Communication Commons

COMMUNICATION COMMONS

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH AND LIBERAL STUDIES AND CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

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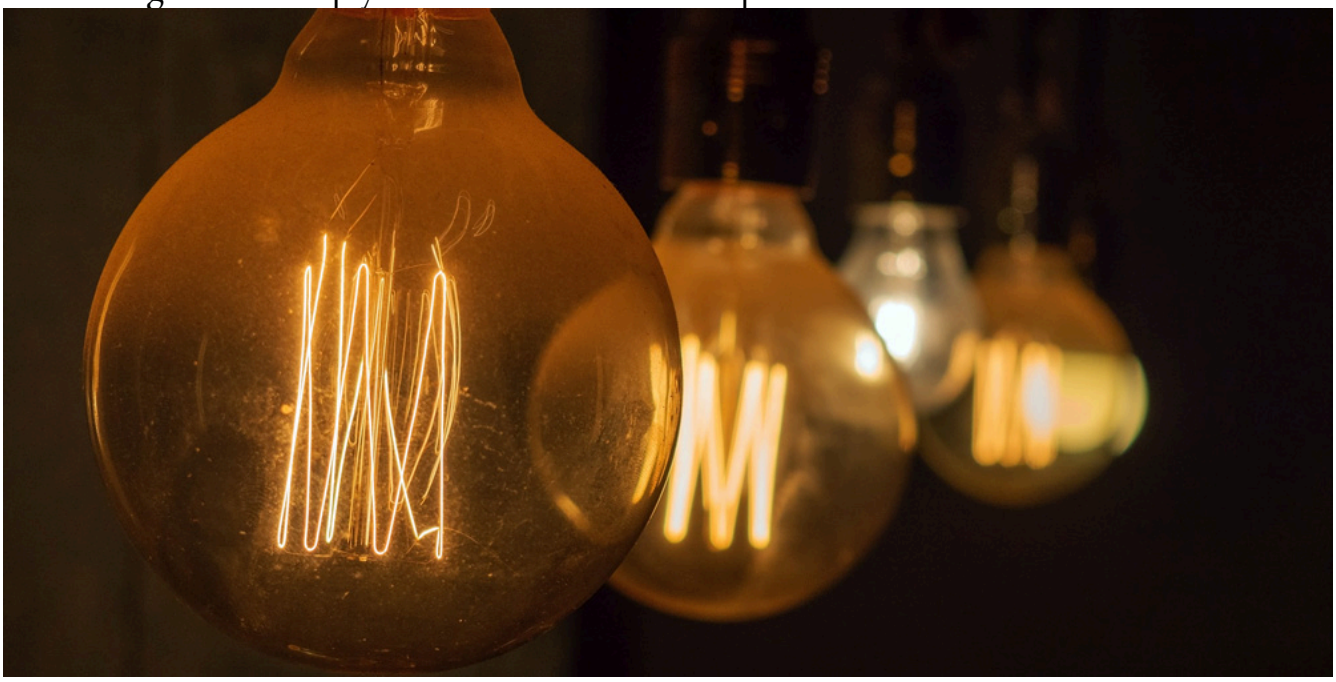
INTRODUCTION

Communication Commons is an Open Education Resource that can support your journey in communication. It is a resource that has been developed by the faculty at Centennial College at the Department of English. Whether you are taking a course involving critical thinking and academic writing, or need a few tips on style, we hope you will find something here to help you. Please feel free to explore and share this resource.



MODULES

VISION

CONTACT

VISION

Our Vision

"Communication that is globally connective and respectful". Communications Commons was designed to meet the needs of Centennial College students taking one of our College Communications courses, COMM 170 or COMM 171. At the same time, it is a diverse resource that can meet the needs of various types of users (non-college students and writers). We hope you will find something here that will resonate with you.

Approach

Our goal with this custom site was to create a modular, interactive tool for the college writing classroom. While materials are scaffolded to a degree, we don't think of this as a traditional textbook. Rather, it's a set of resources that can be continuously updated. We wanted to appeal to diverse learners, native speakers, and second language learners alike. Along with technical interaction and positive user experience, you will also notice that there is an emphasis on the social dimension of research, reading and writing; the sense that our work, no matter how solitary at times, is about listening, collaborating and connecting. Finally, we wanted to position academic writing as just one among many literacies. This resource is simply meant to compliment and inspire the many ways we already communicate and connect with one another.

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MODULES

Foundations

Communication is integral to our lives. It is how we exchange information and make meaningful connections to ourselves, others, and the world around us. It is how we socialize and create communities.

Communication allows us to express ourselves, so others can understand our perceptions, beliefs, and values. Communication also forms and changes those perceptions, beliefs, and values.

Communication can be verbal or non-verbal. It occurs in all settings, and it is ever evolving. Most importantly, it is a skill we can develop. Effective communication can help us in our personal, academic, and professional lives. At heart, communication is the primary way we interact with the world, and therefore, it is our primary means of changing it.

Build Your Tool Kit

Zero in on the *craft* of communication–the tools and techniques you'll use in almost any writing project or communication context. Learn how to design, plan, and test a writing project, how to write with clarity and concision, how to write prose that feels smooth and connected. Learn how to read context to determine what counts as "correct" communication. Finally, practice writing high-impact prose that appeals to readers with its use of concrete details and storytelling techniques, even if you're writing academic or non-narrative prose.

Absorb

Absorbing requires patience, empathy, and consideration. You must be willing to listen to different viewpoints and to reflect and consider before contributing to the conversation.

Focus on listening closely to the author of the message with an open and curious mind, a lack of judgment, and empathy and respect for their views and experiences.

Start by pausing, preparing, and framing. Then skim, scan, and revisit. Understand the actual words on the page. Situate a source to understand its context. Use tools to further your understanding and demonstrate this through breaking it down, summarizing, and paraphrasing. Move to responding and questioning, and finally to inferring, drawing conclusions based on evidence.

Critique

To critique an argument, narrative or other text is first of all to converse with it and explore it in depth, asking critical questions. The result of your appraisal may be to reject some or all of the text's claims, or it may be to affirm them. Either way, we need to be able to verify the reliability and accuracy of the source, recognize when it contains logical fallacies, and question its assumptions. Practice techniques of close critical analysis to engage meaningfully with the arguments all around us.

Research

Research is about inquiry, learning, and the process of putting sources in conversation to create new meaning. Focus on core skills of initiating, planning and organizing a research project. Examine how to locate different types of sources and document your searches, and explore how to assess sources for relevancy, accuracy and credibility. Practice integrating and contextulizing data from your sources and weaving it into a larger whole.

Share

Share your work using verbal and non-verbal communication. Use words, voice, and body language to convey a clear message to the audience in a public speech. Learn how to analyze your audience, persuade and inform others, draft a speech, and use modern presentation tools.

PART I

FOUNDATIONS

- Explore Communication
- Make Connections
- Explore Context
- Explore Literacy
- Develop Self-awareness
- In-Common Communication

1.

EXPLORE COMMUNICATION

Emilda Thavaratnam

Communication is the process of transferring facts, opinions, ideas, and values from one person to another.

What You'll Learn:

- How we communicate
- Where we communicate
- How to communicate mindfully

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=425#oembed-1

As social beings, we communicate all the time in a variety of settings. As you watch this video, think about the different types of communications presented and their **contexts**.

Watch this video for an introduction to how communication works. The three models of communication demonstrate the complexity of the process of communication.

This video provides 10 interesting facts about communication. It is created by National Geographic, a television channel that shows documentaries about nature, science, culture, and history.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=425#oembed-2

Communication: Forms and Settings

Intrapersonal Communication

Intrapersonal communication is the conversations we have with ourselves when reflecting on our experiences. When we talk to ourselves, we use an internal voice that is influenced by our native language, life experiences, and cultural values.

Reflect: Think about the last time you had an interview.

- Did you have an internal conversation with yourself once it was over?

You may have said: "*I did really well!*" or "*That was horrible. You should have practised more!*"

Did you notice the difference in **narration** in the examples above?

When people reflect on their experiences, they tend to use **first-person** intrapersonal communication ."*I did really well!*" is an example of this.

Second-person pronouns are used when people feel the need to self-regulate or overcome difficult situations perhaps (Zell, Warriner, & Albarracín, 2012) "*That was horrible. You should have practised more!*" is an example of using second-person narration to overcome a difficult situation—in this case, an interview that may not have gone well.

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication involves two or more people. This type of communication can range from being formal to informal depending on the topic of conversation and the relationship we have with the person we're speaking to.

The following chart describes the differences in structure, style, and tone between formal, semi-formal, and informal written communication. This can also be applied to other means of communication.

	FORMAL LANGUAGE	**SEMI-FORMAL LANGUAGE**	**INFORMAL LANGUAGE**
Structure (sentences and paragraphs)	Complete sentences; sentence variety (simple, compound, complex); fully developed and properly punctuated paragraphs	Complete sentences of varying length and style (simple, compound, complex)	Generally shorter sentences and paragraphs; sentence fragments are acceptable
Vocabulary and Style	Specialized rhetoric/jargon; void of contractions and colloquialisms; third-person narration	A balance of everyday language as well as some subject-specific terms; can use first-, second-, or third-person narration	Colloquialisms, slang, textese, contractions are acceptable; uses first- and second-person narration
Tone	Direct approach; impersonal; instructional	Varies to suit purpose and audience; serious or casual	Conversational and casual
Examples of Use	Scientific journals, legal documents, academic writing, government documents	Newspapers, magazines, op-eds, business memos	Fiction, commercials, newspaper, personal notes, text messages, social media posts

Reflect: Think about the last difficult conversation you had.

- Who did you talk to?
- What was the conversation about?
- What type of words did you use? Was your tone formal? Informal?
- What was your body language like?

Group Communication

Group communication occurs between a small number of people who may share similar goals.

Here are two examples of college students expressing their frustration during a group meeting.

Example 1:

"I think we need to be more diligent and organized with the way we conduct our meetings. No one has com-

pleted their part, and our project is due next week. I am a little disappointed because I worked on my part all last week, thinking we were going to rehearse today."

Example 2:

"This sucks … and I ain't down for this. Y'all are useless and wasting my time."

Example 1 is specific and **collegial**, and expresses the reason for the student's frustration. Example 2 is vague, not collegial, and does not address the specific reason for frustration. Academic pressures can make group work challenging. In positive group communication, it is important to be clear, open-minded, calm, and, above all, respectful.

Reflect: Think about the last time you had a conflict with a group member.

- What was the conflict about?
- What did you do to resolve the conflict?
- Did you express yourself in a clear, collegial, professional manner?

Learn more about respectful group communication here.

Public Communication

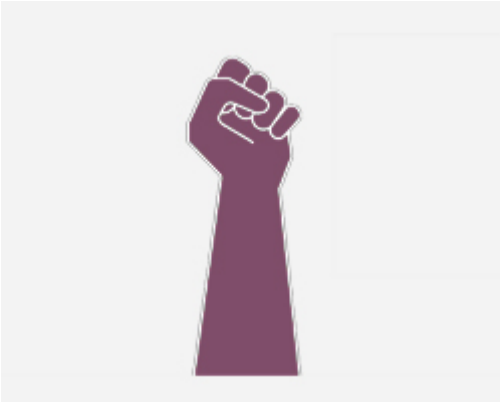
Public communication usually involves one person speaking to a larger group of people. Factors such as audience, venue, and purpose can change the delivery of this type of communication. Public communication is an integral aspect of our lives, as we do this in academic, professional, and civic settings (as will be discussed later).

Did You Know?

The first two seconds of communication are essential in creating an impression—positive or negative (Rothfield, 2009). This is why it is important to consider what you are going to say before you actually say it.

Activists often engage in public communication to advocate for social, political, economic, or environmental changes. In this video, Tamika Mallory, an American activist, speaks about the Black Lives Matter movement in a news interview. Pay close attention to her vocabulary, tone, pace, and facial expressions. How are these appropriate to her topic and this setting?

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=425#oembed-3



Black Lives Matter is an international organization and movement fighting anti-black racism. You can click here to learn more about the Canadian Chapter: https://blacklivesmatter.com/

Other examples of public communication include: managers explaining benefits to a group of employees; principals and deans speaking at convocations; and religious leaders speaking at places of worship.

Reflect: Think about the last time you had to give a public communication.

- What was your purpose?
- Who was your audience?
- What techniques did you use to engage your audience?
- What did you do to prepare?

Mass Communication

Public communication becomes mass communication when information is given to the audience through print or electronic media. Some examples include television, blogs, social media, radio, podcasts, and books. Requiring technology to transmit the message is what distinguishes this type of communication from others. Unlike in the case of interpersonal, group, and public communication, in mass communication, there isn't immediate conversation or feedback ("Introduction to Communication Studies," 2012).

Leaders of countries often have mass communication **addresses**. In this video, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

uses his platform to reassure Canadians that even amidst a crisis, we will persevere. Pay attention to his tone, use of words, body language, and facial expressions. How are these appropriate to his topic and this setting?

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=425#oembed-4

Reflect: What was the last big news story you consumed?

- How did you consume this story (social media, TV, magazines)?
- Was there a speaker? Were they engaging?
- What aspects of the story and its presentation did you enjoy?

Communication Settings

Where we communicate affects how we communicate. Communication settings influence the way we use tone, words, body language, and facial expressions. In this section, we will explore how we communicate in academic, professional, personal, and civic settings.

Academic

An academic setting is an educational environment—such as a college classroom—where people impart and exchange knowledge and experiences. You may communicate with professors, classmates, and administrators in academic settings.

Now look at these two ways of asking for an extension in an academic setting. Pay attention to the address, tone, and language used.

EXAMPLE 1:

Hi Sir,

May I request an extension for my research essay? I have a family emergency. I have a doctor's note for you if you need it.

Many thanks,

Student A

EXAMPLE 2:

Hi Mark,

Do you remember when I told you my dad was sick? Well his illness has come back, and I've been at the hospital for the last two weeks. I wasn't able to finish my research essay. My family and I are going through a really hard time right now. Is there any way you can give me an extension? I can get a note from his doctor if you need it.

Take care,

Student B

In example 1, the address, tone, and language are formal and brief. Some reasons for this may be:

- The student wants privacy.
- The student does not know the instructor well.
- Situational circumstances may have affected the email, e.g. the student may have written it in a rush while at the hospital.

In example 2, the address, tone, and language are less formal and more detailed. Some reasons for this may be:

- The student knows the instructor well.

- The student feels comfortable disclosing their family situation to others.
- Situational circumstances allowed them to spend more time writing.

In both examples, the student is professional and explains the situation.

Communication in academic settings can vary in tone depending on the relationship you have with the receiver.

See the "Develop Voice" section for more

Reflect: Think about the last time you had an academic conversation.

- What was your purpose? Who was your audience?
- Do you feel you delivered your message effectively?

Professional/Workplace

In professional or workplace settings, communication ranges from semi-formal to formal depending on the relationship between the individuals. For example, you may use more formal language and tone when speaking to your employer or conducting a meeting than when speaking to colleagues during lunch.

When communicating in professional settings:

DO	DON'T
Be clear and direct	Be vague
Pay attention	Look at your phone
Be respectful	Interrupt
Think through your ideas before responding	Give quick, spur of the moment responses, especially when angry

Be familiar with the policies and code of conduct at your place of employment. It is important to follow these in private and public—this means on social media platforms as well.

People is an American lifestyle and celebrity magazine. In this article, author Lydia Price gives examples of employees who were fired because of social media posts. Pay attention to the language, tone, and details in these tweets. Why might these posts have been considered inappropriate?

https://people.com/celebrity/employees-who-were-fired-because-of-social-media-posts/

Reflect: Think about the last time you had to communicate with someone on the job.

- What was your purpose?
- Who was your audience?
- Do you feel you had a professional exchange?

Personal

In personal settings—such as in our homes or over our phones—we communicate informally with family members, co-workers, or friends. Generally, this communication is not published or made public, so we are free to express ourselves as we wish.

In these two examples of personal communication, someone is informing another person they're on their way.

Example 1:

"Hey, mom, where are you? I'm on my way."

Example 2:

"S'up, where you at? OMW"

In example 1, this message is delivered in plain language. Example 2 includes **textese**. Textese may not be appropriate for all audiences. Your parents or grandparents may not be familiar with LOL, OMW, etc., and find your message confusing.

Even in personal settings, it is important to consider your audience when crafting your communication.

Here are some other common communication mistakes that people make.

Reflect: Think about the last time you had a personal conversation.

- Who did you talk to?
- What did you say?
- Did you feel confident about the way your message was received?

Civic

Civic settings are places where we engage in political processes or advocate for positive change for our communities, particular groups, or the public at large. Civic communication can take many forms: town halls, protests, meetings, phone calls, voting.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=425#oembed-5

In this example of civic communication, Swedish activist Greta Thunberg speaks out about the importance of protecting our environment.

Exercise your right and stand up for what you believe by attending a town hall, joining a protest, or simply speaking out. Let your voice be heard respectfully.

Reflect: Think about the last time you participated in civic communication.

- Where was it?

- Who did you talk to?
- What was the message?
- Did you feel you were making a positive difference?

Advocacy means speaking up about how you can make the world a better place.

Choose one type of communication and match it with the setting for each scenario.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=425#h5p-46

ANSWER A: You are the manager, and an employee has complained about verbal harassment from another employee.
Interpersonal: Interpersonal communication works best in this situation. It is a sensitive, private matter that requires individual, intimate conversations with both employees that allow them to speak freely. The manager should have two private conversations and not publicly disclose personal information.
Professional: This incident took place in the workplace. The manager may use professional tones to display empathy to the employee who was harassed and to display leadership in addressing a serious issue while following and respecting company policies.
ANSWER B: As a news reporter, you are going live to report on a recent COVID-19 outbreak in Toronto.
Mass: The reporter needs to let the public know quickly that there is an outbreak. A live broadcast reaches populations at large quickly.
Professional: News reporters use professional tones in communicating their message.
ANSWER C: You are making a presentation to your classmates in your college communications course.
Public: This is an example of public communication because it involves one person speaking to a group of people.
Academic: The setting is academic as it takes place at school.

We communicate all the time. It is important to be mindful and tailor your communication based your audience, purpose, and setting.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it

online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=425#h5p-47

Click the link below for effective public speaking competencies

https://courses.lumenlearning.com/atdcoursereview-speechcomm-1/chapter/speaking-competencies/

References

See Explore Communication References

2.

MAKE CONNECTIONS

Emilda Thavaratnam

Our lived experiences, perceptions, and values shape our communication. When we communicate, we are allowing others a small glimpse of who we are.

What You'll Learn:

- How our experiences shape our communication
- How and why we connect to other texts when we communicate
- How global and community issues shape our communication

Read this excerpt about bucket lists from the post "Brain Haemorrhages and Bucket-lists" on the travel blog Danflyingsolo.com.

> The word '**Bucket list**' might as well have no meaning any more. I mean, we use it so much in the travel world you can find it **hashtagged** on the greyest and drab beach shots. In the film that made it famous, we see those experiences one man dreamt of being lived out before cancer took his life. But what if it hadn't? What would be on that second chance bucket list*? When you escape death twice what list do you start writing then?*
>
> *("Brain Haemorrhages and Bucket-lists," 2018)*

When we read, we also make personal, textual, and cultural connections.

In his blog, Dan talks about his travels using videos, pictures, and articles. He has unique global stories that are simply breathtaking!

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=426#h5p-24

Make Individual Connections

We use our individual experiences, morals, and values when we are reading, writing, speaking, and reflecting. Making individual connections makes your communication unique. There isn't anyone in the world who has the same experience or voice as you.

Here are two examples of celebrities who use their social media platforms to make personal connections to important issues.

EXAMPLE 1:

> "It's our job as parents to listen to that to give them the best information that we can, the best feedback that we can, and that doesn't change now that sexuality [and gender] is involved." —Dwayne Wade (ET Canada, 2020)

In this example, Dwayne Wade, an American basketball player, uses his experiences as a parent to a transgender daughter to give positive advice on parenting.

EXAMPLE 2:

> "How many more times must this happen for us to matter? How many more must we lose? BLACK. LIVES. MATTER. #AltonSterling." —Zendaya (Kaufman, 2016)

In this example, Zendaya, an American actress, uses first-person narration to advocate for equal treatment and justice for Black men and women.

Reflect:

Think of a cause about which you care deeply.

- What is the cause?
- What values or experiences caused you to take up this cause?
- How have you shared and communicated this cause to others?

You may have noticed that having a personal connection to an idea or cause helps you understand it and communicate it to others. For this reason, when you encounter new ideas, you may want to look for how they connect to your life experience and values.

Connect to Other Texts

When we communicate, we also make connections to other sources we have encountered. News stories, famous books, eye opening social media posts, poetry, and song lyrics are all examples of texts we use to make connections.

In his 2007 *New York Times* article "Facebook's Frankenstein Moment," author Kevin Roose compares Facebook to a character in Mary Shelley's book *Frankenstein*.

He writes, "[Sandberg, Facebook's manager, gave] a candid admission that reminded me of a moment in Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein," after the scientist Victor Frankenstein realizes that his cobbled-together creature has gone rogue."

In this example, Roose is saying that Facebook's initial purpose of connecting people has morphed monstrously. Ironically, Facebook now divides people and promotes hate. The author uses another text, *Frankenstein*, to make his point by providing readers with a visualization of Facebook as grotesque and monster-like. This visualization will keep the reader interested and engaged.

Making connections to other texts is a great way to engage your reader.

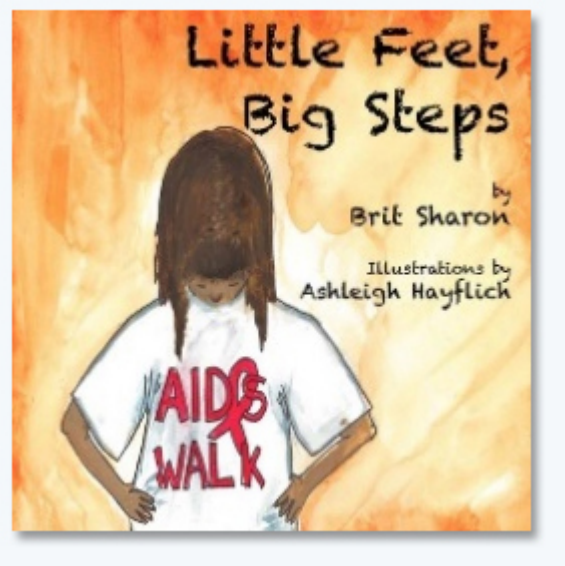
Reflect:

- When was the last time you used a quote or referred to something you read or saw?
- Why did you make this connection?
- What effect were you going for?
- What effect did this connection have on your audience?

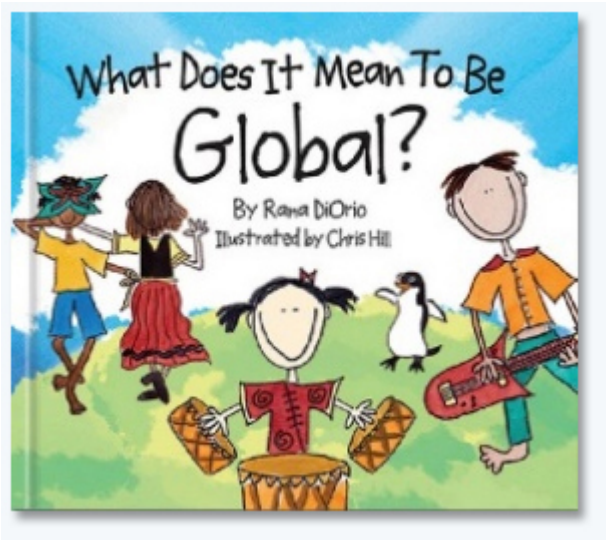
Connect to Global and Community Events and Issues

In our communications, we connect to and reflect on real-world events and issues. These issues may be local, national, or global.

