refer to actions completed in the past. Its main functions are the following:

- to report findings of specific previous studies (usually when the author is mentioned)
- to describe the steps of a completed experiment or the results of a research
- to report past actions after a past time marker (after, following, last year/month/season…).

## The Present Perfect

It is used to refer to an action that occurred at a non-specific time in the past and still has relevance in the present. Its functions are the following:

- to present background information (Studies have found…)

- to report findings of previous research without referring directly to the paper (It has been proved that violence…).

## Remark

Although the three above mentioned tenses are the most common in academic writing, other tenses are used as well such as the future simple and the present progressive.

The future simple is used to describe strong predictions or future events or actions while the present progressive is used to refer to actions that undergo changes at the time of writing.

**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *The Three Common Tenses Used in Academic Writing.* Retrieved on May 22, 2022, from [The Writing Center | The Three Common Tenses Used in Academic Writing | Guides (gmu.edu)](#)

## *Word Order in Embedded Questions*

Direct questions are uncommon in academic writing unless they were research questions. Therefore, it is better to avoid them and use statements with embedded questions instead.

When using statements with embedded questions, it is important to pay attention to the following:

- Word order: While direct questions involve inversion of words order, embedded questions take a regular order.

- Punctuation: Embedded questions take regular punctuation. Use a period instead of a question mark.

Example:

*Why is this research important?* (Question word+ verb+ subject)

*The paper explains why this research is important.* (Question word + subject+ verb)

**Reference**

George Mason University. (n.d.). *Word Order in Statements with Embedded Questions.* Retrieved on May 22, 2022, from [The Writing Center | Word Order in Statements with Embedded Questions | Guides (gmu.edu)](gmu.edu)

# Helpful Links

### USEK Main Library

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### Citing Sources

[USEK Library | Cite Your Sources](#)

### Citation Software

[USEK Library | Citation Software](#)

### Research Guides

[ALL GUIDES Alphabetically - LibGuides at Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (usek.edu.lb)](#)

### Free Writing and Research Software

LibreOffice

Zotero

Evernote

NeoOffice

### Grammar, Style, and Punctuation

The Purdue Owl on Grammar

Jack Lynch: "Guide to Grammar and Style"

### Writing Evaluation Tools

Grammarly

PaperRater

Language Tool

Grammark

Spellchecker Plus

## Online Dictionaries

Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

Netspeak

Oxford Learner's Dictionary

http://www.ldoceonline.com/

Ozdic - Collocation Dictionary

Word Reference - Bilingual dictionary

http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/

Academic Phrasebank

Writefull App