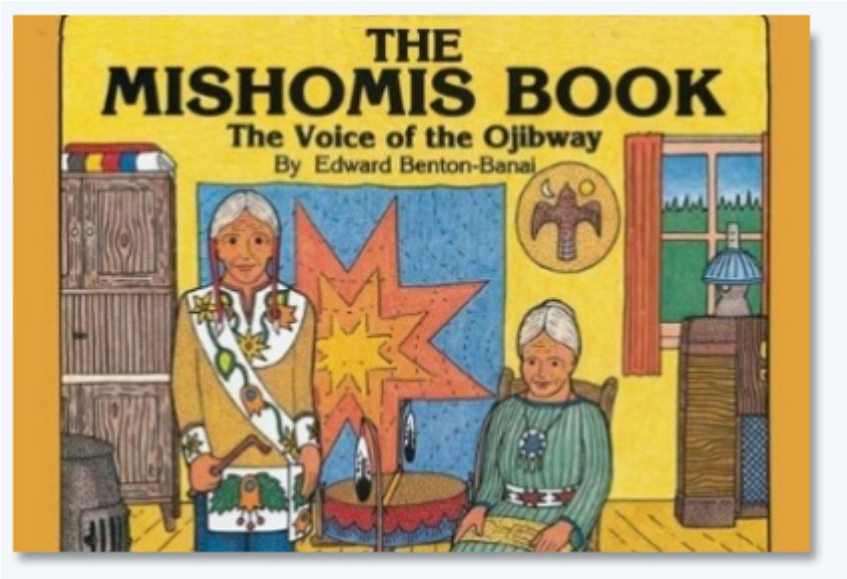
These children books offer examples of how authors make global-, national-, and community-level connections in their stories.



Little Feet, Big Steps by Brit Sharon is a coming-of-age story about creating awareness and support for important global causes such as AIDS.



What Does It Mean to Be Global? by Rana Diorio teaches children about respecting other children's cultures, values, and traditions.



The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway by Edward Benton-Banai draws from traditional teachings of the elders to share Ojibway creation stories and legends with young readers.

Reflect: Think about the last news item you read.

- What was the issue explored?
- Was it a local, national, or global issue?
- How could you personally connect with the issue?

Let's revisit Dan's travel blog. Here is one more **excerpt** from the entry "Brain Haemorrhages and Bucket-

lists." Make as many individual, national, community, global, and literature connections as you can. Here are some prompts you can use for guidance.

"I can relate to this because..."

"This reminds me of..."

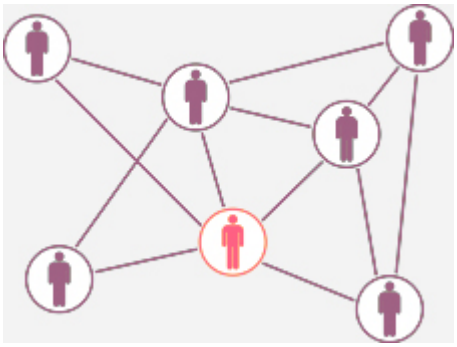
"The global/national/community issue this relates to is..."

"I read something similar and..."

"Sure, my 'bucket list' still has the Northern Lights on it, sailing on a yacht and visiting Antarctica but it is also now littered with social change and making a difference on my travels. I guess the real question isn't what should be on our bucket list but, *simply*, *what do I want to be remembered for?"*
("Brain Haemorrhages and Bucket-lists," 2018)

Connecting to your own experiences, other texts, and the world allows for deeper, meaningful communication and understanding. Use these prompts the next time you engage with a source:

1. The character/voice makes me think of...
2. If I were in the same situation as the character/person I would...
3. I can relate to this because...
4. Something similar/different happened to me...
5. This reminds me of something else I read...
6. This reminds me of what is happening in my community/country because...
7. This is similar to what is happening in the world today in that... (Simon, n.d.)



Making connections can help you hear what isn't being said.

References

See Make Connections References

3.

EXPLORE CONTEXT

Emilda Thavaratnam

Exploring the details surrounding a communication can help us better understand the central idea. Context can give us insight into what is being communicated.

What You'll Learn:

- What social, relational, and cultural contexts are
- How context allows for deeper understanding of communication

This module looks at social, relational, and cultural contexts. Other examples of context such as audience, purpose, tone, and timeliness are explored in the Absorb and Toolkit topics.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=427#h5p-25

You may have asked:

- Will 100% of the money I donate go to the business owner?
- How does Kiva stay in business? Who donates money?
- What countries have Kiva?
- What are the criteria for applying?
- What other types of micro-loans are there?

If you are interested in finding out the answers to the questions above on Kiva, visit https://www.kiva.org/.

Social Context

Social context is the social, environmental, and physical settings that influence the way we communicate. Social environments often have common rules for communication that people follow.

How Social Context Influences Communication

Social context and how we interpret **social cues** change based on the society we are part of.

For example, how we greet someone varies depending on social context.

In Sri Lanka, people from Tamil communities often put their palms together under the chin and in front of the chest while slightly bowing the head and say "*Vanakam*." In contrast, Canadians often wave at one another or shake hands. In Japan, a bow is customary to greet someone.

How we interpret social cues through body language, facial expressions, eye contact, and other gestures also differs based on social context.

For example, eye contact is a sign of respect in certain Northern parts of the world. In contrast, certain countries in the Eastern part of the world perceive direct eye contact as a sign of disrespect.

Social Context in Texts

When looking for the social context of a text or other communication, consider:

- When it was written
- Where it was written
- What **social norms** it follows or describes

In his book *A Fine Balance*, Rohinton Mistry uses life in India in 1979 and the emergency lockdown of the country as the social context for his story. During this time, there was economic trouble, a divide between the rich and the poor, violent riots, and widespread protests. This social context influences the way his characters act, the setting, and the plot.

In addition, this social context allows him to make a commentary on poverty. In his book, four strangers are forced to share a cramped apartment as a result of the riots and upheaval. A widow, a student, and two tailors face uncertainty and try to relate to one another during a scary, turbulent time—the 1979 State of Emergency in India.

Click here to read more about this historical moment in India.

Read this source for an interview in which Mistry discusses the social context in his book.

Think of social context as another way to uncover the author's message.

Relational Context

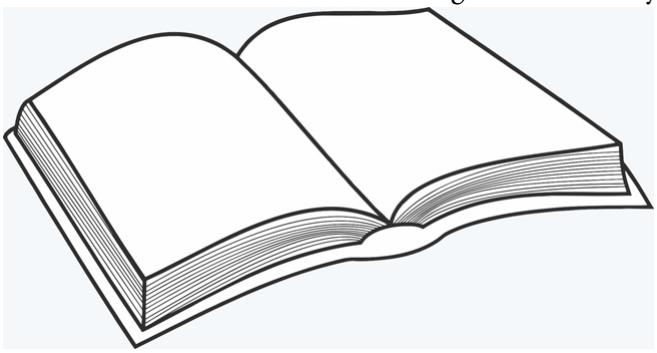
Our relationship to the topic and person we are communicating with changes the way we communicate. Con-

sidering these relationships can give us valuable information about what is being communicated, how it is being communicated, and why it is being communicated.

When looking for relational context for a text or other communication, consider:

- The relationship between the writer/speaker and their topic
- The relationship between the writer/speaker and their audience
- The relationship you have with the writer/speaker
- The relationship you have with the topic

Now consider relational context using two different types of sources: an autobiography and a biography.



Autobiographies are written through a more intimate lens because the author is writing their own story. Biographies, on the other hand, may not be as intimate because someone else is writing the story. The relational context between the author and the topic changes the overall tone and feeling of the story.

Consider Michelle Obama's autobiography *Becoming* and Isabel Wilkerson's *New York Times* article "Isabel Wilkerson on Michelle Obama's 'Becoming' and the Great Migration."

QUOTE

Relational Context

"I was old enough now to realize that all the hours my mother gave to me and Craig were hours she didn't spend on herself" (Obama, 2018).	Since Obama is writing about her own life, her tone and language are authentic. Here, she is reflective. Her experiences in adulthood have helped her realize the depth of mother's selflessness.
"Her father, Fraser Robinson III, worked for the city tending boilers for a water filtration plant, and her mother, Marian Shields Robinson, stayed at home looking after Michelle and her older brother, Craig" (Wilkerson, 2018).	Isabel Wilkerson's relationship to the topic of "Michelle Obama" is not a personal one. She may have referred to secondary sources to research Obama's history before writing the article. As a result, this excerpt is factual in tone. It represents a recollection of events and facts rather than a personalized narrative.

Cultural Context

Culture refers to the beliefs, customs, arts, traits, and institutions of a specific nation, people, or social group. Communication reflects and interacts with the culture in which it occurs.

Paying attention to the cultural context of sources can provide a more thorough understanding of the main ideas.

When looking for the cultural context in a text or other communication, consider the following:

- The underlying beliefs, traditions, and values
- The arts, food, and institutions depicted
- The behaviour and traits of cultural group(s)
- The writer's claim or argument
- Defining cultural events

The Culture Wheel represents some of the various facets of culture that may influence communication.

Symbols are often used in books and movies to provide cultural context.

In the Oscar-winning movie *Parasite*, directed by Bong Joon-Ho, South Korean culture (its standard of living, class structure, arts, food, and music) is used as the backdrop to the setting and plot. One important prop in the movie is a "Scholar Rock," a large stone that is a symbol of wealth and luck in Korean culture. Understanding the cultural significance of the Scholar Rock provides insight into the movie's commentary on class structures in South Korea.

Read more about the significance of this symbol here.

Reflect: Think about the last movie you saw.

- What was the cultural context?

- What type of music, food, arts, and values did you observe?

Activity

Respond to the questions below to find the social, relational, and cultural context of the article: "I Don't Think We'll Be Nicer After COVID-19, But We Might Be Wiser. That's More Important" by Chris Kutarna.

Read the excerpt and the full article before you begin:

> The strength of a community isn't rooted in how nice we are to one another. It's rooted in us each realizing how much we depend on one another for our own well-being.
>
> To exit this pandemic into a better, brighter future, we don't need to hold onto a stronger sense of compassion for others. All we need is a stronger sense of our own fragility... My well-being depends on you and so your well-being makes me stronger. If we each hold on to this newfound wisdom, then as a community we will become much stronger and more resilient to the next shock that none of us will see coming. (Kutarna, 2020)

Click here to continue reading.

SOCIAL	RELATIONAL	CULTURAL
Where was the article written? When was it written? What are social norms you recognize?	Who wrote the article? What relationship does the author have with the audience? Who is the audience? How did I feel while reading it? How did reading this affect you? In what ways did you relate to the article? In what ways did you not relate to the article?	What was happening in the world when this article was published? What are some cultural, political, social, and environmental factors that may have influenced the author's argument? What traditions and values of the audience/community are addressed in the article?

Social, relational, and cultural context can help you critically analyze the source you are reading. Understanding context is an important tool to have in your toolkit.

References

See Explore Context References

4.

EXPLORE LITERACY

Emilda Thavaratnam

Literacy is the ability to communicate and decode messages. Literacy can take various forms. In this topic, you'll learn about critical, information, media, and digital literacies.

What You'll Learn:

- How to critically read texts
- How to practise information literacy
- How to be conscious of media literacy
- How to be a digital citizen

If you can read and write, you have **foundational literacy** skills. This means you can sound out words, understand vocabulary, and figure out an author's literal message. You will learn more about foundational literacy in the Absorb topic.

Let's practise foundational literacy skills. Read the poem and respond to the questions.

Dragonflies
by Felix Jung
It's Thursday evening when my mother calls
and she's exhausted, up before the dawn,
back home well after dusk. We talk around
her day: the trays and drinks, sore feet that need
a salted water rub. Like any son
I think my mother works too hard for me
(but I am young, and childless). When I
was young, she says, in China we would tie

a length of string to dragonflies, to see
them buzz and spark about. The smallest ones
would tug our hands until we set them free.

Her voice against my ear is soft, the sound
made weary from its traveling along
a twisting line, that finds its way through walls.

(Jung, n.d.)

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=428#h5p-26

Critical Literacy

We use critical literacy when we try to make meaning out of and challenge messages we encounter in text and/or other media. We actively analyze and uncover underlying messages. Visit the Critique topic for more on critical literacy techniques.

Asking questions is a great way to **deconstruct** sources we encounter. Questions you may ask include:

- Is there a one or multiple perspectives? Is there a bias?
- Who is the audience? Are there groups left behind? Will others understand it differently?
- What qualifications does the author have? Are they credible?
- What types of evidence is there? Facts? Statistics? Anecdotes?
- Did the author consider the other side? What points were left out? Was this on purpose?
- Who do you think will benefit from this text? Who would be placed at a disadvantage?
- Do you see any political, religious, social undertones?

Here is a sample student deconstruction of Northrop Frye's article "Don't You Think It's Time to Start Thinking." The student practises critical literacy by responding to important questions about the text.

The example is based off of this excerpt:

> *A society like ours doesn't have very much interest in literacy. It is compulsory to read and write because society must have docile and obedient citizens. We are taught to read so that we can obey the traffic signs and to cypher so that we can make out our income tax, but development of verbal competency is very much left to the individual.* (Frye, 1986)

You can read the full article here:

https://search-proquest-com.ezcentennial.ocls.ca/docview/435373839?accountid=39331

Is there a bias?	There is bias in the first sentence. He is assuming that all people aren't interested in literacy. How does Frye know that the majority of people don't have an interest in literacy? Did he look at statistics? Is it from personal experience? In this passage, he says we are only taught to read in order to do simple daily tasks. This is not true at all. I personally read because I enjoy it. Reading lets me imagine and explore other countries, time periods, cultures. People go to school to do this professionally. I see a lot of generalizations here. I had some amazing teachers who showed me how to be "verbally competent in high school" and not just basic reading tasks, so he is wrong in saying verbal competency is left to the individual. My parents also always encouraged me to read for fun instead of playing video games. From reading this particular paragraph, I see bias for sure, but I'm going to find out more about the author and read the entire article before I can conclude for sure.
What is the purpose? Who is the audience? How do you know this?	I think he is trying to encourage people to read more, so the audience could be the public ... but the language is not every day-type language, so maybe it isn't the public... It seems like the audience must be someone who understands this type of language and vocabulary ... maybe a professor, a teacher, another academic? He uses vocabulary that people don't use on a daily basis like "docile," "cypher," and "competency."
Will others understand this reading differently?	I think a sociology researcher with background knowledge will understand it differently. I also think someone from a different society that loves to read and write might understand this reading differently. The perspective seems to be North American because in certain rural communities, there aren't traffic signs. A teacher might interpret this differently and think "I need to teach my students more about reading." A politician might look at it differently as well. The politician might think Frye is an anarchist when he says, "Obey the traffic signs." A politician might think, "We have traffic signs to protect the safety of people, is this meant to be sarcastic?" I also think that my grandma whose first language is not English will understand it very, very differently because the words are a bit difficult. She might not understand the sarcasm. She thinks it is our moral duty to follow laws.
Is the author credible?	I just Googled Frye and came across this on Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northrop_Frye I'll continue to look for more information on other websites. He is actually a literary critic and considered one of the most influential people in the 20th century. I think I should re-read this article again ... maybe he has a point? He seems pretty credible to me.
Were there factual resources or evidence present?	I can't find any statistics.

What points did he leave out? Was it on purpose?	He left out an analysis of other societies and the way they approach literacy. He also left out people who have a love for learning. He didn't use facts or evidence. I think it was on purpose. I don't think he found any facts or statistics to support his claim … so maybe his claim isn't true?
Do you see any political, religious, social undertones?	I see some interesting social and political influences. Like I mentioned before, the fact he is saying "We are taught to read so that we can obey the traffic signs and to cypher so that we can make out our income tax" makes me think that he has a conspiracy theory that we are controlled by the government and only taught to read in school to pay our taxes? Maybe he hates paying taxes? I wonder where he is from or where he grew up? Maybe that gave him a bad taste of governments or even following the rules. I'm going to do more research on this.

Information Literacy

Information literacy is the ability to identify, find, evaluate, apply, and acknowledge sources of information.

In this next example, a student uses specific questions about the topic "Finding a job after graduating" to locate and sort through information. You may ask yourself the same questions the next time you conduct research on a topic. Visit the Research topic to learn more.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=428#oembed-1

Identify	**What do you specifically need to know about this topic?** I want to figure out the most effective skills and strategies new graduates need to find a job after graduating.**Who would likely write about this topic?** Employers on job search sites, authors in the opinion section of newspapers, new graduates with blogs, professors. **Create a timeline to write the essay.** I'll give myself one week to explore; one week to read various perspectives; one week to narrow down my sources, etc. **Estimate the amount of primary and secondary information that you plan to use.** I want to use an equal amount of both because my essay is for new students, so I want to have first-hand, personal stories (primary) and well-researched articles with good statistics and facts (secondary).
Find	**Use keywords to locate sources on the library website and Google.** I'll start by using search words like "new graduates" AND "finding jobs" AND "Canada."
Evaluate	**Explore different perspectives on the topic to develop your own stance.** A professor of HR says it is important to take your time in building your resume and networking before actually applying. Take a month to get yourself organized. A new graduate on his blog said not to waste time on resumes and other stuff… Get yourself out there immediately. He sent out 15 resumes a day as soon as he graduated to beat the competition. I'm not sure which is better … I need to see other perspectives.**Look at different types of sources (books, databases, websites, YouTube).** I found a good TED Talk and good articles on job search websites like indeed.ca. Let me try something else like my school library's database.
Apply	**Paraphrase and quote from reliable sources.** This is an excellent quote from Stefan Danis, a man with 25 years of recruiting experience who is CEO of the firm Mandrake: "You set up a little network around yourself so that they can open doors for you. Simply sending your resume in response to job postings is not going to get great outcomes just because of the sheer [volume of] competition. It's very difficult to stand out from the crowd" (Dehaas, 2013, para. 3).
Acknowledge	**Review academic honesty guides and policies.** I went through the module and watched this video on plagiarism on the learning portal. It was eye-opening for me! I really need to be careful to give credit to other people when I use their information. It's not right to steal other people's work.**Website:**tlp-lpa.ca **Video:**www.youtube.com Give credit to authors through in-text citations and references in APA. Here is my first reference: Dehaas, J. (2013, March 15). How to land a good job after graduation. Macleans./ www.macleans.ca

Media Literacy

Media literacy is a set of skills we use to understand messages we get from the media. We are constantly consuming media. Think of the websites, magazines, video games, social media, TV shows, advertisements, and music you have consumed over the last week. Each of these contain media messages that have been created with specific purposes in mind. It is important to be able to recognize these messages and the purpose behind them, so we can think critically and challenge them.

Watch this source for an introduction to types of media.

Watch this source to learn more about media literacy.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=428#oembed-2

John Pungente, in his book *More than Meets the Eye: Watching Television Watching Us*, adapts key concepts of media literacy from the 1987 Government of Ontario Media Literacy Resource Guide. His concepts are summarized below:

Canada's Key Concepts of Media Literacy (Pungente, 1999)

1. Media is constructed; it is not a 100 percent portrayal of reality. Don't believe everything you see in media to be true.
2. Media influences our reality to some extent. We use the media to build our understanding of the world. It influences a lot of our attitudes, interpretations, and conclusions about life.
3. We make meaning of the media based on individual context. Our culture, values, morals, and beliefs affect our understanding of media. You might understand something completely differently than your friend.
4. Media has "commercial implications" (Pungente, 1999). In other words, most media productions are businesses making a profit. Therefore, we need to ask: *How is the media trying to profit and who is controlling the message (government officials, private for-profit companies, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, etc.)?*
5. Media messages have **ideologies** associated with them; for example, they communicate views on the "nature of the good life and the virtue of consumerism, the role of women, the acceptance of authority, and unquestioning patriotism" (Pungente, 1999).
6. Media messages have social and political influences (positive and negative). For example, social media is being used as a great tool for activism (#BlackLivesMatter, #Climatechange, #MeToo). It keeps us updated on national and global issues.
7. Media messages change in form, display, and content to give different impressions. For example, Twitter

has a word limit to create impactful messages. In contrast, Facebook allows for long paragraph-type content.

8. Each **medium** allows for artistic, creative display (poetry, prose, etc.).

When you encounter media, ask yourself:

1. Who created the message?
2. What is the purpose of the message (entertain, persuade, convince), and who is the audience?
3. Who is paying for it?
4. What techniques are being used to capture our attention?
5. Whose views and values are being included in this message? Who is being left out?

(Adapted from Common Sense Education, 2015)

Fake news is a term that recently became popular and refers to false information spread through media. Click here to find strategies for spotting fake news.

Digital Citizenship

Digital citizenship is when we are respectful, responsible, and safe with our online consumption and use. Being digitally literate is an important skill in the 21st century.

View the source for an introduction to digital citizenship.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=428#oembed-3

Now let's look at key elements of digital citizenship and best practices as defined by the **Learning Portal (2017)**.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=428#h5p-48

Review by watching the videos below.

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Social Media

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=428#oembed-5

Social media job tips

You've just learned a lot about literacy. Match the following examples with the type of literacy represented.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=428#h5p-28

Because we constantly consume information, we must always challenge "the message." The best way to do this is to think carefully and critically using our various literacies. In other words, ask yourself **"the So What question,"** or "Why is this important to me?" and "Can I trust the message and author's integrity?" Finally, remember to practise responsible, meaningful, and healthy online participation.

References

See Explore Literacy References

5.

DEVELOP SELF-AWARENESS

Emilda Thavaratnam

Do you know who you are? Are you conscious of your character, emotions, motives, and desires? If you can clearly identify these factors, then you have practised self-awareness in some form. Self-awareness is key to reflecting on and reinventing our communication.

What You'll Learn:

- How to practise self-awareness when communicating

Dr. Tasha Eurich is an organizational psychologist, researcher, and *New York Times* bestselling author of the book *Insight*. In this video, she explains why we may not be as self-aware as we think.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=429#oembed-1

The Self-awareness Framework

Being self-aware, knowing who we are and how others see us, can help us develop our unique voices as communicators. While Dr. Eurich's strategies can be used in all facets of daily life, here we will use them specifically in relation to communication.

Take a look at Dr. Eurich's (2017) framework for developing self-awareness:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGdsOXZpyWE

1. **Being open and curious:** Rather than focus on what went wrong in your communication, focus on what you can learn from the experience.
2. **Daily check-ins:** Reflect on your experiences at the end of the day. Ask yourself: What went well? What didn't go well? What can I learn to do better tomorrow?
3. **Dinner of truth:** Have a meal with a close friend or family member, someone who cares about your well-being, and ask them to tell you how they see you. In other words, ask them what they like about you and what they find challenging.

Being self-aware has numerous benefits for your communication skills:

1. Helps you become open to feedback
2. Helps you recognize your biases and blind spots
3. Widens your perspective so you can build closer relationships with others

Dr. Eurich's self-awareness framework and approaching communication as a vessel for creating community are concepts that can be universally applied.

This example shows the internal and external conversations of an individual who recently went for an Early Childhood Education job interview.

Being open and curious: I was nervous during my interview, so I may have spoken too abruptly and quickly. This did not allow me to let the manager know that I am passionate about this profession. Next time, I will slow down my pace and focus on sharing my experiences teaching abroad in vulnerable communities. This is the person with whom I'll be working, so I want them to understand that I value their experience and want to be part of their school. I will share my experiences in a follow-up email.

Daily check-ins: My interview didn't go too well today, but tomorrow I'm going to go back to looking for jobs. I think I will also rewrite my cover letter to tailor it to the child-care jobs I'm applying for. I want the person who reads my cover letter to know I share the same values and am passionate about childcare.

Dinner of truth: "Thanks for joining me for dinner, mom. My interview did not go too well today. I was extremely nervous, and I feel like I may have spoken really fast and may have interrupted the employer. Do you feel like I interrupt you? What do you notice about the way I speak? Is there anything I should change?"

Apply Dr. Eurich's three-step self-awareness framework to your last piece of communication. It could be a phone call, a social media exchange, an essay submitted for a class, a presentation, or an interview. Respond to the questions below:

1. What can you learn from the experience?
2. Reflect on the experience and ask yourself: What went well? What didn't go well? What can I learn to do better tomorrow?

Once we know who we are and the way others see us, we can reflect on our communication skills and create strategies to connect and engage in meaningful communication with others.

References

See Develop Self-awareness References

6.

IN-COMMON COMMUNICATION

Emilda Thavaratnam

We all have something in common with one another. Finding the "in common" element in our communications can help us forge connections and make a difference.

What You'll Learn:

- Why good communication focuses on what we have in common with others
- How to engage in mutually respectful discourse
- Why we should seek out diverse voices

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=430#h5p-27

Looking for the "In Common" Element

We communicate most often with people with whom we share common goals or interests. John Swales (1990) calls these groups "discourse communities". People in these groups have six things in common:

1. Common public goals
2. Specific methods to communicate
3. Share information and feedback in a participatory manner
4. Share genres and conventions
5. Lexis: specialized words/vocabulary
6. Specific level of knowledge needed for membership (Swales, 1990, pp. 471–73)

We all participate in many discourse communities. Some discourse communities you may be part of include:

Family and friend groups

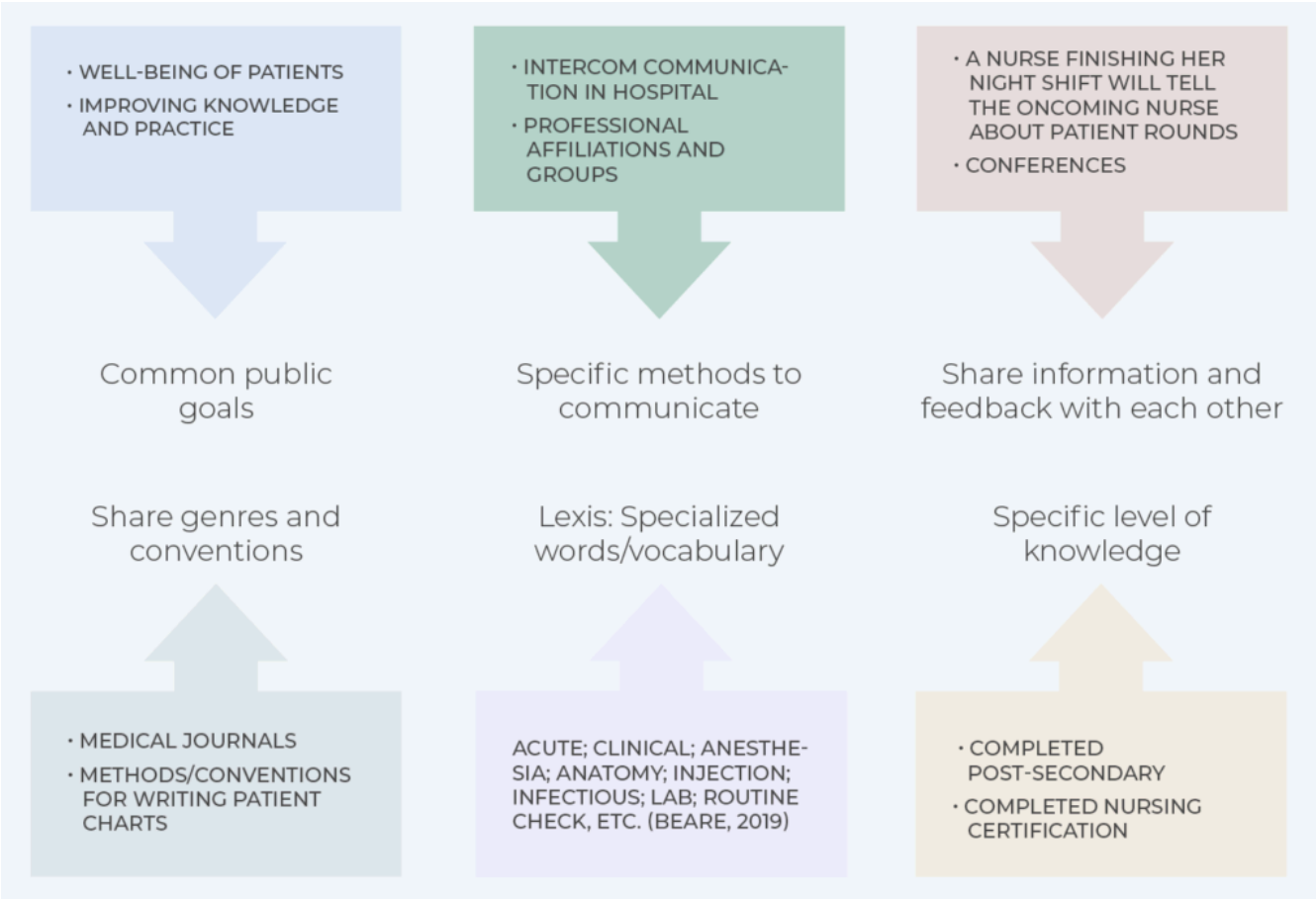
Sports teams

School communities

Specialized social media groups

Now, take a look at an example of a specific discourse community.

Nurses



Considering what you have in common with others can help you solve points of disagreement and resolve difficult situations.

Take the example of a disagreement between a nurse and a patient's family. The family is concerned about the way the nurse is handling the care of their loved one. What should they do, and how might finding the "in-common" element affect their communication?

DON'T	DO
Scream, yell, or use abusive language.	Remember the in-common element—"the patient." Nurses deeply care for their patients. This nurse may have missed the call, is attending to another patient, or is on the verge of coming to your room.
Family member: "Where are you? You are extremely slow! I've buzzed your station three times and you haven't come to see if my mother is ok?"	Family member: "Hi there, I'm so sorry to buzz again, but is there any way you can bring my mother another painkiller? Her back is hurting her."

Regardless of whether you share a discourse community, it is possible to find elements in common, and doing this ensures respectful and effective communication.

Reflect: Think about the last time you had a disagreement with someone.

- What was the disagreement about?
- Were you from the same discourse community?
- What in-common element did you have?
- How did the conflict resolve?
- What could you and the other person do differently next time?

Members of discourse communities use specific types of communication known as **rhetorical modes**. For example, a chef may use process analysis to write a recipe for a magazine. Click here to learn about the various types of rhetorical modes.

Civil Discourse

Civil discourse is when we listen and have gracious discussions with someone whose ideas are different than ours. It involves removing our assumptions and demonstrating mutual respect, open-mindedness, humility, and integrity.

Watch this source for an introduction to civil discourse.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=430#oembed-1

Andrea Leskes in her "A Plea for Civil Discourse: Needed, the Academy's Leadership" (2013) shares effective ways to engage in civil discourse:

- Focus on the issue and not the person (avoid personal attacks).
- Thoughtfully listen to the other perspective.
- Look for areas of disagreement and points of commonality.
- Concede/admit the validity of the other side.
- Defend your ideas with verified information.
- Treat other ideas with respect.
- Avoid violence (physical, emotional, and verbal).
- Be humble, open-minded, and willing to change.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=430#oembed-2

Here is an example of a debate that uses strategies from Leske's model. In this video, popular children's show host Mr. Rogers requests an increase in government funding to keep his show on air.

Focus on the issue and not the person (avoid personal attacks).	Mr. Rogers focuses on the issue of needing more government funding for his television show rather than personally attacking the government officials for making cutbacks. Ethos: appeals to goodwill
Thoughtfully listen to the other perspective.	He attentively listens and doesn't interrupt when others are speaking.
Look for areas of disagreement and points of commonality.	He points out that they are all invested in making their communities a better place.
Defend your ideas with verified information.	He uses facts and statistics as well as his experience with children on the show to highlight his claim, which is that public television shows like his are extremely important for children.
Treat other ideas with respect.	His tone, mannerisms, and approach are respectful.
Be humble, open-minded, and willing to change.	He is very humble and does not come across as being the only one who knows anything about children's educational programming.

Our communication is inspired by our individual experiences, values, traditions, and native language. Civil discourse allows us to use our unique voices and showcase our perspective while respecting the opinions of others as well.

Using Leskes's framework can be an effective brainstorming exercise when planning your communications.

Let's practise using Leskes's framework.

First, choose a claim that you believe to be true:

*Post-secondary education **does** prepare students for daily life or "the real world."*

*Post-secondary education **does not** prepare students for daily life or "the real world."*

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=430#h5p-29

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=430#oembed-3

Watch Julia Dhar's "How to Disagree Productively and Find Common Ground" for inspiration on engaging in respectful debates.

Diverse Voices and Stories

We live in a globalized reality where powerful stories told by authors, activists, researchers, scientists, artists, and other leaders transcend borders.

Effective communication occurs when we listen to experiences and stories that are different from our own. When we question our assumptions and bias and expand our filter bubbles, we can discover what we have in common.

Storytelling

Stories are powerful communication tools. They are impactful and reveal emotions that allow others to connect with them in a meaningful way.

Kevin Eikenberry (2010) in his blog post "Five Reasons Stories Are a Powerful Communication Tool" says stories are powerful because they...

1. Make a point memorable
2. Make it personal, meaningful
3. Create and reveal the audience's emotions
4. Build a connection to the audience

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=430#oembed-4

Watch Joseph Kim's story.

In this example, Kim uses storytelling to relay a powerful message to his audience about hope and perseverance. Kim's TED Talk, on one hand, features a unique experience that is only his. On the other hand, his mode of delivery allows him to create a connection to his audience and show the feelings of love, hope, gratitude, joy, heartache, despair, disappointment, and perseverance that we all share.

Here is how he does this:

1. Make a point memorable	Describes events with descriptive language and details life events using elements of storytelling. Uses an earnest tone and expression when recounting painful memories (e.g. being hungry on his birthday, losing his father, message to his sister).
2. Make it personal, meaningful	Shares personal experience of losing his family. Sends a personal message to his sister at the end.
3. Create and reveal the audience's emotions	Audience's expressions are sad, sympathetic, tearful. Kim's is solemn, respectful.
4. Build a connection to the audience	Message of hope is universal to audience. Personal experiences of love, family, overcoming adversity, new beginning, connecting and relating to others. Makes eye contact. Humble and earnest.

Stories with diverse authors and ideas can be very powerful. Step outside your filter bubble, and listen to a story or choose a book you typically would not.

For suggestions of diverse books to read, visit this page: www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/diverse-authors

In the summer of 2018, the publisher Scholastic asked their readers to tell them why reading diverse books was important to them. Take a look at some of their moving responses here.

Reflect:

- What was the last story you encountered?
- Was it from a perspective different than your own?

- Did you agree with this perspective?
- What did you learn?

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=430#oembed-5

Watch and then analyze the communication between NDP leader Jagmeet Singh and an attendee at his rally.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=430#h5p-30

We are part of multiple communities and have exchanges with people both within and outside of those communities. Remember the in-common element when speaking to others to avoid negative or ineffective communication.

Civil discourse makes it possible to "agree to disagree" in a gracious manner. It focuses on discussing the topic and not attacking the person. Meaningful exchanges can allow for the onset of new ideas and growth.

Listening to diverse voices and experiences allows us to venture outside our filter bubbles and grow our understanding of the world. Through diverse voices, sharing and learning becomes possible.

References

See References In-Common Communication References

PART II

BUILD YOUR TOOLKIT

- Focus on Process
- Practice Iterative Design
- Develop Voice
- Be Concise
- Be Clear and Complete
- Be Correct in Context
- Develop Flow
- Think Like a Storyteller

7.

FOCUS ON PROCESS

Philip Loosemore

Serve your readers through your investment in the writing process. Plan your time. Write **iteratively**, looping through the process several times.

What You'll Learn:

- Why your process matters to your readers
- How the writing process works
- How to write iteratively

The writing process is a bit like hosting a dinner. There's far more involved than just grabbing whatever's in the fridge and serving it.

- The experience is social. You focus on someone else's needs and preferences.
- You plan and organize early in the process, and perhaps do some research to offer the right thing.
- Once it's underway, you have to see it through to the end.
- Along the way, you make little adjustments and improvements.
- The most important moment is when you present what you've made.
- You learn from the process—insights you can use the next time around.
- However small it may be, the experience reverberates outward. Connections form. Relationships shift.
- The experience is ultimately about *people*.

8.

PRACTISE ITERATIVE DESIGN

Philip Loosemore

Don't just write. *Design* your communications by looping through the stages of prototyping, testing, and refining.

What You'll Learn:

- What iterative design means
- How to design for the needs of readers
- How iterative design can improve your writing

Design means to plan and create something. **Iterative design** means to loop repeatedly through the design process, gradually refining the product through feedback.

Iterative design is common in the development of commercial and tech products:

	Pixel 3 Phone	**Pixel 4 Phone**
Specifications (RAM)	4GB RAM	6GB RAM
Updated Features	Camera: Dual front cameras for wider view	Camera: New telephoto lens for better zooming
New Features	Titan M chip for more secure passwords and operating system	Motion Sense to control actions without touch

Source. https://www.pcworld.com/article/3446919/pixel-4-pixel-4-xl-pixel-3-pixel-3a-versus-features-specs-comparison.html

Writers and their readers can benefit from this approach. Picture the following process:

- Draft something
- Get feedback
- Revise based on the feedback
- Get more feedback
- Revise based on that feedback
- Etc.

In the iterative design approach, you share a draft long before your project is finalized.

Get readers' reactions to your work while you're still developing it.

Iterative Design

Characteristics of iterative design:

- Focus on a user's needs
- **Prototype** to meet those needs
- Test the prototype with users
- Refine and improve the design

Meet the Audience's Needs: Connection First

Iterative design is all about connection. Focus on your audience's needs, even when making an argument or disagreeing with someone.

This approach fits with any communication situation, including essay writing and public speaking. In a debate, your opponents need several things:

- Evidence that you've heard and understood them, and that you are open to hearing their point of view
- Clear, direct communication of your **claims** and **reasoning**, so they in turn can understand and respond
- **Accurate**, **credible** evidence backing up your points
- **Unbiased** language

With that in mind, consider these critical responses to an argument made by Mark Kingwell.

In May 2020, Mark Kingwell wrote an op-ed in Canada's *Globe and Mail* to argue that online education was inferior to face-to-face education ("Let's Admit It—Online Education Is a Pale Shadow of the Real Thing"). Kingwell was responding to the rapid transition to online learning with the onset of COVID-19 that March.

Response 1

"Biased opinion coming from an institutionalized professor" (monexatb, 2020). Read the comments here.

Readers who sympathize with Kingwell may feel their viewpoint is unfairly dismissed by the unproven, generalized **claim**, and the **stereotyping** and oversimplification.

Response 2

"Contributor Mark Kingwell may be right, but he may also just be resisting change" (Daudelin, 2020). Read the letter here

The writer of this letter welcomes all readers, including those who share Kingwell's view. Notice the **qualifications**:

- Acknowledgement of the other side ("Kingwell may be right")
- Limitation of the argument ("he *may* also just be resisting change," as opposed to something aggressive like "he's clearly just resisting change")

Response 3

"I teach legal studies at a community college. I recognize the necessity of online teaching to salvage the academic year. But I lament the loss of the classroom for two major reasons" (Berger, 2020).

Read the source.

The opening lines of this letter clearly establish the main point and provide a quick structural roadmap ("two major reasons"). The author also **qualifies** the argument and begins with context that personalizes the letter. It reaches out to readers by being clear, fair and personal.

Design your communications to meet the recipient's needs.

How do you discover your target audience's needs and expectations?

- When possible, just ask!
- Put yourself in a reader's shoes.
- Analyze different readers' likely expectations and motivations.

Prototype Rapidly

Step 1: Get it off the ground

A prototype is a rough draft. Its purpose is to generate feedback.

Think about a target reader's needs, then produce the quickest draft that you think fits those needs.

"Quickest" depends on the size of the project. A research project usually involves a lot of reading, exploring, prewriting, and outlining before you're even able to make a draft.

FOCUS ON PROCESS >

Consider showing someone your initial ideas in note or outline form. Or write the first full draft as early in the process as you can.

The point is, the first thing a reader sees doesn't need to be polished or fully formed.

Parallel or sequential?

In technical design, prototyping may be either parallel or sequential.

- Parallel prototyping: You offer users several versions at once (Hohl, 2017).
- Sequential prototyping: You offer one version, apply the feedback, offer the next version, and so on.

In the world of writing, *prototyping* usually makes more sense.

But you could offer a reader different versions of one brief section of a document. For example, you could draft two separate introductions and say to your reader, "Here are two possible intros. Which works better?"

Step 2: Give it a once-over to correct the obvious errors or gaps

It's better to get feedback on an imperfect version early on than to put off receiving feedback.

That said, aim to provide something as error-free as possible. Don't trip readers up with little things you can solve easily. You want them to focus on your ideas and structure more than typos.

Fix the things you can, then send it to a reader.

Original:

"Online learning has its own unique challenges however opens the doors to a larger audience" (monexatb, 2020).

Corrected:

Online learning has its own unique challenges. However, it opens the door to a larger audience.

Test Early

Get feedback early. Share a whole or partial draft. See how readers react. Find out what they understand and what they don't.

Discover how close you are to meeting the target reader's needs and expectations.

Let's say you are making an argument about a contemporary issue. To know if you're meeting readers' needs, you require certain feedback:

- Is your **thesis** clear?
- Are your **reasons** clear?
- Is your **evidence accurate** and considered trustworthy?
- Do you yourself come across as **credible** and trustworthy?

Know that it's hard to see your own work through a reader's eyes. There is no substitute for getting feedback. Strive hard to overcome the fears we all have about sharing our written work. Feedback is one of the most valuable parts of the writing process!

Consider the following exchange, in the comments thread below an op-ed.

"The highest % of funds are spent on the capital costs for constructing large buildings" (monexatb, 2020).

"[L]argest, by far, component of university budgets is salary, not capital costs" (ToryForever, 2020).

Read the exchange here.

Here, the respondent points out a correction.

This pair of comments illustrates the kinds of things that might come up in a reader's response to an essay draft.

Don't write in a vacuum. Find out what readers think and have to offer.

Tips

- Get feedback early and often.
- Give readers specific questions. What exactly do you want feedback on? The language and tone? Your argument? The structure?
- If you can't find someone to give feedback, go over your own work with a second reader's eyes as best you can. It's *very* challenging to read something of yours as if you're not the writer, which is why feedback is so important—but it's always worth a try.

Refine Continuously

Develop your ideas based on feedback.

Let's go back to the last example. Imagine you're critiquing Mark Kingwell's criticism of online teaching and learning. You're making the point that online teaching will save money:

ORIGINAL

"The highest % of funds are spent on the capital costs for constructing large buildings" (ToryForever, 2020)."

See the source.

Now imagine that you receive the feedback that you've made a factual error. You do a little bit of research and verify the feedback. How might you revise?

One option is to delete the statement entirely. But you don't have to.

You'll need to question your own claim that online learning will bring significant savings to postsecondary institutions. But that doesn't mean you have to abandon your line of thinking. You just need to refine it:

FEEDBACK-BASED REVISION:

While capital expenditures are a relatively small part of postsecondary budgets, the savings brought by online learning would still be meaningful.

The revision fixes the factual error and backs the point up with a source. It improves accuracy and credibility.

This revision reverses the statement about spending, yet makes fundamentally the same point: online learn-

ing saves postsecondary institutions money. It's a much stronger claim now that it's research-based and **qualified**.

The process is

- collect feedback;
- refine your work; and
- repeat the process.

Let's end with one more example of what iterative design can look like in the writing process.

Let's say you're writing a critique essay evaluating Bruce Pardy's claim that Mental disabilities shouldn't be accommodated with extra time on exams," and you're getting input from readers on various drafts. What might these iterations look like?

	ESSAY DRAFT 3	**ESSAY DRAFT 4**
Scope	Critique essay—evaluates Pardy's argument based on close analysis of his article	Research-based critique essay—evaluates Pardy's argument based on both analysis and additional research into the topic of "student accommodation"
Updated Elements	Claim 1 (weakness of Pardy's opening analogy that compares athletes in a race to students): adds additional example of a false analogy to clarify why Pardy's analogy doesn't work	Claim 1: adds research to solidify the claim and show alternatives to the "competitive" model of education
New Elements	New claim: adds a claim to address a reader's observation of a weakness in the argument	Qualification section: adds a paragraph-length acknowledgement of the merits of Pardy's argument

Iterative writing is a great way to rapidly improve your work with the input of readers!

Try It!

Begin your journey with iterative design by putting users first.

Your internet bill is scheduled to jump 7% in three months, according to a recent notice from the internet provider. You're calling to complain to customer retention. What does the first service representative you speak with need? Think it through, then compare your response to the sample answer.

Show Answer

To clearly understand the problem and the customer request. To feel humanely treated despite the fact that it's a complaint.

You're writing a letter to the editor in response to an opinion piece you disagree with. Some readers do agree with the opinion writer's point of view and are therefore probably going to disagree with you at first. When they come to your letter, what are their needs?

Show Answer
To understand your thesis. To know the reasons why you feel as you do. To feel like their point of view is being treated fairly.

We covered what iterative design is and how it helps you focus on the needs of your audience. We explored how iterative design is a looping process of:

1. Prototyping (making something to address others' needs)
2. Testing (getting feedback)
3. Refining (improving the draft based on feedback)

References

See Practice Iterative Design References

9.

DEVELOP VOICE

Philip Loosemore

What you write is an extension of yourself, a little bit of your personality shows up on the page. Shape the personality of the writing you send out in the world.

What You'll Learn:

- Why voice matters
- How context influences voice
- Strategies for shaping voice

Writing is social. For it to work, there needs to be some personality on display:

"Last week my wife and I told our 13-year-old daughter she could join Facebook. Within a few hours she had accumulated 171 friends, and I felt a little as if I had passed my child a pipe of crystal meth" (Keller, 2011).

Read the source here.

This writing sparkles!

Inject life into your prose. Say real things to real people.

Voice Matters

It's normal for writing to come out a bit flat in the early drafting stage. At that stage, it's often hard enough just to get ideas down!

This is probably especially true for academic writing and projects we don't choose for ourselves.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there are a lot of things people can learn from the challenges already being faced by chronically ill people.

The *idea* matters.

Yet the eyes glaze over. There's no colour, emotion, or spark.

It's a bit like the writer is sitting expressionless at a party. We don't know who they are, and we're going to lose interest fast.

Without voice, writing can't be *social*—or interesting!

When revising, transform a flat-sounding draft into something with character.

Context Matters

The fact that good writing has a *voice* doesn't mean all your writing has to be full of huge gestures and humour.

A thoughtful, eloquent voice may suit who you are or may fit the situation, as in this meditation on the act of writing by author Jhumpa Lahiri:

"The urge to convert experience into a group of words that are in a grammatical relation to one another is the most basic, ongoing impulse of my life. It is a habit of antiphony: of call and response" (Lahiri, 2008).

"My Life's Sentences"

Maybe your purpose and subject matter demand a factual, serious, scholarly tone:

"For most of the century between the two Reconstructions, the bulk of the white South condoned and sanctioned terrorist violence against black Americans" (Bouie, 2015).

"Christian Soldiers"

In short, writing situations limit and define the possibilities of voice.

Who are you writing for? Why? Where are you sharing or publishing?

American comedian and actor Mindy Kaling can post a tweet like this:

"Speaking of movies I absolutely loved #TheWayBack. My man Ben Affleck crushed it. Such a moving movie about the healing power of sports, and this is coming from a person who tripped on her treadmill this morning. And my sis @Janina was Fire! Highly rec" (Kaling, 2020).

That tone would be disastrous in a bank's annual report, which has to sound like the voice of corporate marketing:

"At CIBC, we are committed to delivering sustainable earnings growth to our shareholders and creating a relationship-oriented bank for our clients" (CIBC, 2019).

Read the report here.

Context shapes voice.

Be aware of who you're writing to, and why.

Voice Is Attitude and Connection

Think of voice as attitude. Besides context, attitude depends on lots of things, such as:

- Your feelings
- Your personality
- The subject

In sum, voice is personality, the sense of an authentic person behind the written or spoken word.

With those points in mind, *how* can we cultivate voice?

We'll look at three key strategies:

- Perspective
- Tone
- Style

Tip

Craft a voice that connects you to the people you want to reach, that shows them who you are and what you value, and that suits what you're writing about.

Have a Perspective

Commitment to your topic or subject matter shows.

Some writing tasks are given to us. We don't ask for them.

In those cases, find *something* about the topic that interests you. A fresh angle. A new idea to offer. Something all yours and just for your readers.

If the *topic* doesn't interest you, maybe your own *process of analysis* does.

For instance, if you're writing a critique essay or report, your focus may be your own **evaluation** of the source, event, or whatever you are analyzing.

Let's say you're asked to write a critique of Bill Keller's "The Twitter Trap," where he argues that social media is dumbing us down.

In your argument, you will engage with the subject of social media and its effect on us. But whether or not that subject matter interests you, your real focus is the way Keller builds his **claims**.

In this case, you'll have a viewpoint on Keller's own **rhetoric** and method of argumentation, not just the topic of social media.

Let the process of exploring Keller's method of argumentation be what interests you.

There's a lesson in Keller's work itself. Bill Keller is passionate about his viewpoint, which comes through in many places in his essay through his original language and clear, ethically committed position:

"Typing pretty much killed penmanship. Twitter and YouTube are nibbling away at our attention spans."

"Basically, we are outsourcing our brains to the cloud."

"[Twitter] is the enemy of contemplation."

"The things we may be unlearning, tweet by tweet—complexity, acuity, patience, wisdom, intimacy—are things that matter." (Keller, 2011)

A critique *of* Keller can be just as committed, just as rooted in a perspective.

Let's demonstrate this idea through a comparison. Here are two examples of a critique, both of them *less* committed than they could be. One supports Keller, one disagrees with him. Both are definitely starting to stake a position. But both could do more to create an authentic voice:

Keller makes a strong argument that Twitter and social media are having a negative effect on society. His evidence and claims show how Twitter affects attention span, memory, and the serious discussion of important topics.

Keller has valid concerns, but ultimately makes a weak argument that social media is causing us to become dumbed down. Granted, there are some examples of empty, silly communication on social media. But social media is also a platform for engagement and discussion.

Notice that while these critiques sound more committed, they are also more rounded and **qualified**. Both statements **hedge** a little bit and point to other viewpoints than their own.

Committed does not mean *uncompromising*. It means conveying passion for, and interest in, your own argument or purpose, within the boundaries of your writing context.

If the writer's not visibly invested, why should anyone else be?

Communicate with Tone

Tone is the mood of your writing.

It's a powerful, efficient way of communicating. It indirectly yet relentlessly shows readers the author's view of the subject.

In any given project, the mood of your writing might be funny, sad, serious, measured.... Anything is possible.

As always, it depends on your purpose and the situation. Are you writing an opinion piece? An academic paper? A business or technical report? A post? A speech? Are you writing out of anger? Joy? Curiosity?

But even within related contexts, there are many possibilities of tone.

These three examples all come from articles written in response to the early part of the COVID-19 crisis, specifically around April–May 2020. The first is Canadian, the second American, the third Indian.

For example, the following three passages all relate to the same topic (vulnerable populations affected by the COVID-19 crisis) and appear as articles for a general readership in newspapers and magazines. Similar contexts. Similar topics. Different tones.

In the first, the personality of the writing is casual and clever, even though the topic is serious:

"We're living in some wild times. A virus is on the loose, people are being quarantined, and many of us haven't left our apartments in days. It feels like science fiction. Or, if you're a chronically ill person, it feels pretty close to reality" (Feldman, 2020).

Read the source.

What makes this example feel casual and witty, like a friend is in the room, chatting with you?

- Informal writing ("wild times," "pretty close")
- Colourful language, including **personification** ("a virus is on the loose")
- Ironic reversal ("It feels like science fiction. Or, if you're a chronically ill person, it feels pretty close to reality.")

Considering the topic—chronic illness—another fitting voice might be *compassionate*:

"As anyone who lives with chronic illness knows, life in a holding pattern is stressful. During an illness flare, each day bleeds into the next as we wait and wait and wait for things to get better. It's tiresome and boring. As if that's not enough, we are acutely aware that things could get worse. Our health could slide fast, leaving us longing for the boredom over pain and terror. Anxiety mixes with tedium to produce an unwelcome cocktail.

"We're all in that space these days [during COVID-19]. We're fatigued, agitated, and lonely. We long for normalcy—to go to work, to celebrate milestones together, to be part of the humming of the world" (Virant, 2020).

Read the article here.

How does the writer's sense of empathy come through?

- Serious language ("illness flare," "acutely aware," "longing for the boredom over pain and terror")
- The way the writer draws special attention to—or *heightens*—the suffering of chronically ill people, for example in the repetition of the verb "wait" ("we wait and wait and wait for things to get better")
- The voice of a collective to which the writer belongs, through the use of the first-person plural pronoun ("we wait," "our health")
- The connection drawn between the chronically ill and everyone else ("We're all in that space these days")

The writer never says, "I have compassion for the plight of the chronically ill." In fact, a direct statement like this would probably sound insincere. The writer's *tone* communicates her compassion.

The voice could also be formal and serious:

"Ever since the lockdown began, stories of migrant workers have haunted [India]. These stories of suffering and hardship have become the face of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in India's megacities. There is an eerie similarity to many of them, highlighting an unequal society that has caused a humanitarian crisis to erupt during an unprecedented health crisis" (Priyam & Bordoloi, 2020).

Read the entire article here.

What makes this writing formal?

- The use of third person, where a seemingly neutral, disembodied voice is speaking about a third party (the migrant workers). As readers, we're more distanced from the author and the subject matter than in the examples above. This is neither better nor worse—just different, with a different effect.
- Formal language ("...that has caused a humanitarian crisis to erupt during an unprecedented health crisis.")

Even short extracts from each piece are enough to see the distinct tones and personalities in the writing.

Write with Style

Like tone, style is about the *way* you communicate something, as opposed to the literal content. But where tone is **synonymous** with mood, style is more about the arrangement and patterns of words and sentences.

For our purposes, *style* is the shapes and sounds of your sentences, and the special, original choices you make (such as using fresh **figures of speech**).

Consider these three passages, and notice how characteristics of *style* do a lot to shape the voice that comes through:

Here the style is blunt. It's also kinda informal. I'm using mostly short sentences, some slang. A fragment or two. You get the picture. It's writing done more like speech.

Listen now to the change in style. Because I'm using *periodic* sentence structure, where the main clause is delayed, and parallelism, where several corresponding grammatical chunks (nouns, phrases, clauses) stem from the same root, and because the lexis is more complex, the style sounds less like speech. That doesn't mean it has to be especially dense and difficult. Nor that all the sentences must be lengthy. Very much the opposite. The point is, the overall effect is more formal, and the pattern of thought is different.

Style is music. This short passage aims for sonority and rhythm—a beat, a pulse. Writing it, I'm alert to combinations of vowels and the clash of consonants. I want some sentences that drift, and turn, and softly close on words of several syllables. And other lines that hurtle to a rhythmic end.

Don't feel you have to learn a lot of **grammar** and **prosody** to write with style! It's not about the rules and the labels. It's about *listening* to your own style, experimenting with it, and actively shaping your sentences.

That said, here are a couple of quick sentence patterns and other tools it's good to be aware of:

1. Vary Sentence Length

Use lots of short sentences. They are easier to read. They take a load off your readers. Readers appreciate them. But not too many in a row! Otherwise the writing becomes monotonous. Like here.

By contrast, this paragraph contains variety. Some sentences are short. Others, like this one, are slightly longer and consist of more than one phrase. Only once does sentence length in this paragraph exceed 15 words, and if you want to reach a wide audience, make about 20 words your upper limit. The point is, vary the sentence length!

2. Place Your Main Clause Deliberately

Do you know where your main clause is?

Ok, that *is* one piece of grammar terminology you should make sure you know.

Understand the difference between an *independent clause* (often called *main clause* when it's the only independent type in the sentence) and *subordinate clause*.

- An *independent clause* has a subject and verb and *can* stand alone as grammatically complete, although it's often embedded in longer sentences.

- A *dependent clause* also has a subject and verb but *cannot* stand alone, except as a **fragment**. It is grammatically *dependent* on some other part of the sentence. It's marked by something called a *subordinating conjunction* (as long as, because, since, though, which, etc.):
  - *subordinating* because it marks the clause as dependent; and
  - *conjunction* because it *joins* the clause to some other part of the sentence.

Let's look at some examples. Pay attention to where the main or independent clauses are (underlined in each example):

This sentence is a single independent clause.

This sentence has two independent clauses, and it joins them with the word "and."

Because it begins with a subordinate clause and builds towards the main idea, this sentence is a distinct but common type called "periodic."

This so-called "cumulative" sentence starts on the main clause, which is then followed by any number of additional phrases or clauses that qualify or enlarge our understanding of the idea.

For more information, see this resource.

And while we're at it:

Beginning with a participial phrase, this sentence demonstrates a very common pattern you should study.

Want to solidify your knowledge of this pattern? Look up participial phrase here.

3. Use Figures of Speech

Common figures of speech include simile and metaphor, which are both types of comparison.

A simile compares two things with "like" or "as":

"The best sentences orient us, like stars in the sky, like landmarks on a trail" (Lahiri, 2012).

"My Life's Sentences"

A metaphor compares two things as if they are identical, as if one thing is not merely *like* another but *is* that thing:

"The first sentence of a book is a handshake, perhaps an embrace" (Lahiri, 2012).

"My Life's Sentences"

Used sparingly, figures of speech enhance voice and clarify thought, and therefore build connection to the reader.

Tip

Avoid clichés, which are tired or overused figures of speech or other expressions. "Sick as a dog" and "He'd give you the shirt off his back" are two examples. Avoid non-figurative generalizations, too, such as "In today's society...." When revising and editing, replace overused expressions with something fresh and original.

Voice Changes

Nobody has one single "writing voice" or "speaking voice." Our sound—our personality—changes according to context. There may be a common thread or a dominant voice in your output, but it's ok if your voice changes.

As you go forward, think about how you can do more to bring your communications to life by cultivating different voices for your different writing situations.

Each time, use the power of voice to connect with others!

Your Right to a Voice

A parting thought: When you craft voices to connect with others, you also create space for your voice(s) to be heard. If your culture has historically silenced people from the groups you identify with, this act may be especially significant.

As Rebecca Solnit says, "Having the right to show up and speak are basic to survival, to dignity, and to liberty. I'm grateful that, after an early life of being silenced, sometimes violently, I grew up to have a voice, circumstances that will always bind me to the rights of the voiceless" (2012).

https://www.guernicamag.com/rebecca-solnit-men-explain-things-to-me/

At one level, developing "voice" is technical. At another, it becomes the same as striving to "show up and speak" and "have a voice," sometimes in the name of those who remain voiceless.

Instructions:

Click on the H5P activity below for some writing prompts that help you practise crafting different voices.

Try the exercises in your favourite software. Feel free to use the text fields provided inside the H5P activity where you can generate a document and export your notes to a Word Document. **Remember that your responses will not be saved if you don't export your notes from the H5P activity.**

Activity 2 video – Option 1

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=418#oembed-1

Activity 2 video – Option 2

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=418#oembed-2

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=418#h5p-16

Voice is the personality of your writing. For every piece you write, it's important to be aware of voice in general and to cultivate the particular voice you're developing for that project.

Think about *perspective* (fresh angles, unique insights) and *tone* (the mood you convey) to craft the voice of your writing.

Engage your readers—make them feel like you're a real person writing real things that should matter to them!

10.

BE CONCISE

Philip Loosemore

More meaning. Fewer words.

What You'll Learn:

- Why concision matters
- How to trim your writing
- Three quick strategies that always work

First drafts are for free. Use all the words you need to generate your ideas:

One of the big problems in communication is when readers are forced to wade through far more words than they need to get fundamentally the same meaning. (27 words)

But then go back and trim unnecessary words:

A key communication problem is using more words than needed to express the same meaning. (15 words)

Go further. When relevant, focus on solutions. Propose actions. These lend themselves to concise, razor-sharp points:

To help your readers, trim unnecessary words. (7 words)

Why Concision Matters

Imagine you're critiquing an argument.

Consider the following passage:

The argument made by the author as to why the government is not doing enough for the wellbeing of Indigenous communities is strong and reliable because the article provides evidence that is effective, accurate, and reliable, which makes the author's points valid.

The idea is important! But that's a lot to chew on!

How can we improve this?

Try these strategies:

1. Trim
2. Cut redundancy

Let's see these strategies in action.

Tip

Remember, your writer-focused draft can be anything. The key is, *revise* so it's *reader-focused*. The wordy sentence above is not wrong. It's how the writer got the idea down. But readers need the revision!

Trim

Let's trim, or cut unnecessary words.

Consider:

The argument made by the author as to why the government...

Let's take a closer look at these cuts:

First, use "The author's" instead of "made by the author":

The argument made by the author The author's argument

Now, replace a three-word phrase with one word:

as to why that

The result?

The argument made by the author as to why the government... The writer's argument that the government...

Combined, these changes reduce the opening from 11 words to six. Almost half the length! Yet with no loss of information.

Tip

Concise writing is your complete meaning in the fewest possible words.

Cut Redundancy

Redundancy is unnecessary repetition. It comes in at least two forms:

1. Piling up **synonyms**
2. Stating info the reader does not need, because
    - it's a given (like telling a chessmaster the rules of the game); or
    - you've already **implied** it; or
    - it's beside the point.

Look again at the original passage. (The main idea is in **boldface**):

The argument made by the author as to why the government is not doing enough for the wellbeing of Indigenous communities **is strong and reliable.**

Do we need both "strong" and "reliable"? No! They're close enough in meaning.

Don't pile up synonyms.

Also, don't repeat the word "reliable." The original says the argument is "strong and **reliable**," and the evidence is "accurate and **reliable**."

Let's just say, **accurate evidence** leads to a **strong argument**.

Tip

There has to be a really good reason to use two terms when one will do!

Don't stop at single words. Cut whole clauses, sentences and ideas:

The argument … is strong and reliable because the article provides evidence that is provides effective, accurate, and reliable evidence, which makes the author's points valid.

Do we need "which makes the author's points valid"?

Maybe. It depends on how important the idea of *validity* is here.

If it's not central, cut it.

Putting It All Together

The revisions below mean the same thing as the original passage. But they're concise.

Revision 1

The author's argument that the government is not doing enough for Indigenous communities is strong because it's based on accurate evidence.

Revision 2

Drawing on accurate evidence, the author convincingly argues that the government is not doing enough for Indigenous communities.

The term "convincingly" implies that the argument is strong, reliable, and effective. We can cut all those terms.

Revision 3

While concise, revisions 1 and 2 above could sound more natural:

The author argues that the government is not doing enough for Indigenous communities. The claim is strong and just, backed up by accurate evidence.

Going Further

We have a concise, natural-sounding version of the original. Next, let's build it back into a longer statement. Not by padding out the same idea, but by adding *new ideas*.

By revising for concision, we've freed up space. Now we can push further and build the argument.

Recall the original:

The argument made by the author as to why the government is not doing enough for the wellbeing of Indige-

nous communities is strong and reliable because the article provides evidence that is effective, accurate, and reliable, which makes the author's points valid. (42 words)

Here's a sample revision. Notice it's three words shorter, but says far more:

I accept the author's claim that the government is failing Indigenous communities. The evidence is accurate, the reasoning sound. The question is, what then? First, I'll look more closely at the argument's strengths, then explain why it matters today. (39 words)

In the first half of the revision, which is fewer than 20 words (up to the word "sound"), we say what took twice as many words before.

In the remaining 20 words (the second half of the revised version), we push into new territory, explore implications, and create more interest and anticipation.

We say *more* with *less*.

Try it!

Test Your Knowledge

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=419#h5p-17

Try It Out!

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=419#h5p-19

You can write concisely by:

1. Trimming
    - Cut unnecessary words

    - Compress your language ("as to why" = "because")

2. Cutting redundancy

    - Cut synonyms
    - Cut direct statements of what is already implied

By writing concisely, you make room to push your ideas into new territory. Your writing becomes at once clearer and lighter yet richer in information.

11.

BE CLEAR AND COMPLETE

Philip Loosemore

Don't leave people guessing what you mean. Be clear and direct, and use lots of examples.

What You'll Learn:

- Strategies for clarity
- Strategies for completeness

Clarity and Completeness Defined

Clarity

Clarity means readers don't have to 'decode' to understand your meaning:

- Points are clear, direct, straightforward.
- Words are precise but common.
- There's no filler. (See Concision)
- Sentences and paragraphs are short (with enough variation to keep things interesting).
- There are definitions, examples, and explanations so the meaning is complete.

When in doubt, use plain language, language people can understand on a first reading.

Completeness

Completeness means you've left nothing out that your reader needs in order to follow along:

- Ideas are fully explained.
- Terms are defined.
- Context is provided, so readers know *why* you're writing and how the ideas relate to the larger world.
- Examples are used wherever appropriate, to illustrate abstract concepts.

Two qualifiers:

1. In some contexts, people expect more dense, complex, or indirect language. For instance: some academic writing, along with poetry, fiction, and other personal, expressive forms of writing. "Look at the old house/ Outmoded, dignified/ Dark and untenanted/ With grass growing instead/ Of the footsteps of life" (Thomas, n.d.). Read the original poem here.
2. Discipline-specific writing is also not always written for the "general reader," but that doesn't necessarily mean it's unclear. For example, the following statement is unclear to a layperson, but perfectly clear to a software specialist, because the grammar and syntax are clear and the terms are precise: "If I had this requirement, I would probably solve it by creating a base class for my serializers (which I always do anyway for key transforms and other shared behavior [sic]), and then copy the parameter on init" (christophersansone, 2019).

Strategies for Clarity and Completeness

Fix Sentence Structure and Ambiguous Words

Ambiguity refers to "inexact meaning." It happens in at least two ways:

1. Grammar, syntax, and word choice make the meaning unclear.
2. A word, phrase, or sentence is unintentionally open to two or more equally possible interpretations.

People who don't know specific people of a certain gender identity could create biases because of their portrayal in the media.

Here are some questions a reader might have:

1. Which of the two "people" nouns does the pronoun "their" refer to?
2. Does the writer intend the meaning "People ... could *create* biases"?
3. What does the writer mean by the phrase "a certain gender identity"?

Solutions may include the following:

1. Be clearer and more specific than the term "gender identity."
2. Clarify who or what "creates" biases—here, it's stereotypical media portrayals.
3. Make the clause "People who don't know specific people of a certain gender identity" more natural and concrete: "those who have no direct personal experience of transgender identity."

Consider this revision:

Historically, transgendered identity has been misrepresented and stereotyped in the media. False media portrayals encourage biases among those who have no direct personal experience with transgender people.

Define Terms

Define specialized terms, even relatively common ones that you assume people are familiar with.

In the following passage, the writer defines the term "obsessive-compulsive disorder":

"I have obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), a mental disorder characterized by intrusive thoughts or feelings (obsessions) that can lead an individual affected to engage in behaviours (compulsions) that alleviate the anxiety that can come with intrusive thoughts. My OCD is mostly obsessive with compulsive behaviors thrown in under high stress" (Hannah, 2020, para. 3).

Read the source.

Remember:

First ideas are for free. Draft however you need to in order to get your ideas down. Then stand back from your writing and ask yourself where readers are likely to get confused. It's always challenging to review your own work from an external reader's perspective, so you should also get feedback from real readers. Ask them where they don't follow your ideas. Fix the problem areas. But don't sweat the fact that there are problems! A first draft of anything worthwhile always has them.

Be Precise and Concrete

Consider this statement:

Plastic is bad.

What does this mean? How is plastic bad? What does the writer mean by the term "bad," anyway?

Considering that plastics are light, tough, cheap, and highly useful in construction and electronics, they can't be uniformly bad.

In short, the statement is unclear.

The following alternatives are clearer because they are more precise (specific):

Plastic is bad for the environment.

Plastic is environmentally harmful.

The unclear statement ("Plastic is bad") might come from a writer who is *picturing* environmental effects or *assuming* readers are doing the same.

That's dangerous. When writing, get your assumptions out of your head and onto the page.

The following statement is even clearer and more precise:

Plastic harms ocean life.

Why is this statement an improvement? Because it's even more precise, and it's *concrete*.

Concrete means things you can sense—see, touch, hear, taste, smell.

The terms "environment" and "environmentally" are abstract. It's hard to picture "environment," and if you try, there are dozens of things you could think of—birds, trees, a forest, a waterfall, a climate protest, a nature show complete with narration, soundtrack and high-definition images.... It's different for everyone.

An "ocean" everyone can visualize right away and agree on. It's *concrete*.

Add Context

Context means the bigger picture. Context *positions* your idea in relation to the world around it:

Plastic is everywhere and we can't avoid it—but it's harming the oceans.

Now we have more context for the statement that plastic is harmful: It's everywhere, and its use is seemingly unavoidable.

With context, we better understand why the writer is drawing our attention to the harm of plastic on ocean life. We see that the problem is urgent because it doesn't have an easy fix.

Provide Examples

Consider this improved version, which comes directly from the original article:

1 Avoiding unnecessary plastic is not just hard, it's nearly impossible. Bags, take-out food containers and other single-use plastic items spill out of our recycling bins and litter our neighbourhoods. Now we have more data than ever on how plastics are killing our oceans.

2 "You might want to sit down for this: the equivalent of one garbage truck of plastic enters our oceans every

minute. Mistaking it for food, one in three sea turtles, some 90 per cent of seabirds and more than half of all whales and dolphins have ingested plastic. (Khan & Alfred, 2018)

See the source here.

In paragraph 1, the writers use *concrete examples* to illustrate the concept of how hard it is to avoid plastic:

- Bags
- Take-out containers
- Other single-use plastic items found in recycling bins and forming litter on the streets

At the end of paragraph 1, the writers make a precise, forceful claim about the effect of plastic on oceans: "Now we have more data than ever on how plastics are killing our oceans."

Immediately following, in paragraph 2, the writers illustrate this claim with more vivid examples.

Clarity and Completeness in More Abstract Writing

It's relatively easy to solve issues of clarity and completeness when you're writing about concrete subjects. You can reach for concrete examples more easily.

What do you do if you're writing about abstract things, such as concepts and arguments?

The techniques are pretty well the same:

- Be as precise and concrete as possible.
- Contextualize your ideas.
- Define terms.
- Provide examples.

Suppose you're writing a critique of Bruce Pardy's argument against accommodations for difference and disability.

If you judge Pardy to be mistaken, your critique might circle around the following idea:

Pardy is wrong.

As it stands, this point is ambiguous and incomplete. (Also, the tone is harsh and dismissive, which is something else we can correct at the same time.)

In 2017, Bruce Pardy, professor of law at Queen's University, wrote a public opinion piece based on one of his academic articles, in which he argues that it's unfair to provide extra time on exams for people who identify as

having learning disabilities. He claims that the entire point of a timed exam is to "discriminate" between (select among) those who can perform up to standard in the allotted time and those who—for whatever reason—cannot do so.

Here's a clearer version:

1 In a special for the Canadian newspaper *National Post*, "Mental Disabilities Shouldn't Be Accommodated with Extra Time on Exams" (2017), Professor Bruce Pardy argues that accommodations are unfair to students who do not require them. Given enough time, anyone could perform up to standard. But the point of a timed test, he argues, is precisely to see who can perform up to standard in the allotted time, and who cannot.

2 Pardy's desire to protect academic integrity is understandable. That said, it's a problem that his argument privileges some types of students and excludes others. However, before even looking at that problem, I want to suggest some different, broader ways to think about how to measure student learning.

3 Pardy assumes education is competition. 4 For instance, he compares accommodations to a runner gaining an advantage in a race:

> Last week at the World Track and Field Championships, Usain Bolt ran his final race. Andre De Grasse, the Canadian sprint star, missed his last chance to beat Bolt because of a hamstring tear. If, instead of pulling out of the race, De Grasse had claimed accommodation for his injury and demanded a 20-metre head start, no one would have taken the request seriously.
>
> Yet an equivalent accommodation is standard practice at Canadian universities and colleges. They award extra time on exams and assignments to students who claim mental and cognitive impairments. Extra time for mental disabilities is as unfair to other students as a head start would be to other runners. (Pardy, 2017)

On a first reading, this analogy seems compelling. 5 But there's a different way to think about it. The entire point of a race is to see who's fastest. Arguably, the primary purpose of a classroom test is to measure what a student knows and can do, and only secondarily, if at all, to see how fast a student can perform. Increasingly, educators are calling into question the idea that speed relates to skill and ability (see Blodget, 2019). Is speed a valid criterion?

How can we broaden the idea of "education" beyond "testing"? 6 There are many alternatives to the timed test, including simulations and e-portfolios (see Wingfield, 2014).

1 Context: Where Pardy's argument comes from and what it's about
2 Precision: A much more specific response than "Pardy is wrong"
3 Clarification: Zeroing in on part of Pardy's argument
4 Example: Specific passage from Pardy's argument that illustrates the preceding point
5 Clarification: Redefinition of what tests should measure
6 Example: Researched alternatives

Additional Strategies

Here are a few final pointers for making your writing clear and complete:

- Use strong, active verbs, not passive ones: "The study showed that…" instead of "It was shown in the study that…"
- Use common words: "This idea emerges grows out of…"
- Use headings, subheadings, and ordered (numbered) or unordered (bullet point) lists.
- Use graphics and graphic organizers wherever possible or appropriate (images, tables, etc.).

Examine the following "unclear stems" (vague and/or confusing statements). Choose one or several of these stems, and write clearer, more complete statements about the topic in the text editor below. Use research, as needed, to develop and define your ideas. Some sources have been provided, but you can use your own research as well. You are welcome to switch position on the topic or keep it the same as in the original.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it

online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=420#h5p-68

Make sure your writing and other communications are *clear* and *complete*, so that your audience will have no trouble quickly understanding your intended meaning. Strategies include:

- Fixing sentence structure and ambiguous wording
- Defining your terms
- Being precise and concrete
- Adding context
- Using examples

References

See Be Clear and Complete References

12.

BE CORRECT IN CONTEXT

Philip Loosemore

Correct your work according to context. Provide accurate content and consistent presentation.

What You'll Learn:

- How to correct things depending on context
- How to protect factual accuracy

We communicate differently in different situations.

What counts as "correct" depends on that situation, and depends on whether we're speaking or writing, writing a tweet or an essay, presenting at a conference or chatting with a friend.

For instance, in many types of writing, it's considered incorrect to use:

- Sentence fragments (grammatically incomplete sentences, such as "Arranging the ideas," or a one-word sentence like "Right.")
- Contractions ("won't")
- Interjections ("yeah," "oh")

But in many spoken English contexts, it would be incorrect to *avoid* these, and a series of grammatically complete sentences would be wrong.

Being correct *according to context* is an important communication tool.

We're going to use the word *correct* in another sense, meaning *factually correct*. Here, "correctness" is or should be less dependent on context, more absolute or universal. It's never ok to willingly distort facts, and we must always check facts for mistakes and hold others to the same high standard.

Correctness in Context

When we say "be correct in context," we mean pay attention to the rules and conventions of the context you're in.

Dealing with Rules

You can follow the rules. You can break rules, too, but you should always be aware of the possible effects on readers and consequences to you as a writer.

For example, if you're an engineering technician student in Ontario, Canada, you'll need to prepare a report according to the rules set by the Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists (OACETT).

Here are four of the style and language guidelines for that report:

1. The document should be typed, double-spaced using Arial, Univers, or a similar Sans Serif 12-point font.
2. The lines should be justified left, with pages numbered and appropriate page breaks.
3. Correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar should be used.
4. Consistent voice, subject-verb agreement, and verb tenses should be used.

Read the source.

You're always free to submit a report that is single-spaced, uses serif font, and switches verb tenses frequently. But there are consequences.

Rules in Context: Becoming a "Polyglot"

Items 1 and 2 from the OACETT guidelines above are objective:

- You can measure whether a document is typed and double-spaced using sans serif 12-point font, left justification, and numbered pages.
- The size of 12-point font is standardized and is unlikely to change from one place to another, or to change over time.
- Any two or more people will be able to reach unanimous agreement on whether a given document follows those first two guidelines.

Items 3 and 4 are less objective because the rules of orthography (spelling, punctuation) and grammar *do* change from place to place, and over time.

There are so many types of written and spoken English, and so many kinds of English speaker and English language learner, that it's probably better to be able to *adapt to many contexts* and *learn the conventions of different contexts* than to "learn *the* rules," as if there's only one set.

Like a programmer who knows many computer programming languages and can pull out the right one for the job, you should become familiar with many different kinds of English (and other languages, if possible) and learn how to adapt to the situation you're in.

There is no one "standard" or "correct" English.

Correctness and Power

It's important not to privilege one rhetoric, or form of language, over another.

For example, the English classroom in a North American postsecondary institution can easily feel like a place of judgment, where you sense you're either "correct" or "incorrect" in your use of language.

But if you're a student in that setting, remember that the conventions and rules taught there don't replace other rhetorics you possess and shouldn't be privileged over them, such as the way you speak and write with friends.

Academic and so-called "mainstream" English are only correct in certain contexts. In other contexts, their rules don't apply and are sometimes incorrect.

Linguistic Accuracy

Finding Out the Rules

To "follow the rules" of grammar and usage in a particular context, you should look at relevant and reputable examples of the genre, and at relevant style guides.

For example, if you're learning how to write journalism, read a lot of journalism from around the world, especially from your region and in the specific genres you're interested in.

In many North American postsecondary institutions, when writing academic essays, you can follow the guidelines for style, layout, grammar, and more set out in one of these manuals:

- APA https://apastyle.apa.org/products/publication-manual-7th-edition/
- MLA https://style.mla.org/works-cited-a-quick-guide/
- Chicago Manual of Style https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html

There are also popular, classic texts on grammar and style you can consult:

- Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*
- Messenger's *Canadian Writer's Handbook*

If you are writing for a particular publication, you can ask if they have a house style manual.

Flexibility

In some writing situations, there's a lot of room to experiment, bend rules, or blend rules from different contexts. In others, the rules are more rigid. You can still always bend or break rules, but the stakes and consequences change.

If you're asked to prepare a paper according to APA style, then there are specific rules of grammar, layout, citation, and more.

If you're writing a personal blog, social media post, or piece of creative writing, there *are* conventions and reader expectations, but you can theoretically do anything you want.

Factual Accuracy

We've looked at linguistic correctness and said that guidelines depend on context.

We're going to look at another form of correctness—factual accuracy—and lay down a more universal principle.

Especially in the era of fake news, mass mobile communications, and information overwhelm, it's more important than ever to uphold the standards of *factual accuracy* and to be able to distinguish between fact and opinion.

Is It Fact or Opinion?

A *fact* is a piece of information that can be proven with evidence. It may be accurate or inaccurate.

An *opinion* is a judgment shaped by personal beliefs, values, and assumptions. It may be informed or uninformed.

An informed opinion is generally an interpretation of available facts, whereas an uninformed opinion may be based on nothing but personal feeling or even prejudices.

See this source for further information.

For example, the following is a fact:

In 2016, 2% fewer Canadian postsecondary students than in 2013 felt their mental health was very good or excellent.

This happens to be an *inaccurate* fact. The accurate fact is the following (notice the correction of the statistic):

In 2016, **8%** fewer Canadian postsecondary students than in 2013 felt their mental health was very good or excellent.

You can see how easy it is to intentionally or unintentionally distort a fact. The consequences can be significant. Two percent and 8% may *seem* close, but in statistical terms they are very different. The consequences of getting the fact wrong is serious.

Put simply: Facts matter.

Is the following fact or opinion?

Student mental health is worsening.

It's an opinion, not a fact. It's a judgment based on

- the statistical data (the fact of fewer students reporting good mental health); *and* on
- assumptions about how to interpret that data.

Just because the opinion is fact-based does not necessarily make it true or valid.

As this source points out, the statistical decline in students reporting good mental health may not mean that more students are suffering. It may mean that more students are willing to admit to having poor mental health or that more students are able to recognize and label it—in short that there's more space for expressing mental health problems (Chiose, 2016).

We don't know *for a fact* what's at the root of the decline.

Here, then, is an alternative opinion—that is, an alternative interpretation of the facts:

Students are increasingly able to recognize signs of mental health problems and increasingly willing to admit when they are suffering.

One of these statements may eventually become a fact, if enough convincing evidence can prove it beyond a doubt.

Be a Fact-Checker

Always check your own facts before communicating them. Ensure that you are reproducing data accurately, and also that your sources are reliable.

Likewise, check the facts that others present, or at least check how reliable the sources in question are.

Sometimes you have to go through more than one layer of fact-checking.

For instance, the fact in the previous example, that 8% fewer students reported good mental health in 2016 compared to 2013, comes from a *Globe and Mail* newspaper article.

The Globe and Mail is a mainstream Canadian newspaper-of-record, meaning that it's held to a high standard of accuracy and impartiality in its reporting.

That doesn't mean it never publishes factual errors. But it's a reputable source, and it publicly corrects errors it makes when these are drawn to the editors' attention.

In turn, the *Globe* article was citing a statistic from the National College Health Assessment. So the next step would be to look at that source and determine its credibility.

As of this writing, the web page the *Globe* article linked to is no longer available. We might not be able to check it directly.

The process, though, remains:

- Check the sources of any facts you cite. How reliable is the given source? Why?
- What sources is *that* source relying on?
- Remember that methods for collecting data are not always reliable.
- Remember that facts can be distorted, invented, and made to appear credible when they aren't accurate.
- Remember that all facts can be interpreted in multiple different, sometimes contradictory, ways.

Try it!

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=421#h5p-21

Correctness in communication is important, and incorrectness can have serious consequences. At the same time, what counts as "correct" in language is not universal. It depends on context.
Learn how to be correct *in various contexts*, and learn how to find and apply the rules or guidelines required, rather than memorizing lists of rules.When it comes to factual accuracy, we should be more absolute. Know the difference between fact and opinion. Learn how to vet sources for their accuracy, and always make sure to check your own work for factual accuracy and integrity.

References

See Be Correct in Context References

13.

DEVELOP FLOW

Philip Loosemore

Connect your ideas so readers can follow.

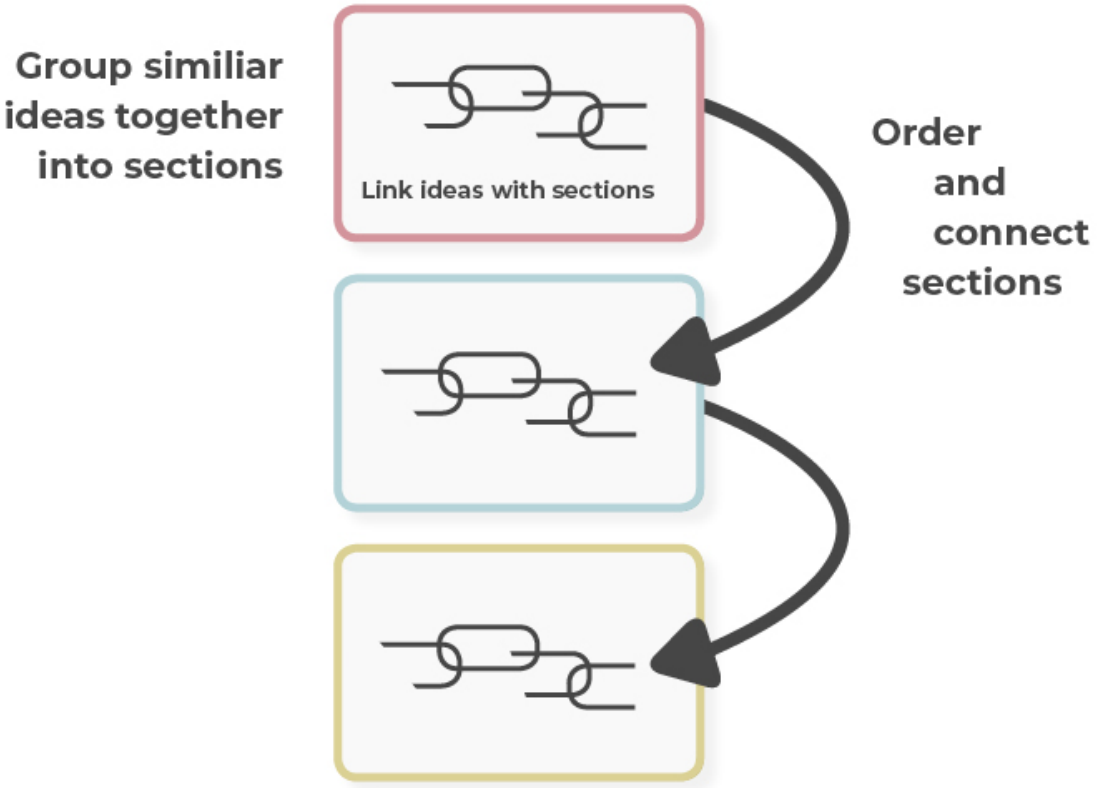
What You'll Learn:

- How to group and sequence ideas
- How to connect ideas

Flow in writing is the sense of connection between ideas.

Writers should:

- **Group** similar ideas together
- **Order** (sequence) ideas logically
- **Connect** each sentence to the next



Group, Sequence, and Connect

A first draft is exploratory. Even if you've planned and outlined your project, ideas might pour out at random. It's not easy to write a first draft. Give yourself permission to write prose that doesn't yet flow:

1 Students are greatly in debt. 2 In a survey, 90% of respondents reported feeling overwhelmed by the tasks they had to complete. 3 Postsecondary institutions are trying to enhance student life. 4 Credentials are no longer enough for employment.

Statements 1, 2, and 4 relate to the pressures and problems postsecondary students face. But nothing focuses these statements or pulls them together. Meanwhile, point 3 probably doesn't belong.

Strategy 1: Group and Sequence Ideas

To solve this problem, separate out ideas into larger **topics**, put them in logical order, and directly identify the topics for your reader:

1 **Students face many pressures today.** They are greatly in debt. In a survey, 90% of respondents reported feeling overwhelmed by the tasks they had to complete. Credentials are no longer enough for employment.

2 **There have been attempts to address the issue.** Postsecondary institutions are trying to enhance student life.

Here we've

- created two separate topics;
- put them in a logical order (problem → solution); and
- identified each with a **topic sentence** (1, 2).

By default, topic sentences should go at or near the start of a given paragraph. It's also possible to put a topic sentence at the end:

Students are greatly in debt. In a survey, 90% of respondents reported feeling overwhelmed by the tasks they had to complete. Credentials are no longer enough for employment. **Students face many pressures today.**

Strategy 2: Connect Ideas

Grouping and sequencing help, but the ideas still feel disjointed. We need to link them more with connectives. Connectives are those little words that link, or connect, ideas together:

- Also
- Moreover
- For example, for instance
- Yet
- But
- However
- More importantly/most importantly
- In short

These connectives help you add ideas, contrast two or more ideas by showing difference, summarize, and so on.

By using them, you **show your readers these same logical connections**. Your writing feels more cohesive as a result.

Sometimes punctuation can help in the same way. For example:

- A colon (:) often shows that an example follows.
- An em-dash (—) can be used to emphasize or add an idea—just as this one does.

Students face many pressures today. **For example**, they are greatly in debt. They're **also** stretched thin**:** In a survey, 90% of respondents reported feeling overwhelmed by the tasks they had to complete. **Worse**, the credentials they're earning are no longer enough for employment.

There have been attempts to address the issue. **For instance**, postsecondary institutions are trying to enhance student life.

The words and phrases "for example," "also," and "worse," and the colon ("stretched thin:") all link ideas together and show the relationships between them. Let's look at what each connective is doing:

- "For example" connects the subsequent idea to the previous one as an *instance* or *illustration*.
- "Also" adds a *new, equal idea* onto the previous one. (In fact, the entire clause "They're also stretched thin" is one big connective, showing the relationship between student debt and student overwhelm.)
- The colon (:) after the word "thin" shows that an example or piece of evidence is coming.
- The word "worse" comparatively weights the following idea as *more important* than the previous one(s), in a negative sense (i.e., one example *worse than* the other two).

Note you can still put the topic sentence of the first paragraph at the end:

Students are greatly in debt. They're **also** stretched thin: In a survey, 90% of respondents reported feeling overwhelmed by the tasks they had to complete. **Worse**, the credentials they're earning are no longer enough for employment. **In short**, students face many pressures today.

Here the connectives work the same way as before, and the new one, "in short," brings all the ideas to a point, and alerts the reader that the next idea is a summary and explanation of all the previous ones.

Tip

Not every sentence you write will have a connective word or phrase. In longer paragraphs, their use in every sentence would become repetitive and distracting.

But as you can see in the above examples, it helps when you're clear about the connections between ideas! Don't *underuse* connectives!

A Closer Look at Grouping and Sequencing

The first strategy we explored separated out and grouped together similar ideas. In the case of that example, the pattern was:

- Problems postsecondary students face
- Attempts to address the issue

This sequence is logical.

One thing you might do as a writer is expand on the "problems" section. For instance, you might decide to pay special attention to the problems students face getting jobs. Now you have two parts looking at "problems" and one at "solutions." You need to decide on the order of the two parts on problems.

One possibility is to go from most important to least important. Another is from least important to most important. (These choices assume one idea *is* more important than the other. Usually we can rank our ideas like this.)

Let's say you want to zero in on job prospects as the most serious issue. Here is the topic outline, going from more important to less important:

1. The most serious problem facing students today is lack of job prospects.
2. Students face a number of other pressures, too.
3. There have been attempts to address these issues.

You can reverse 1 and 2, and go from less important to more important:

1. Students face many pressures today.
2. Of all these, the most serious problem is lack of job prospects.
3. There have been attempts to address these issues.

You can also build out each larger topic in more than one paragraph, each with its own topic sentence, or central point.

You'll often notice that in skillful, cohesive writing, when you extract and join together the first sentence of each paragraph, you get a logical summary of the whole piece.

For example, look at the following breakdown of eight paragraphs in a row from Anthonella Alvarez's "Barriers in the Classroom."

Notice the following:

- The ideas fall into three main topics (language barriers, cultural exclusion, positive signs). These are labelled with roman numerals (I, II, and III) and headings. (These roman numerals and headings do **not** appear in the original.)

- The first sentence of each paragraph (recorded below) is the main idea for that paragraph.
- Paragraph 4 transitions between the first two categories, showing similarity between them.
- Paragraph 8 transitions into the third topic, showing contrast ("However").
- The ideas flow logically from one to the next. Alvarez has carefully sequenced them. Reading just these opening sentences of each paragraph, you can follow almost the entire argument.

(All quotes from Alvarez, 2020)

I. Language Barriers:

1. "One of the most obvious challenges Latinx students have in the classroom is the language barrier."
2. "Because of the language barrier, a lot of Latinx students are assumed to be not as smart as their peers and many teachers give up on them."
3. "Most public schools have English Language Learning programs, yet they are mostly underfunded or understaffed."

II. Cultural Exclusion:

1. "Our challenges do not stop there. Our cultures play a role, too."
2. "The pressure to assimilate and be "normal" when you have an immigrant family or are an immigrant student is a big weight that no one else carries. [...]"
3. "Educators play a huge role in these struggles." [Alvarez goes on to describe how educators often fail to include Latinx cultures and multilingualism in the classroom.]
4. "This exclusion and erasure of Latinx culture makes staying in school and learning even harder for students who are the first or second generation of their family to receive formal education, at any level."

III. Positive Signs:

1. "However, not all is lost."

Read the original article to see how these ideas are fleshed out in each paragraph.

A Closer Look at Connection

We saw above how you can use *connectives*—linking words and phrases—to show relationships between ideas.

There are two more useful techniques called "consistent subjects" and "old-new flow."

Consistent Subjects

"Consistent subjects" means starting each sentence (or **main clause**) from the same perspective. For a given chunk of text (a paragraph or other group of sentences), start each **main clause** on the same subject or its equivalent (e.g. a pronoun). These are sometimes also called "topics." They are what each sentence is about.

You can picture it like this:

Subject → statement about that subject. **Subject** → another statement about that same subject. **Subject** → statement about that same subject.

If you remember, one of the solutions we looked at before involved adding connective words. Well, the first part of that solution *also* uses this technique of consistent openers:

1 Students face many pressures today. 2 For example, they are greatly in debt. 3 They're **also** stretched thin.

Each sentence is about "students." The word "students" or the equivalent pronoun "they" appears at or near the start of each sentence.

Notice how the consistent subject technique can be combined with the connectives technique (the use of "for example" in sentence 2).

You can see the same technique in one of the paragraphs in Alvarez's "Barriers in the Classroom," where "educators" (replaced in most sentences by "they") is the consistent subject:

"Educators play a huge role in these struggles. As the first line of defence, they should try to create a more inclusive classroom. However, unless a problem is explicitly brought to their attention, they will create lesson plans that exclude anything outside of the "ordinary," like reading materials that might speak to Latinx cultures, or an understanding of what it's like to speak multiple languages" (Alvarez, 2020).

Notice that in the second and third sentences, the word "they" starts each **main clause** but not the sentence itself.

There's no rule that you can only have one consistent subject. You can probably have two or even more depending on the length of the section or paragraph. Use your judgment. Just be aware that the whole point is that if there are too many subjects, the writing may become unfocused, unless you're using another technique to make the writing cohesive.

Old-New Flow

Another technique is "old-new flow."

In your sentences, try to move from *old information* (what you've already told the reader) to *new information* (the point you are adding).

Repeat this process in an ongoing chain link of ideas.

Typically, each new sentence picks up where the last one left off, although there's no hard and fast rule about this. It's just a general pattern.

Old information is information the reader already has, typically because you've just given it to them:

This sentence establishes idea A by the end. Idea A is at the start of this sentence, and now we add on idea B. Idea B is signalled here to anchor the reader, and we can safely add idea C...

Let's rewrite one of the solutions above using this new technique:

Students face many pressures today, from rising debt levels to overwhelm. And these pressures may not be worth it, because students' postsecondary credentials are no longer enough for employment. In fact, job prospects ...

Here's another, more complex example.

> When my ancestors made treaty with the Crown, the original intent and outcome was never based on the idea that we, as Indigenous nations, would assimilate to the point that we would deem our own political and traditional governance systems irrelevant and dissolvable.
>
> With this knowledge, I know that in order to have strong, healthy nations, I must raise my daughter with the knowledge of the original intent and outcome of those treaties. This, in turn, aids in the reminder of the immortality of treaty.
>
> The fact is, treaties are of international stature. (Landry, 2019)

Read the source.

The strategies we've looked at can be adapted and combined in various ways. The following passage uses a mix of consistent subjects and old-new flow (see if you can also spot the connectives and use of topic sentences!):

Students face many pressures today, from rising debt levels to overwhelm. They're taking out loans to pay ever-rising tuition and living costs. Moreover, they find themselves stretched too thin. For example, in one recent survey, 90% of respondents reported feeling overwhelmed by the tasks they had to complete. And these pressures may not be worth it, because students' postsecondary credentials are no longer enough for employment.

In fact, job prospects are perhaps the most serious issue.

Combined, these techniques create prose that feels coherent and connected. We can see how the various ideas relate, how they build one to the next, and how they're grouped together.

Try It!

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=422#h5p-22

Make your writing *flow* for your readers, so ideas are connected and easy to follow:

- Group similar ideas together.
- Use topic sentences to identify the main idea of a paragraph or section.
- Use connectives ("also," "but," "for example," "in short," "more/most importantly," "moreover," etc.).
- Use consistent subjects (start your sentences or **main clauses** on the same noun or small group of nouns within a particular passage).
- Use old-new flow (begin the next sentence on the idea you ended with in the previous one).

References

See Develop Flow References

14.

THINK LIKE A STORYTELLER

Philip Loosemore

Stories stick. Always tell a story—especially when the thing you're writing *isn't* one.

What You'll Learn:

- How stories engage
- How to transform abstract ideas into story
- Techniques you can use right away

Compare these two passages. Each is about 100 words long:

1.

Some parts of the constraints that deception requires will involve regulatory curbs, but others will require wise discretionary decision making. Since certain kinds of deceptive practices will involve intrusions into matters ordinarily considered private, deception will need to be scrutinized lest enthusiasm for "information" improperly cross moral boundaries. So, for example, the use of phone tapping and bugging devices will ordinarily need the approval of an impartial judge. Other deceptions, such as sting operations, may require supervisory approval, and individual discretionary decisions will need to be defensible in the event that they come up for review. Particularly egregious have been police sting operations in which guilty parties have been manipulated into indefensible deceptive behavior. (Kleinig, 2018, Police Deception, para. 6)

View the source.

2.

On the evening of May 7, 2008, a twenty-three-year-old woman named Rachel Hoffman got into her silver Volvo sedan, put on calming jam-band music, and headed north to a public park in Tallahassee, Florida. A recent graduate of Florida State, she was dressed to blend into a crowd—bluejeans, green-and-white patterned T-shirt, black Reef flip-flops. On the passenger seat beside her was a handbag that contained thirteen thousand dollars in marked bills.

Before she reached the Georgia-peach stands and Tupelo-honey venders on North Meridian Road, she texted her boyfriend. "I just got wired up," she wrote at 6:34 p.m. "Wish me luck I'm on my way." (Stillman, 2012, paras. 1-4)

Get the source.

These sources cover the same topic—police sting operations in the United States.

Which is easier to follow? Which one sticks better in your mind?

You probably picked the second one.

That's because *story sticks*.

This might seem like an unfair comparison. The first example is from an academic essay. The second is from a piece of investigative journalism that allows author Sarah Stillman to tell stories.

The journalist can use narrative here. How is the academic supposed to do that?

But we're not saying "always write a story." We're saying, "Think like a storyteller"—yes, even if you're writing an essay, email, or report.

Context Matters

Depending on your writing context, you may be more or less free to use the techniques we will discuss.

For example, the first technique we cover is, "Make it about people doing things." That means, write sentences showing people doing actions ("Rachel Hoffman got into her silver Volvo sedan...").

If you're writing a formal technical report, you can't generally write about people doing things.

As another example, we'll discuss how to cut **abstract nouns** and **modifiers**.

But what if your subject matter really is abstract?

Or what if you want to use a formal, academic tone to meet your readers' expectations? Maybe you need to keep some of the abstract words after all.

These are probably some of the factors that influenced John Kleinig's choices in the first example. He's a professional academic writing to others in his field. There are ways of writing that his circle of readers expects and understands.

But within these limits, we'll encourage you to think about how you can nudge all your writing in the direction of *story technique*.

In short: Maximize "storyteller thinking" wherever possible.

How Does Story Work?

People love story. We're not here to talk about *why*. For the possible reasons, check out Lisa Cron's *Wired for Story*.

But *how* does story work its magic?

There are many techniques to consider.

First, we're not talking about writing novels, short fiction, or drama, or even narrative non-fiction. Story is a given in these genres.

We're talking about bringing non-narrative writing to life with the secrets of good storytelling.

So, what are the story techniques you can easily apply to non-story (essay, report, blog, email, etc.)?

Here are some:

- Make it about people doing things
- Make it concrete

- Cut abstract nouns and modifiers
- Create questions and suspense

Let's see these in action in the passage from Sarah Stillman (the second example provided earlier), comparing it against the more abstract writing in the first passage. Then we'll look at how story technique can work in non-narrative types of writing and speaking.

People Doing Things

"On the evening of May 7, 2008, a twenty-three-year-old woman named Rachel Hoffman got into her silver Volvo sedan, put on calming jam-band music, and headed north to a public park in Tallahassee, Florida" (Stillman, 2012, para.1).

A person taking action:

- What's the sentence about? Rachel Hoffman, a twenty-three-year-old woman.
- What are the main verbs? Getting in a car, putting on music, heading north.

You can picture this easily.

By contrast, here's the first sentence of the first example:

"Some parts of the constraints that deception requires will involve regulatory curbs, but others will require wise discretionary decision making" (Kleinig, 2018, Police Deception, para. 6).

- What's it about? "Some parts of the constraints that deception requires."
- What are the verbs? "Will involve," "will require."

You can't picture this easily.

To be clear: We're not saying abstract writing like this is *wrong*. We're saying it's not story-like. It's always your call as a writer. We want to show you how to turn abstract writing into writing that "sticks" by being story-like. You have to decide when to apply the technique.

Make It Concrete

Use concrete details.

Back to Sarah Stillman's picture of Rachel Hoffman:

"A recent graduate of Florida State, she was dressed to blend into a crowd—bluejeans, green-and-white patterned T-shirt, black Reef flip-flops. On the passenger seat beside her was a handbag that contained thirteen thousand dollars in marked bills" (Stillman, 2012, para. 1).

It's made up of concrete things: "bluejeans," "green-and-white patterned T-shirt," "black Reef flip-flops," "passenger seat," "handbag," "thirteen thousand dollars in marked bills."

From the academic passage:

"Since certain kinds of deceptive practices will involve intrusions into matters ordinarily considered private, deception will need to be scrutinized lest enthusiasm for "information" improperly cross moral boundaries" (Kleinig, 2018, Police Deception, para. 6).

It's made up of abstractions: "deceptive practices," "intrusions into matters ordinarily considered private," "enthusiasm for 'information,'" "moral boundaries."

Cut Abstract Nouns and Modifiers

1. Cut Abstract Nouns

Abstract nouns are concepts, things you can't picture easily: "decision," "information," "capitalism," "judgment," "prominence." They often end in -ion, -ism, -ment, -ence.

If you look at Sarah Stillman's story of Rachel Hoffman, there are *no abstract nouns*:

"On the evening of May 7, 2008, a twenty-three-year-old woman named Rachel Hoffman got into her silver Volvo sedan, put on calming jam-band music, and headed north to a public park in Tallahassee, Florida" (Stillman, 2012, para. 1).

The other passage is built out of abstract nouns. Here are a few:

"Some parts of the constraints that deception requires will involve regulatory curbs, but others will require wise discretionary decision making. Since certain kinds of deceptive practices will involve intrusions into matters ordinarily considered private, deception will need to be scrutinized lest enthusiasm for "information" improperly cross moral boundaries" (Kleinig, 2018, Police Deception, para. 6).

Tip

Abstract nouns sometimes guide you to the "people doing things" in your prose. Think about "deception," "intrusion," and "decision":

- A person deceives
- A person intrudes
- A person decides

Person – Action.

2. Cut Abstract Modifiers

> The difference between "discretionary decision making" and a "green-and-white patterned T-shirt" is that you can picture a green and white T-shirt; you can't picture "discretionary decision making."
>
> Modifiers in Sarah Stillman's piece help you to see what's happening:

"a twenty-three-year-old woman named Rachel Hoffman got into her silver Volvo sedan, put on calming jam-band music, and headed north to a public park in Tallahassee, Florida. A recent graduate of Florida State, she was dressed to blend into a crowd—bluejeans, green-and-white patterned T-shirt, black Reef flip-flops" (Stillman, 2012, para. 1).

> Abstract modifiers don't help you to visualize:

"Some parts of the constraints that deception requires will involve regulatory curbs, but others will require wise discretionary decision making. Since certain kinds of deceptive practices will involve intrusions into matters ordinarily considered private [...] So, for example, the use of phone tapping and bugging devices will ordinarily need the approval of an impartial judge. Other deceptions, such as sting operations, may require supervisory approval, and individual discretionary decisions will need to be defensible in the event that they come up for review. Particularly egregious have been police sting operations in which guilty parties have been manipulated into indefensible deceptive behavior" (Kleinig, 2018, Police Deception, para. 6).

Create Questions and Suspense

The passage from Sarah Stillman makes us want to know more about who Rachel is and what's going on. As soon as we're *shown a situation* (rather than told information), we hunger to know what it's about.

Of course, you don't want to *confuse* people.

But you do want to spark their curiosity.

When you tell people things, they tune out.

When you offer a puzzle, a hint, a question, they want to know more.

An Aside: Inject Story

Sometimes you can tell a small story to open a longer non-narrative piece, or you can insert a story somewhere in your non-narrative.

Watch the first minute and a half of this speech by Michael Pollan, where he tells a really short, descriptive story to explain how he discovered the main question of his talk:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=423#oembed-1

Thinking Like a Storyteller

If you're not writing a story, don't write a story!

Don't even inject a brief story, if it's not appropriate.

Instead, the point is to *think like a storyteller*.

What if we do this with our first example?

Compare the original with a more "story-like" version. We've reinterpreted the first part (everything labelled section 1), and left the second part (section 2) for you as an exercise below.

1 "Some parts of the constraints that deception requires will involve regulatory curbs, but others will require

wise discretionary decision making. Since certain kinds of deceptive practices will involve intrusions into matters ordinarily considered private, deception will need to be scrutinized lest enthusiasm for "information" improperly cross moral boundaries. So, for example, the use of phone tapping and bugging devices will ordinarily need the approval of an impartial judge. 2 Other deceptions, such as sting operations, may require supervisory approval, and individual discretionary decisions will need to be defensible in the event that they come up for review. Particularly egregious have been police sting operations in which guilty parties have been manipulated into indefensible deceptive behavior" (Kleinig, 2018, Police Deception, para. 6).

Police sometimes need to deceive people to enforce the law, for example in a sting operation. We regulate this practice to a degree. We also rely on individual oversight in specific cases. And since investigators sometimes invade others' privacy, like when they listen in on private conversations, such oversight provides an important moral check. That's why a judge must approve a wiretap, or a supervisor must permit a sting.

Here we applied the strategies of "people doing things" and "cutting abstract nouns and modifiers."

ACTOR	ACTION
Police	Sometimes need to deceive people
We	Regulate
We	Rely on
Investigators	Sometimes invade others' privacy
They	Listen in
A judge	Must approve
A supervisor	Must permit

Try It!

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=423#h5p-23

Even when you're not writing a story, storytelling techniques can help you write prose that *sticks* in the reader's mind:

- Make your writing about *people doing things* (Who does what?)
- Fill your writing with concrete details and precise language wherever possible
- Generate puzzles and suspense where you can

You can also inject small stories into non-narrative pieces, for example, by opening an essay with a brief story.

References

See Thinking Like a Story Teller References

PART III
ABSORB

- Prepare, Pause, and Frame
- Skim, Scan, and Use Tools
- Situate
- Break Down a Source
- Summarize
- Paraphrase
- Clarify, Respond, and Infer

15.

PREPARE, PAUSE, AND FRAME

Sarah Duffy

Get ready to focus and respectfully absorb as you prepare to develop a deep understanding of a source. Initiate connection and spark curiosity.

What You'll Learn:

- Why engage actively
- How to prepare
- Why pause judgment
- How to quick check

***Consider this*:** According to Internet Live Stats (2020), a site that tracks internet activity, in an average second:

Think about this: How does this volume of information impact our ability to focus, pay attention, and engage with a source long enough to get a deep understanding of it?

Engage Actively

Engaging actively with a source requires focus and attention. It involves creating space in your mind and your day to dive deeply into a source's content and its message. It requires exploring the message's **nuances**, creating connections to what you already know, and appreciating its context.

Passive and active engagement with a source look different. Active engagement takes time and effort, while passive engagement is faster and less focused. As professionals and students, it will be important to decide when active engagement is required.

How Are Active and Passive Engagement Different?

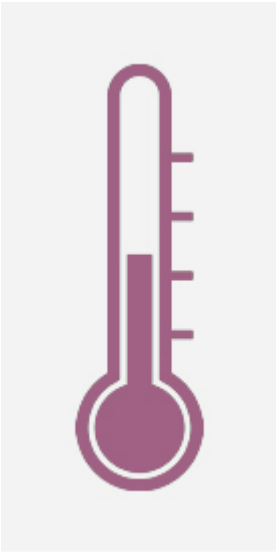
ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT	PASSIVE ENG
Explore the **context** for the source.	Ignore the conte
Examine the purpose.	Engage without
Alter your speed based on the significance and difficulty of the source.	Use the same sp
Preview before engaging.	Don't preview; j
Engage with questions in mind.	Engage without
Stop to monitor your understanding.	Don't stop to th
Annotate if reading; read with a pencil or highlighter in hand to mark important passages and jot down notes.	Don't annotate.
Make time to reflect upon and evaluate the source.	Don't make tim

Prepare

This first step of engaging actively is about knowing yourself as a reader and finding a space that works for you, away from distractions. If possible, this space should also be a comfortable working environment. Physical discomfort can also interfere with your ability to focus.

For example, you might know that if you sit in a common area, you will be distracted by your roommates and their actions, getting side-tracked and involved in their activities rather than focusing on the source. Or having your phone at your fingertips with alerts buzzing and beeping will lure you onto social media and its enticing diversions.

Along with finding a good physical space, you should also give some thought to the time of day, and your fatigue and energy levels. You probably have a window of time in the day that is most productive for you. Perhaps it's first thing in the morning when you're the only one up and your place is quiet. Find that time and use it for tasks that require focus and attention. Put away distractions and set a timer; be prepared to focus for a planned amount of time.



According to an article titled "8 Ways to Improve Your Focus" on fastcompany.com, "If it's too hot or too cool in your work environment, it could impact your focus. A study from Cornell University found that workers are most productive and make fewer errors in an environment that is somewhere between 68 and 77 degrees [20 and 25 degrees Celsius]. Another study from the Helsinki University of Technology in Finland says the magic temperature is 71 degrees [22 degrees Celsius]. If you don't control the thermostat, you can opt to bring a sweater or a fan" (Vozza, 2015, para. 12).

Pause Judgment

In our **polarized** world where people have strong positions on many topics, it can be easy to get caught up in offering opinions. You may navigate frequently through social media, posting and commenting, perhaps positively, perhaps negatively, since, in the digital world, opinions flow quickly and easily. The anonymity and protection of a screen contribute to this.

It is important at times, and especially for professional or academic purposes, to pause. Pause so that you can give quiet and respectful consideration to others' viewpoints. Pause so that you can develop your own con-

sidered, evidence-based response that builds from your understanding, finds common ground, and, when relevant, disagrees **constructively**

In this first stage of absorbing a source, you should practise pausing. Wait to hear and understand. Later, you will respond, analyze, and **critique**.

Quick Check

Ok, now that you're comfortable, ready to focus, and have paused judgment, you should do one more thing before you start to work with a source: a quick check to frame it. This creates context for understanding and further investigation later. Be **inquisitive** about the source. Learn a little about it—who is the author? When was it written? Where was it published? What can we predict and learn from the title? This is a time when you might be reminded of how much you love your smartphone because all these answers are at your fingertips. Don't spend too long on this; a quick internet search should be enough.

QUICK CHECK:

"It's Time for 'They.'" Read it here.

Publication Name and Details

"It's Time for 'They'" was published in *The New York Times*. If you don't know anything about *The New York Times* as a publication, you could take another few moments to learn more. You'll learn that it's an American publication. On first glance, does it seem to be a credible source? Why or why not? These are the sorts of questions you might want to consider quickly, but you will return to explore them further later.

Publication Date

"It's Time for 'They'" was published in 2019.

Prediction from Title

The title of this article seems fairly clear. You might expect to read about the word "they," and given the use of "It's Time for...," you might predict that the author is expressing a strongly held opinion in this article.

Author Details

You can also do a quick internet search on the author, Farhad Manjoo. You'll learn that they have been a columnist at *The New York Times* since 2018. What else? They were born in South Africa and have been a journalist at other publications since 2008.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=408#oembed-1

QUICK CHECK:

"The Danger of a Single Story."
Read it here and watch it here.

Note: "The Danger of a Single Story" is the transcript of a TED Talk. Good news! This means that you can both read and watch this source.

Publication Name and Details

What do you know about TED Talks and the organization behind them? There is a ton of information about this platform readily available on the internet, but perhaps the best spot to learn more is at https://www.ted.com/about/our-organization. Here you'll find that "TED is a nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or less). TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, and today covers almost all topics—from science to business to global issues—in more than 100 languages" (TED, n.d., para. 1).

Publication Date

"The Danger of a Single Story" was published in 2009.

Prediction from Title

What can you predict from this title? By looking at the wording, you may guess that the source is about "single stories" and that the author thinks these are dangerous. You may guess, correctly, that you'll hear or read about why the author has this perspective.

Author Details

Onto the author. Her name is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. She has a website—https://www.chimamanda.com/about-chimamanda—that you can access to learn that she is a novelist who grew up in Nigeria. She has won numerous awards. Her TED Talk is one of the most viewed of all time. (As of June 2020, it had been viewed 22 million times.)

A quick check should take you no more than 3–5 minutes. Don't spend more time on it. The benefit of **framing** a source is that you've begun your journey of engaging with the source, becoming curious about what you will read, and building respectful understanding.

Try It!

Do Your Own Quick Check

Directions:

1. Complete a quick check for "Forgiveness Story" by June Callwood in the table provided. Access "Forgiveness Story" here.
2. Compare your quick check to the model.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=408#h5p-9

In this subtopic, you've learned the first steps of actively engaging with a source including how to

- prepare to engage with a source;
- pause judgment to allow understanding; and
- quick check a source's background.

References

See Prepare, Pause, and Frame References

16.

SKIM, SCAN, AND USE TOOLS

Sarah Duffy

Get an overview of a source. Find specific content. Proceed to engage closely and focus strategically.

What You'll Learn:

- How to quick read: skim and scan
- How to use tools to engage closely

Recall what you know: Skimming, scanning, and reading closely are all strategies for engaging with a source. How are they different? Recall what you already know about these strategies by placing the descriptors below in the correct column.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=409#h5p-71

Think about this: Before beginning to engage actively with a source, set a goal. What are you trying to achieve? How much time will you spend? What are the outcomes you are looking for? With this purpose in mind, you can choose how to interact with the source.

Quick Read: Skim and Scan

Skim First

When you skim a source, you go through it quickly so that you begin to grasp its focus, style, and content. The key word here is "quickly." Remember that a full understanding will come later.

You'll probably find that you're adept at looking at content this way; it's often how we approach the endless stream of media feeds on our devices.

You will engage with countless sources as part of your academic, personal, and professional experience. Your approach to skimming should vary by the type of source, its complexity, its length, and your reason for skimming. Are you skimming before doing a more detailed review of the source? Are you skimming so that you can decide if the source should be used for another purpose—e.g., as support for an argumentative essay you are writing? Are you using skimming to remind yourself of the key parts of a source you read a week ago?

The key is this: Don't get bogged down when skimming. Focus on only the main points, headings, subheadings, and bolded or highlighted terms. It can be helpful to set a timer to limit how long you spend on this.

Approach to Skimming

Here are three examples of how the time and approach may vary by type of source:

TYPE OF SOURCE	TIME FOR SKIMMING (approximate)
Popular: Web Article or Web Page	1–2 minutes
Scholarly: Journal Article	3–4 minutes
Academic: Textbook Chapter	5–10 minutes

Regardless of the source type, the goal of skimming is consistent: You are aiming for a general overview. You should also get a sense of how the source is organized, what the focus is, and keywords or concepts. You may also begin to identify areas that seem most challenging to you as a reader.

Scan with a Purpose

Scanning is also a quick-reading strategy, but when you scan, you're on a mission. Scanning is not about understanding or absorbing a source as a whole. You are looking for specific content and only that content. You go through the source quickly until you find it, using your time efficiently to achieve your purpose. You could use scanning to

- look up definitions;
- find details such as a client name, technical term, a step in a procedure or experiment;
- search for content to use in a quotation;
- find the answer to a question; or
- locate statistics or data.

Approach to Scanning

1. Identify the content you are looking for.
2. Scan quickly to find it within the source.
3. Stop when you find it.
4. Pay close attention to the desired content and the details around it, extracting the required information.
5. Move on.

Anatomy and Physiology is an OpenStax book published in 2013. You can access it here.

Approach to Scanning

APPROACH TO SCANNING	EXAMPLE
1. Identify the content you are looking for.	You have to find the definition of "serous membrane," an anatomical term.
2. Skim quickly to find it within the source.	You are looking through chapter 1 of Anatomy and Physiology, an open, digital textbook.
3. Stop when you find it.	You find the definition in this part of the source: 1.6. Anatomical Terminology, so you stop here.
4. Pay close attention to the desired content and the details around it, extracting the required information.	You find the definition is this: "A serous membrane (also referred to as a serosa) is one of the thin membranes that cover the walls and organs in the thoracic and abdominopelvic cavities" (OpenStax, 2013, "Anatomical Terminology," para. 13). You capture the definition and citation details.
5. Move on.	You move on to scan for another definition and, in doing so, repeat this process.

Engage Actively: Use Tools

To absorb a source, you will need to engage closely with it. This requires slow, focused attention on the whole source, but also on its parts. In this section, we will focus on tools that you can use to help you engage closely before moving on to work with the source in other ways (*see* Situate; Break Down a Source; Summarize; Para-

phrase; Clarify, Respond, and Infer). There are numerous proven approaches and tools that can help you immerse your attention and focus on a source.

Annotate

One tool that can help with engaging actively is annotation.

When you annotate, you add comments, notes, and symbols. You might highlight or underline. You work right on the source, not on a separate screen or piece of paper. This means that the annotations become part of the source; this is the power of annotation.

Annotating has a number of benefits:

- It helps you sustain focus and attention on the source.
- It assists you in making personal connections with the source.
- It reminds you to look further if you encounter content, terms, or ideas in the source that you find challenging or are new to you (e.g. look up the definition of a new word).
- It creates a personalized record of your interaction with a source that you can refer back to at a later date.
- With digital annotation tools, you can collaborate and connect with others as you annotate.

Annotating should be personal in nature; over time, you will develop your own approach to annotating that makes sense. Perhaps you will use colour coding or develop a set of symbols, or a combination of both.

Research on Reading Strategies

Did you know? The effectiveness of reading strategies is supported by research.

As discussed in a study published in *Educational Technology & Society*, "Many studies have found reading strategies useful when implemented before, during or after reading (e.g., Brown, 2002; Ediger, 2005; Fagan, 2003; McGlinchey & Hixson, 2004; Millis & King, 2001; Sorrell, 1996). For example, reading strategies include rereading, scanning, summarizing, keywords, context clues, question-answer relationships, inferring, thinking aloud, activating prior knowledge, setting a purpose, and drawing conclusions" (Hsieh & Dwyer, 2009, p. 36).

A 2018 study published by *TESL Canada Journal* also discusses the importance of reading strategies: "Stud-

ies have shown that reading improves a reader's vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension, and that using strategies when reading leads to improved reading comprehension (Anderson, 1991; Grabe & Stoller, 2011; Hudson, 2007; Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2008)" (Khatari, 2018, p. 80).

Further, a 2008 study published in *Issues in Educational Research* comments on the role of reading strategies in cognitive processing: "Successful comprehension does not occur automatically. Rather, successful comprehension depends on directed cognitive effort, referred to as metacognitive processing, which consists of knowledge about and regulation of cognitive processing. During reading, metacognitive processing is expressed through strategies, which are 'procedural, purposeful, effortful, willful, essential, and facilitative in nature' and 'the reader must purposefully or intentionally or willfully invoke strategies' (Alexander & Jetton, 2000, p. 295), and does so to regulate and enhance learning from text" (Cubukcu, 2008, p. 3).

Here are two examples of annotation systems that could work for you:

AREA OF SOURCE	**COLOUR CODING**	**LABELS AND SYMBOLS**
Main idea/thesis	Highlight in yellow	Underline
New word, important term	Highlight in blue	Circle
Key supporting point, statistic, other evidence	Highlight in green	Emphasize with an exclamation mark
Challenging or confusing content to be revisited or explored further	Highlight in red	Place a star beside/around content
Questions, responses, or commentary you have as you engage with the source	Write beside area of source that sparked the question, response, or commentary; write in the margin or around the content; use physical or digital sticky notes	

Many sources today are digital. Digital media can be annotated with annotation apps, and, subsequently, the annotation can be saved, printed, and/or shared. Digital annotation can be public and collaborative, allowing for conversations on the text. Comments can be added through voice recordings in some applications. Many digital annotation tools can be used in different ways. Here is a beginning list:

Kami

https://www.kamiapp.com

PowerNotes

http://powernotes.com/

Hypothes.i

https://hypothes.is/

Perusall

https://app.perusall.com/

VoiceThread

http://voicethread.com/

VideoAnt

https://ant.umn.edu/

(Note: Authors are not endorsed by these companies, and students should use at their own risk.)

More details on these digital tools can be found here:

- "Annotating Text, Images, and Videos Online" by Stanford University
- "Top Tech for Digital Annotation" by Common Sense Education

Reverse Outlines

You've likely used outlines to select, develop, and organize your ideas as part of the writing process. A reverse outline, as its name suggests, works in reverse. You take a published source and produce an outline from it. This can also be an effective first step in summarizing a source.

When creating a reverse outline, it can be helpful to use a table with two columns: one for the location infor-

mation (e.g. paragraph number), and the other for the summary of that part of the source. When summarizing a paragraph, try to keep it to one to two sentences in length.

"You've Got to Find What You Love" by Steve Jobs is a 2005 commencement speech made at Stanford University. Read it here, watch it here, and find more about the author here.

Here is an example of a reverse outline of the first segment of "You've Got to Find What You Love" by Steve Jobs; it focuses on paragraphs 1 to 9 of the speech.

LOCATION	SUMMARY
para. 1	honoured to give the speech, will focus on three stories
para. 2	first story: connecting the dots
para. 3	dropped out of college after six months
para. 4	adopted at birth; his birth mother ensured that adoptive parents would send him to college
para. 5–6	went to college but dropped out after six months; was not engaged in his program, started auditing other classes
para. 7	one class he audited, calligraphy, had an impact; he learned about typography
para. 8	years later, used knowledge of typography when designing the Mac; this became the norm for personal computers and would not have happened if he had stayed in original college program
para. 9	connecting the dots between life events can only be done with hindsight, have to trust that there is a purpose to choices

In this example, you can see that each paragraph of Jobs's commencement speech is reduced to a one-sentence summary. When you're developing a reverse outline, you consider the main point of each paragraph so that you can condense it. In this way, the development of a reverse outline forces you to pay attention to each part of a source. In doing so, you'll develop a greater understanding of the source as a whole. You'll likely find that your respect and appreciation of the author's viewpoint develops too. This does not mean, necessarily, that you will agree with it. You may find, too, that you have to pause on a section of a source that you find confusing. You'll spend longer here, ensuring that you understand that section fully.

Other Tools

There are many additional tools that can help you actively engage with a source.

> **Graphic Organizers:** Graphic organizers area visual representation of a concept, an idea, or information. They are used for various purposes and can be as simple as a table or as elaborate as a mind map with many connections. They are particularly effective for visual learners.

Journals: Like annotations, journals can be physical or digital. They are useful for developing a permanent archive of ideas, connections, and questions related to sources. They can also be used to capture quotations and specific content such as data or statistics from sources that can be used in your writing. Examples of specific types of journals are provided in the book *Reading Reconsidered*; the authors, Lemov, Driggs and Woolway (2016), recommend the following journals: double-entry quotation journals, common-place journals, essential question trackers, hypothesis trackers, and theme or motif trackers (pp. 334–335).

Lemov, D., Driggs, C., & Woolway, E. (2016). *Reading reconsidered: A practical guide to rigorous literacy instruction.* Jossey-Bass & Pfeiffer Imprints, Wiley.

Text-to-Talk: If you are an auditory learner—someone who learns well by listening—your understanding will increase if you listen to a source. This can be used to accompany your reading. You can try out a free, easy-to-use, and versatile text-to-talk online tool called NaturalReader here.

SQ3R: This is a reading strategy that prescribes five steps in the reading process: 1) survey (skim the source); 2) question (identify questions); 3) read (go through the source thoroughly); 4) recite/recall (assess your ability to recite or recall what you have learned); and 5) review (refresh and ensure understanding through review at a later date) (Lumen, n.d., Chapter 12, para. 23–25).

Active Reading Documents: This reading strategy involves capturing your understanding of a source and making logical connections between the source and other sources. This can work well for program-related content and assigned textbook readings. Like SQ3R, there are five tasks: 1) create visual representations of information; 2) depict personal understanding with short explanations and/or visual representations; 3) identify and explain logical connections within the reading; 4) identify and explain logical connections to other chapters or units; and 5) identify and explain logical connections to related academic content and to personal, social, or professional aspects of life (Dubas & Toledo, 2015, p. 29).

Self-Explanation Reading Training: Self-Explanation Reading Training (SERT) is "designed to improve students' ability to generate effective inferences while reading complex text. Self-explanation refers to the process of explaining aloud the meaning of written text to oneself" (McNamara, 2017, p. 480). As the name suggests, when using SERT, you explain a source's content to yourself, checking on your own understanding as you go. This involves a combination of comprehension monitoring, paraphrasing, elaboration, and using logic, predicting, and inferring (McNamara, 2017, p. 481).

Try It!

Directions:

1. Practise creating a reverse outline of section 2 (paras. 10–15) of "You've Got to Find What You Love" by Steve Jobs. Use the outline template below.

2. Compare your reverse outline with the model.

"You've Got to Find What You Love" by Steve Jobs is a 2005 commencement speech made at Stanford University. Read it here, watch it here, and find more about the author here.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=409#h5p-10

In this subtopic, you have covered how to

- get a general understanding of a source by skimming;
- find specific content in a source by scanning; and
- use annotation, reverse outlining, and various other tools to engage closely.

Freedman, L. (n.d.). *Skimming and scanning*. University of Toronto. https://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/researching/skim-and-scan/

GradProSkills. (2017, September 21). Reading strategies: Skimming vs close reading [Blog post]. *Concordia University*. https://www.concordia.ca/cunews/offices/vprgs/gradproskills/blogs/2017/09/21/reading-strategies-skimming-vs-close-reading.html

How to annotate. (n.d.). English Composition 1. Lumen Learning. https://courses.lumenlearning.com/engcomp1-wmopen/chapter/text-how-to-annotate/

Skimming and scanning. (n.d.). Butte University. http://www.butte.edu/departments/cas/tipsheets/readingstrategies/skimming_scanning.html

17.

SITUATE

Sarah Duffy

Explore the situation surrounding a source. Gain further insight by identifying its subject, genre, audience, purpose, and setting.

What You'll Learn:

- Why situate a source
- How to situate a source

Consider this: Society changes over time. These changes make the views and laws of earlier generations seem outdated, only relevant in the context of their time and place in history.

Review the top statements below. Then, drag-and-drop each specific, outdated societal idea above its more current, updated version on the bottom.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=410#h5p-72

Think about this: How does societal context impact an author's views, opinions, and ways of expressing them? How important is it, when absorbing a source, to understand this context?

Why Situate

If you've already prepared and done a quick check (*see* Prepare, Pause, and Frame), you have a sense of the author's background and know a little about when and where the source was published. This is an important first step. Now you're ready to dig deeper into the source.

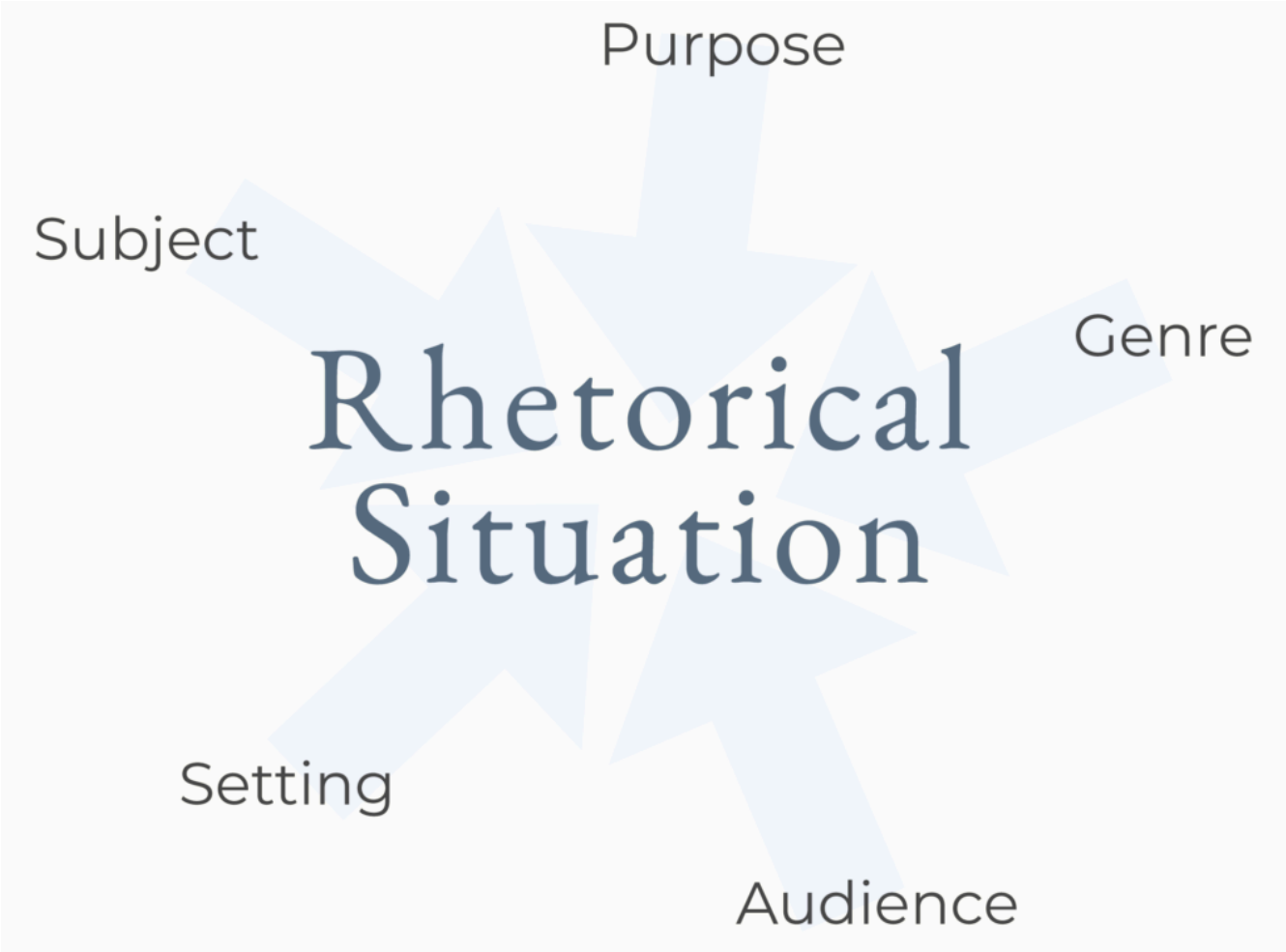
You should start by situating it, or placing it in a rhetorical context.

For example, imagine you are a student in 2040, reading an article written in 2020. To understand this article further, it would help to know more about the key contexts of the time. You'd find that the world in 2020 was in the midst of a global pandemic. This would help you understand the author's choices and mindset at the time of writing the piece. It would also give insight into the outlook and attitude of its intended audience.

Or, perhaps, you're reading a newspaper article in which an author expresses an opinion about fear of missing out (FOMO). The article was written in 2011. When you research further, you learn that iPhones were introduced in 2007, and social media platforms became more popular during the years after this. While the impact of social media is well known today, you find that the concerns of the author are insightful given its date of publication. You also gain a greater understanding of the observations and experiences shared by the author.

How to Situate

To situate a source, you should examine five elements: subject, genre, audience, purpose, and setting. By doing this, you consider why the source exists and determine how contextual factors led to its development and content.



Three sources are used as examples for "Rhetorical Context Defined."

"Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Postsecondary Students" is a report from Statistics Canada published in May 2020. It is based on data collected from and about Canada and/or Canadians. You can find out more about Statistics Canada here.

"Pandemics Aren't Wars" was published by *Vox* in April 2020 and was written by Alissa Wilkinson. *Vox* is a free online American publication that explains the news. You can find out more about the publication here.

"Most Common Panic-Buying Purchases During Coronavirus" was published by *The Onion* in May 2020. *The Onion* is an American satirical online publication that focuses on global and local news topics. You can learn more about the publication here.

RHETORICAL	RHETORICAL CONTEXT DEFINED	
Subject	What is the topic of the source?	The subject should be captured in a specific short phrase. For example, in the case of the three sources listed above, the subjects would be "Impacts of COVID-19" (Statistics Canada report), "COVID-19 Compared to War" (Vox article by Alissa Wilkinson), or "COVID-19 and Purchasing Behaviour" (The Onion article).
Genre	What is the type of source?	There are many categories for both fiction and non-fiction. Non-fiction sources, the type most relevant to college students, include reports, essays, textbooks, reference books, biographies, and personal narratives.
Purpose	What was the author's purpose in creating the source?	Generally, the purpose is described in one of three ways: to inform (e.g. the Statistics Canada report "Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Postsecondary Students"), to persuade (e.g. the opinion piece on Vox "Pandemics Aren't Wars"), or to entertain (e.g. the satirical article published by The Onion "Most Common Panic-Buying Purchases During Coronavirus").
Audience	Who are the intended readers or viewers of the source?	To determine the intended audience, you should look at: 1) the publication and its intended audience; and 2) the language used by the author—is it specialized (e.g. jargon for a specific professional audience), complex, formal, or informal?
Setting	What was happening—culturally, politically, socially—that may have influenced the author?	This requires a scan of factors that may have motivated the author. In all the above examples, the authors were influenced by the global COVID-19 pandemic and its extensive impact on day-to-day life.

How Does Audience Influence Language?

As a communicator, you make choices about language all the time, and many of these choices depend on your audience.

***Imagine this*:** You will miss class due to a doctor's appointment and are concerned about getting caught up on the materials.

You text your friend this message:

> hey im not going to be in class due to drs appt can you send pic of notes ttul

You email your professor this message:

> Dear Prof. Gupta, Unfortunately, due to a medical appointment, I will have to miss your class today. If possible, could you post your notes so that I can review them tonight? Thank you, Sophie

***Think about this*:** Although the purpose of these messages is similar—to advise someone that you are missing class and to make a request about class notes—the language choices are quite different. The personal message to a friend is written in informal language with short forms of words and no punctuation. The message to a professor is more formal, using correct sentence form.

All authors make intentional language choices when they consider their audience and purpose.

In the following example, we will explore the rhetorical context of a source.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=410#oembed-1

Watch this: **"The Amazon Belongs to Humanity—Let's Protect It Together"**

Now, learn more about this source in two steps:

Step 1: Do a quick check—find the author(s), publication, and publication date.

The quick check should be really fast. In less than a minute, you can find these details:

Authors – Tashka and Laura Yawanawá. Learn more here

Publication –Ted.com. Learn more here

Publication Date – September 2019

Step 2: Investigate the rhetorical situation.

When you have watched the video and done a little more searching, you'll be able to identify its rhetorical situation:

Subject – protection of the Amazon

Genre – non-fiction, speech

Audience – viewers of TED Talks, general public since language is straightforward with no technical terms or jargon

Purpose – to persuade viewers that Indigenous people need to be heard; they have the answers to protecting the Amazon

Setting –

• "Indigenous peoples inhabit a large portion of the Amazon rainforest and their traditional and cultural beliefs have existed for centuries" (Lutz, n.d., para. 1)—read here

• in Brazil, 160 societies live within the Amazon (Lutz, n.d., para. 2)

one of the presenters, Tashka Yawanawá, is the chief of the Yawanawá people: "he leads 900 people stewarding 400,000 acres of Amazon rainforest in Brazil" (Skoll, n.d., para. 1)

• the threat to the Brazilian Amazon rainforest increased in January 2019 when Bolsonaro, Brazil's president, "cut funds for the enforcement of Brazil's strict environmental laws, leading Amazon deforestation to spike" (EcoWatch, 2020, para. 14)

• the video was published at a time of significant increase in forest fires in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest; "There were … 19,925 fire outbreaks in September [2019] in the Brazilian part of the rainforest … the numbers soared by 41% compared to the same period in 2018" (Ortiz, 2019, para. 5)

When you are familiar with a source's rhetorical context, you can situate it within the bigger picture, and are able to appreciate the source, its perspective, and its role, leading to greater understanding. You will later be able to analyze and critique it.

Try It!

Directions:

1. Practise identifying rhetorical context for "It's Time for 'They'" and "You've Got to Find What You Love" by placing the following descriptors in the correct spot in the Rhetorical Context Chart.

2. Compare your rhetorical context to the model.

"It's Time for 'They'" by Farhad Manjoo is a 2019 article from *The New York Times*. Read it here, find more about the author here, and learn about *The New York Times* here.

"You've Got to Find What You Love" by Steve Jobs is a 2005 commencement speech made at Stanford University. Read it here, watch it here, and find more about the author here.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=410#h5p-74

In this subtopic, you've learned

- why it is important to explore the rhetorical context of a source;
- what should be considered as part of a source's context; and

- how to situate a source.

References

See Situate References

18.

BREAK DOWN A SOURCE

Sarah Duffy

Break down a source to show its meaning is clear to you. Develop a starting point for interpretation, evaluation, and critique.

What You'll Learn:

- Why break down a source
- What are arguments and personal narratives
- How to break down arguments
- How to break down personal narratives

Pandemic Lessons: An Effective Argument?

Read this: In a May 2020 cbc.ca article, Canadian Mark Sakamoto expresses this view on COVID-19: "This pandemic has highlighted how our globalized and deeply interconnected world can be so vulnerable to a virus. How quickly and widely it can spread—to devastating effect. However, it has also shown us that our knowledge and expertise and hope can be shared just as quickly" (para. 3–4).

Consider this: There is hope to this perspective. Do you share this view? Does it relate to your experiences during the pandemic? What would you want to know before evaluating this argument further? How could you ensure that you assess the argument fairly and respectfully?

Read the full piece here. Read more about the author here.

Why Break Down a Source

When you break down a source, you gain a clearer picture of how it is constructed. The benefits include

- furthering your understanding;
- identifying its parts and its structure; and
- laying the foundation, when applicable, for your development of a similar source, or for evaluation, interpretation, and critique.

For example, perhaps you must write a formal technical report as the culminating task for a capstone course in your program. Your professor provides you with a sample report from a previous student to use as a model. Your professor asks you to take the report apart, noticing its focus, support, organization, and style of writing. In doing this, you begin to understand how the report is constructed and think about how you will apply this understanding to write your formal report.

Or you are presenting an overview and interpretation of a recently released journal article in your field. You

need to break down the article into its main idea and supporting points before you can interpret it. As you work on this, you develop a deeper understanding of the source's position, and subsequently, you can begin to evaluate the strength and credibility of its support.

Arguments and Personal Narratives

(Content in this section is used with permission from Unit 6 of Centennial College 170 Online, Winter 2020.)

We will examine two types of sources further since they are often used in college-level communication courses: arguments and personal narratives. Both offer a perspective on an issue, question, or problem. Both have a message to share and provide support for that message.

However, they are different in several ways.

Arguments typically address a current issue and are persuasive—that is, the author has an opinion on a subject and intends to persuade the audience of their point of view. They do this by using various reasons and forms of evidence to influence the audience and substantiate their main idea or thesis. Their thesis is often directly stated.

Personal narratives address a problem or question and use first-person fact-based experiences, anecdotes, and life details to support the author's perspective. Their main message is often implied and has to be determined by the audience after careful consideration.

ARGUMENT	NARRATIVE
Addresses an issue	Addresses a problem or question
Includes a thesis (often explicitly stated)	Includes a main idea (often implied)
Provides reasons to support the thesis	Uses critical events (plot) from a story to emphasize, illustrate, and/or reinforce the main idea
Uses various types of evidence to support the thesis	Uses other narrative strategies and elements

How to: Break Down an Argument

(Content in this section is used with permission from Unit 6 of Centennial College 170 Online, Winter 2020.}

Most arguments contain some mixture of the following types of strategy, known as rhetorical appeals (Centennial College, n.d., para. 5):

> **Logical:** The writer persuades through facts and reasoning designed to seem rational and reasonable.

Emotional: The writer persuades through imagery, words, and stories designed to make the reader feel an emotion—joy, horror, sadness, empathy, etc.

Ethical: The writer persuades through markers of credibility (writing that is fair-minded, accurate, and self-aware; but this may also refer to elements not directly in the text, such as the writer's background, experience, education, and reputation).

When you take an argument apart, you will look for its issue, thesis, reasons, and evidence.

Issue

An issue is the question or controversy addressed by the author.

Thesis

The thesis is the author's perspective or point of view about the issue.

Reasons/Evidence

- Evidence is provided by the author to support the thesis.
- It helps to explain and provide reasons for the author's position.
- Evidence can take various forms including anecdotes, personal observations or experiences, expert knowledge, statistics, historical details, scenarios, common knowledge, and analogies.

More on Evidence

TYPES OF EVIDENCE	EXAMPLES	WHAT YOU'LL SEE
Stories or accounts based on the author's personal experience	Stories or accounts based on the author's personal experience	"I," "my," and other uses of the singular first-person voice
Expert (or disciplinary) knowledge	Theories, concepts, or research produced by scholars, journalists, scientists, or other writers	Full name of the expert, title of work by expert, university or college affiliation, title (i.e. PhD or Dr.), reference to study/results, such as "recent studies show. . ."
Statistics	Research in the form of data	Historical details
Historical details	Specific events that take place in the recent or distant past	Dates, places, notable historical figures/events ("9/11," "WWII," "Gulf War," etc.)
Scenarios	Hypothetical situations	Asked to imagine a possible situation that could happen
Common knowledge	Information that is shared and widely known by the general public; may be extended to include commonly shared experiences and observations	Might use "we," "our," and other uses of the plural first-person voice
Analogies	Comparisons	Similarities found between two subjects, may use words or phrases such as "like," "compared to," "similar to"

We'll practise breaking down an argument by looking further at "It's Time for 'They'" by Farhad Manjoo.

"It's Time for 'They'" by Farhad Manjoo is a 2019 article from *The New York Times*. Read it here, find more about the author here, and learn about *The New York Times* here.

Break Down an Argument: "It's Time for 'They'" by Farhad Manjoo	
Issue Tip: Express as a question.	Should the plural pronoun 'they' be used in place of the singular gendered pronouns 'he' and 'she' in common usage?
Thesis Tip: Express as an answer to the question.	In 2020, we should make the shift to 'they,' avoiding gender assumptions in our choice of pronouns (see paragraphs 5, 6, and 18)
Reasons & Evidence	Few linguistic advantages to gendered pronouns he/she (para. 3) • personal observation (para. 3) "They" is ubiquitous, inclusive, neutral, and already widely used (para. 7) • expert opinion (paras. 8–10) "They" is used in mainstream media by marketers and companies • personal observation (para. 11) "They" does not default to the limitations of gender binary • personal observation (paras. 13–16)

When you break down Manjoo's argument in this way, it is simplified. You can use this simplified version to verify your understanding of the argument with a professor, colleague, or friend. In addition, you may want to find other opinions that respond to the same issue. You can use the issue to develop a research question and look for other relevant sources.

Subsequently, you can assess how well Manjoo supports the thesis with reasons and evidence. Are they sufficient to you as a reader? Would you prefer to see less personal experience and more expert opinion? Perhaps, if you prefer logical appeals—numbers, research studies, expert opinions—you would feel more persuaded if Manjoo increased the use of these forms of evidence.

How to: Break Down a Personal Narrative

(Content in this section is used with permission from Unit 6 of Centennial College 170 Online, Winter 2020.)

Personal narratives are an essay about a particular moment, event, problem, or question that occurs in the author's life. They are usually brief and tightly focused. They use the same narrative techniques as fictional stories—plot, character, setting, figurative language—but they are true and autobiographical.

When you break down a personal narrative, you should look for its problem, main message, and narrative strategies/elements.

Problems or Questions

The writer of a personal narrative usually seeks to understand or unravel some specific problem or question in their life.

Main Message

Narrative writers typically avoid stating their main meaning directly. Readers must infer the lesson of the narrative, and it's possible for different readers to arrive at different—but related—interpretations. As a reader, questions to ask may include "What does the writer most want me to understand?" or "What is the writer's central insight?"

Elements

Narratives are built out of narrative elements, using key events in the personal story to support the main message. Narrative elements include character, plot, setting, theme, and symbolic or figurative language.

We'll practise breaking down a personal narrative by looking further at "The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=411#oembed-1

"The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a 2009 TED Talk. Its transcript is now an essay in "88 Essays," an open resource. Read it here, watch it here, find more about the author here, and learn about TED Talks here.

Break Down a Personal Narrative: "The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie	
Problem/Question Tip: Can be expressed as a question or a statement.	Why should people avoid simplifying the narratives of others' lives?
Main Message Tip: Express as a statement, related to the problem/question.	When viewing others, we should avoid the tendency to simplify someone's life into a "typical" narrative because it will be incomplete; we will overlook nuances and be influenced by stereotype, bias
Narrative Elements (examples only) Tip: Address various elements.	EVENTS/PLOT (para. 1-20): • grew up in Nigeria influenced by British and American literature • recalls a limited view of a neighborhood boy • attends university in America and is viewed by the single story of Africa: "a single story of catastrophe" • visits Mexico and had her own limited view of Mexicans/the country SETTING: Geographical – Nigeria, America, Mexico; Time – 1970s to 2000s; CHARACTERS: parents, roommates, other Nigerians; THEMES: limitations of stereotypes

When you break down Adichie's narrative, you get a well-defined picture of it. You clearly identify its main message and how Adichie supports it. Again, it gives you an opportunity to verify your understanding before moving on to evaluate and interpret it. You can also search for other sources that relate to it, that address the same problem. This allows you to begin to evaluate Adichie's ideas. Are her ideas relevant? Are they shared by others? Are they verifiable? Can you find other authors who support or, perhaps, contradict Adichie's perspective on this problem?

Try It!

Directions:

A. Break Down an Argument

1. Watch "Fighting Islamophobia with Education" by Shafique Virani.
2. Break down Virani's argument by identifying the issue, thesis, and reasons/evidence.
3. Check your work with your instructor or a peer.

"Fighting Islamophobia with Education" is a CBCvideo by Shafique Virani, published in 2017. Watch the video here, learn more about the author here, and learn more about CBC here.

B. Break Down a Narrative

1. Read "Why Would My Father Not Want to Know Me" by Tara Ellison.
2. Break down Ellison's personal narrative by identifying the problem, main message, and narrative elements.
3. Check your work with your instructor or a peer.

"Why Would My Father Not Want to Know Me" was published in *The New York Times* "Modern Love" section in June 2020 and is by Tara Ellison. Read the personal narrative here, learn more about the author here, and learn more about *The New York Times'* "Modern Love" section here.

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=411#h5p-11

In this subtopic, you've learned an important step in absorbing a source. This includes

- defining arguments and personal narratives;
- breaking down arguments into issue, thesis, and reasons/evidence; and
- breaking down personal narratives into problems, main message, and narrative elements or strategies.

References

See Break Down a Source References

19.

SUMMARIZE

Sarah Duffy

Create shortened versions of a source in a respectful, neutral, and fair way that reflect a deep understanding.

What You'll Learn:

- Why summarize
- How to summarize
- How to give attribution
- How to stay neutral

Recall what you know: What do you already know about summarizing? Take this quick true or false test to find out.

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Think about this: Effective summarizing reflects your understanding of a source. Summarizing is simple, but not easy! This is where the time you spend on getting to know a source (*see* Prepare, Pause, and Frame; Skim, Scan, and Use Tools; Situate; Break Down a Source) will pay off. How effective are your summarizing skills? What can you do to improve them? How can you ensure your summaries have academic integrity?

Why Summarize

When you summarize, you condense and restate the essential meaning of a source. You use your own words but respect the message of the original without adding, interpreting, or assessing anything.

This is key: Your judgment and critical evaluation are on hold, for now.

Think about the areas of your life in which summarizing plays an important role. In an academic setting, some examples of summarizing include

- integrating content from a source into your work to add credibility to yourself as an author and/or to build an argument;
- showing your group members or professors that you grasp their ideas;
- making notes while studying, as you work independently or collaboratively on ensuring that you comprehend course material; and
- capturing findings from a recent journal article.

Beyond this, in academic, professional, or personal contexts, you can use summarizing in active listening, a valuable skill. You can also use it to share ideas, find common ground, identify and correct misunderstandings, and de-escalate conflict.

Imagine This: Summarizing Scenarios

Scenario	How Summarizing Helps
Due to a medical appointment, your group member misses an important three-hour class. This is a problem since you are working on an assignment together that requires an understanding of that class content. Given your busy schedules, you only have one night to work on the assignment, so it's essential that your group member catches up quickly.	You summarize the class content for your group member, highlighting the main points. You're able to do this in 30 minutes because you omit activities and the minor points made by the professor. Now, you can move on to complete the assignment effectively.
You and a colleague do not see eye to eye on how to approach a project for an important client. You have tried to discuss it numerous times, but it ends up with each of you sticking firmly to your plan. You have to figure this out soon. The client meeting is now just a couple of days away.	You summarize your colleague's suggested plan for the project, ensuring to avoid your opinion and stay neutral. You then compare this to your approach. By doing so, you are able to find common ground, remove the conflict from the situation, and move forward with a shared approach.
You are a registered early childhood educator and supervisor at a local nursery school. Your staff have identified a child who may require early intervention services, and you need to meet with the parents to share these concerns.	You gather the observations of your staff and summarize them when meeting with the parents. The parents provide their input, and then you neutrally and respectfully summarize what you've heard from them. You work collaboratively with them to find common ground on the best steps forward to support their child.

How to Summarize

You should only summarize after you have engaged actively with an author's message to ensure that you have an accurate understanding of it. (*See* Prepare, Pause, and Frame; Skim, Scan, and Use Tools; Situate; and Break Down a Source.)

Summarizing involves

- grasping the core meaning;
- distinguishing between the most and least important ideas;
- explaining the main ideas in your own words accurately, respecting the author's perspective; and
- omitting your evaluation or opinion.

In academic writing, you may need to write a brief summary of a source, and in other cases, you will write an extended summary.

Brief Summary	**AND/ OR**	**Extended Summary**
Source title, publication details, author's name, and main idea only		Source title, publication details, author's name, and main idea
1–2 sentences in length		Main points in sequential order
		Paragraph form with transitions between points to ensure coherence
		Length varies (depending on the length of the original source, but it should be much shorter than the original)

Tips for summarizing in academic writing include the following:

- write in the present tense;
- acknowledge the source's title, publication date, and author in the opening of the summary;
- capture the author's main idea in the opening of the summary, and then summarize the key points in sequential order after that;
- use various verbs to give attribution to the author throughout the summary (*see more* in How to Give Attribution and Stay Neutral);
- avoid using exact words from the original source unless necessary (avoid looking at the source when summarizing to ensure that your wording is unique);
- be sure to quote (i.e. include content in quotation marks) if it is necessary to use exact words from the source; and

- cite appropriately (see a relevant style guide for various options).

BRIEF SUMMARY

In "It's Time for 'They'" published in *The New York Times* in 2019, author Farhad Manjoo argues that the pronoun 'they' should be uniformly used in place of gendered pronouns such as 'he' and 'she.'

"It's Time for 'They'" by Farhad Manjoo is a 2019 article from *The New York Times*. Read it here, find more about the author here, and learn about *The New York Times* here.

EXTENDED SUMMARY

In "It's Time for 'They,'" published in *The New York Times* in 2019, Farhad Manjoo argues that the pronoun 'they' should be uniformly used in place of gendered pronouns such as 'he' and 'she.' Manjoo begins by indicating that people use 'he' and 'him' when referring to them, and Manjoo accepts this. However, Manjoo comments on issues with assuming gender and asserts that gendered pronouns have limited advantages. Manjoo is confused by the need of some institutions to continue to use gendered pronouns and points out the advantages of uniform use of 'they.' Manjoo believes it is inclusive and ubiquitous; this is supported by a study. Manjoo observes that many companies use 'they' in marketing and states that only grammarians are recommending against it. Manjoo believes society should avoid gender norms, and that doing so in language is a start. Manjoo concludes with a request that others use the pronoun 'they' for both Manjoo and themselves.

This example illustrates how the extended summary can begin with the one-sentence brief summary, which captures the article's thesis, and then move on to capture the main supporting points provided in the article in sequential order. The extended summary uses citations narratively in each sentence (e.g. "Manjoo comments"; "Manjoo believes"). This is one acceptable way to use citations in a summary according to APA 7 (Walden University, 2020, para. 11). After reading the extended summary, the audience should have a good grasp of Manjoo's argument.

How to Give Attribution

When you summarize, you must clearly indicate that the ideas you are condensing are not your own; they belong to someone else. This is where author attribution plays a role. Giving author attribution is a key part of ensuring that your summaries have academic integrity.

You are summarizing the main point of "You've Got to Find What You Love" by Steve Jobs. You write this:

It's essential to learn lessons from life experience.

The problem with this is your audience will not know if this is your idea or Steve Jobs's idea. However, you can fix this by attributing the idea to Jobs. Here is one way you could do this:

> *Jobs illustrates that it's essential to learn lessons from life experience.*

"You've Got to Find What You Love" by Steve Jobs is a 2005 commencement address at Stanford University. Read it here, watch it here, and find more about the author here.

Notice that the summary of the content is the same (highlighted text), but now this idea is attributed to its author—Steve Jobs—through the use of the lead, "Jobs illustrates that."

You are a social services worker and have been tasked with summarizing the findings from the report "Ending Mandatory Minimums for Drug Offences." You might write this:

> *Compulsory minimum jail time for drug-related and non-violent offences should be eliminated, giving judges more discretion in sentencing decisions.*

There is no attribution for the source of this idea; this means that the reader cannot look up the report to learn more or validate the summary. This undermines the credibility of the summary.

Here is one way to correct this issue:

> *A report from the Canadian Association of Social Workers (2020) recommends that compulsory minimum jail time for drug-related and non-violent offences should be eliminated, giving judges more discretion in sentencing decisions.*

"Ending Mandatory Minimums for Drug Offences" by the Canadian Association of Social Workers is a 2020 report published on casw-acts.ca, the website for the Canadian Association of Social Workers. Read it here and find more about the author here.

In the correction, there is clear attribution to the author of the report (in this case, the Canadian Association of Social Workers) so that the reader can look up the report to learn more.

You can choose from many verbs to show attribution to the author. These are referred to as signal verbs, and some style guides specify that they should be in the present tense. Here is a helpful list to get you started:

- advises
- asserts
- concludes
- continues

- contradicts
- disagrees
- elaborates
- expands
- illustrates
- points out
- predicts
- states
- supports

For many more signal verbs, see here.

Stay Neutral

Staying neutral in a summary can be tricky because you may have a strong opinion on the source that you are eager to express. However, you need to hold back your opinion at this point since the purpose of a summary is to demonstrate a respectful and thorough understanding of a source's ideas.

You are summarizing June Callwood's piece "Forgiveness Story." You might be tempted to write this:

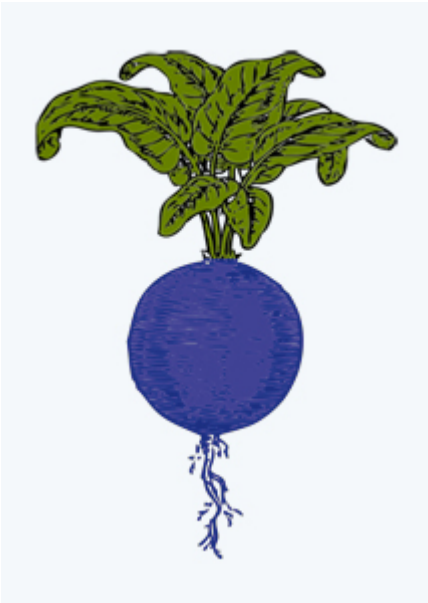
> *Callwood illustrates various scenarios for forgiveness, thus engaging the reader in a thoughtful way.*

"Forgiveness Story" is a 2007 article published by *The Walrus*. Read it here, find more about the author here, and learn about *The Walrus* here.

However, when you write "thus engaging the reader in a thoughtful way," you are no longer offering a neutral view of Callwood's ideas. Instead, you are layering in your opinion on the piece.

You stay neutral by simply using the first part of this sentence:

> *Callwood illustrates various scenarios for forgiveness.*



"Beets Bleed Red but a Chemistry Tweak Can Create a Blue Hue" by Carmen Drahl was published in April 2020 by sciencenews.org, a website that reports on findings in the fields of science, medicine, and technology. Read it here, find more about the author here, and learn about the publication here.

You're summarizing a scientific finding that you read titled "Beets Bleed Red but a Chemistry Tweak Can Create a Blue Hue," and you write this:

> *In a significant discovery in the field of food science, scientists discovered that beet juice, which is normally a deep red in colour, can be turned blue by modifying the bonds in the beet pigment (Drahl, 2020).*

However, the use of the word "significant" reflects your opinion of this discovery and should be avoided when writing a neutral summary. You can correct this by just omitting that word:

> *In a discovery in the field of food science, scientists discovered that beet juice, which is normally a deep red in colour, can be turned blue by modifying the bonds in the beet pigment (Drahl, 2020).*

Try It!

Directions

1. Watch this 3.27 minute TED Talk: "Why 1.5 Billion People Eat with Chopsticks" by Jennifer 8. Lee.
2. Practise writing a brief summary of this source. (Tips: Remember to include the source details (citation) as part of the summary and limit your summary to 1–2 sentences.)
3. Practise writing an extended summary of this source. (Tips: Include details of the source and its main idea first, use present tense throughout, give attribution to the author, and limit your summary to

100–150 words.)

4. Compare your brief and extended summaries with the model.

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In this subtopic, you've learned how to summarize a source including

- writing brief summaries;
- developing longer or extended summaries;
- giving attribution to the author; and
- remaining neutral throughout the summary.

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Webster, M. (2017, January 18). *How to write an academic summary*. Thompson Rivers University. https://inside.tru.ca/2017/01/18/how-to-write-an-academic-summary/

Writing a summary. (n.d.). Las Positas College. http://www.laspositascollege.edu/raw/summaries.php

References

See Summarize References

20.

PARAPHRASE

Sarah Duffy

Put an author's ideas into fresh and unique words but stay true to and respect their meaning. Ensure to give credit to the author.

What You'll Learn:

- Why paraphrase
- How to paraphrase
- Why cite in a paraphrase

Recall what you know: Like summarizing, paraphrasing is an important skill for effective communication in many contexts. Do you know the similarities and differences between summary and paraphrase? Test your knowledge by dragging the descriptors into the appropriate columns.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=413#h5p-73

Think about this: Think of times when you paraphrase in your day-to-day life—perhaps for professional or personal purposes. How important is it to ensure your paraphrase respects the original message's meaning? Consider how this is a critical part of developing a paraphrase that has integrity and also supports your credibility as an effective communicator.

Why Paraphrase

When you take someone's ideas and express them in your words while keeping the same approximate length, you are paraphrasing. You must ensure the meaning is consistent with the original source and avoid layering in your commentary or opinions so that the intention of the author is maintained.

When you paraphrase, you are doing more than just finding synonyms to replace individual words; instead, you create content that reflects and respects the original meaning of a source while using language and structure that feels fresh and unique. Like summarizing, this reflects a deep understanding of the original source's meaning and consideration of the author's viewpoint. Also, like summarizing, you can use paraphrasing in various contexts and situations: academic, professional, and personal. Some examples include clarifying misunderstandings, demonstrating active listening, and finding common ground with others.

In addition, paraphrasing is a tool for resolving conflict. This is explained in an article titled "Communicating in Conflict," from the Vancouver Island University's website:

> Miscommunication happens when we assume we understand, but haven't checked out that assumption. When we do, we may find that we are misinterpreting some of what was said, or missing some key element that is important to the other person. Paraphrasing not only checks for clarity and accuracy of understanding, but also lets the other person know they have been heard and understood. (Vancouver Island University, 2020, para. 5)

Definition, Please! What Is Paraphrasing?

In a 2018 study published in *English for Specific Purposes*, the authors discuss paraphrasing in this way:

There is no consensus on what constitutes a good paraphrase (Shi, 2012), though many would agree that paraphrasing is recasting the source text accurately with a credit to the original author. Such a definition ... suggests that a paraphrase should be 'exactly logically equivalent' (Bhagat & Hovy, 2013, p. 471), but not containing the original vocabulary and sentence structure (e.g., Oshima & Hogue, 1999). (Shi, Fazel, & Kowkabi, 2018, p. 31)

Is Paraphrasing Easy?

No, paraphrasing is not easy! Since it relies on a deep understanding of the original message, you cannot rush paraphrasing, and, at times, it can feel like a tedious, difficult, perhaps even painful process. In the same study, the authors observe that "students, even advanced graduates, find it challenging to develop the intertextual skill of paraphrasing" (Shi, Fazel, & Kowkabi, 2018, p. 32).

How to Paraphrase

You're ready to paraphrase when you've spent time with a source to ensure that you understand it fully. Paraphrasing involves

- grasping the core meaning and logic of the original source;
- using distinctive wording and sentence structure, showing respect for the author's voice and viewpoint;
- citing; and
- omitting your evaluation or opinion.

In your academic work, you will often need to paraphrase when using and accurately representing the ideas of scholars and professionals in your field of study.

While you are developing the ability to paraphrase in your academic writing, you may find it useful to follow a step-by-step process:

STEP 1 – Understand the author's message and logic.

STEP 2 – Use synonyms when possible to replace original words.

STEP 3 – Put it back together.

STEP 4 – Use new sentence structure and order.

STEP 5 – Review your paraphrase to ensure that it is true to the original meaning.

STEP 6 – Clearly give attribution, contextualize, and cite.

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This example paraphrases the following line from "The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009):

"It is impossible to talk about a single story without talking about power" (para. 22).

"The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a 2009 TED Talk. Its transcript is now an essay in "88 Essays," an open resource. Read it here, watch it here, find more about the author here, and learn about TED Talks here.

STEP 1: Understand Adichie's message and logic.	Adichie is referring to power as one of the elements that contribute to the over-simplification of others' lives into a stereotypical narrative.
STEP 2: Use synonyms to replace Adichie's words.	Impossible – difficult Talk – discuss Single – one or sole or simplified or stereotypical Story – narrative Without – with no or devoid of Talking – discussing About – regarding Power – influence or authority
STEP 3: Put it back together.	It is difficult to discuss a simplified or stereotypical narrative if it does not include a discussion of influence and authority.
STEP 4: Use new sentence structure and order.	Influence and authority cannot be omitted when discussing simplified and stereotyped narratives.
STEP 5: Review your paraphrase to ensure that it is true to the original meaning.	Yes, the paraphrase retains the original line's meaning; the two versions are logically equivalent.
STEP 6: Clearly give attribution, contextualize, and cite.	Sample 1 – Parenthetical in-text citation (exclude author's name and date of publication from lead-in): Many variables must be considered when discussing a 'single story.' For example, the author asserts that influence and authority cannot be omitted when discussing simplified and stereotyped narratives (Adichie, 2009, para. 22).Sample 2 – Narrative in-text citation (include author's name and date of publication in lead-in): Many variables must be considered when discussing a 'single story.' In her TED Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story," Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) asserts that influence and authority cannot be omitted when discussing simplified and stereotyped narratives (para. 22).

As illustrated in this example, it is not sufficient to *just* use synonyms to replace some words in the original. Just using synonyms would result in the sentence from step 3 above: It is difficult to discuss a simplified or stereotypical narrative if it does not include a discussion of influence and authority.

This is not an effective paraphrase since it is too close to the original. A paraphrase must use new sentence structure or order too, ensuring that it is fresh and unique while remaining true to the original line's meaning.

Some words have multiple synonyms, so how do you choose the best one? This is where your understanding of the source's meaning and context will come into play. In this example, synonyms for "single" include "sole" and "one." However, given the context of the piece, the author is using the term "single" to refer to "stereotypical" or "oversimplified." Given this, these words are better choices to replace "single."

More on Synonyms

Do all words have synonyms? No. Some words, phrases, and terms do not have readily available synonyms and, therefore, the original words are used in the paraphrase. This includes, but is not limited to, proper nouns

(e.g. Canada, COVID-19, DNA, Centennial College) and technical terms (e.g. polymerase chain reaction, wifi, return on investment).

After examining the following original lines and paraphrases, consider "Is this an acceptable paraphrase?" Then, compare your assessment to the model for each paraphrase.

Original Line 1:

> "Gender is a ubiquitous prison for the mind, reinforced everywhere, by everyone, and only rarely questioned" (Manjoo, 2019, para. 15).

Paraphrase 1:

> Gender is an omnipresent jail for the psyche, strengthened universally, by all, and barely examined (para. 15).

Is this an acceptable paraphrase?

No, it is not acceptable.

It uses synonyms, and the meaning is retained. However, it does not use a unique sentence structure and order. In addition, although it includes a paragraph number, it does not give attribution, cite, and contextualize.

Original Line 2:

> "Restaurants will need more support remaining viable until they are on a path to full recovery" (Restaurants Canada, 2020, para. 2).

Paraphrase 2:

> In response to the pandemic, it is claimed that, pending a complete revival, eateries will require additional assistance to sustain their businesses (para. 2).

Is this an acceptable paraphrase?

No, it is not acceptable.

It uses synonyms, and the meaning is retained. It also uses a unique sentence structure and order. However, although it includes a paragraph number, it does not give attribution, cite, and contextualize.

Original Line 3:

> "Type A is considered to be the influenza virus type with the greatest impact on public health as it has caused

> more than a dozen documented pandemics since the 1700s, with the latest occurring in 2009" (Government of Canada, 2019, para. 3).

Paraphrase 3:

> A report titled "Biosafety Directive for New and Emerging Influenza A Viruses" states that from 1700 to 2009, Influenza Type A produced greater than twelve global epidemics, and, as a result, it is deemed the influenza virus category with the most significant public health effects (Government of Canada, 2019, para. 3).

Is this an acceptable paraphrase?

Yes, it is acceptable.

Although some of the words remain consistent since they do not have readily available synonyms (e.g. Influenza Type A), the paraphrase uses synonyms where possible and retains the meaning. It also uses a unique sentence structure and order. Finally, it includes appropriate attribution, citation, and contextualization.

Why Cite in a Paraphrase

Although you use your own words in a paraphrase, do you need to cite? Yes, absolutely.

It is a common misconception that you do not need to cite paraphrased content. *This is incorrect.* You must cite when you use content that someone else created even if you paraphrase it effectively, and if you do not, it is considered plagiarism. This rule encompasses, but is not limited to,

- ideas;
- explanations;
- research;
- data and statistics;
- website content;
- blogs;
- social media posts;
- interviews;
- music and lyrics;
- videos;
- collaborations; and
- any content that is not common knowledge to the audience.

One guideline is that you should not use more than two words in a row without citing the source. Using APA-

style rules, parenthetical or narrative in-text citations should include an author's name and year of publication. A reference list entry should accompany them.

Do you need to include location information—typically a page or paragraph number—in an in-text citation for a paraphrase? Not necessarily. An APA Style Blog post titled "When and How to Include Page Numbers in APA Style Citations" clarifies when location information is necessary:

> When you include a paraphrase in a paper, you are required to include only the author and date in the citation. You are encouraged (but not required) to also provide the page number (or other location information) for a paraphrased citation when it would help the reader locate the relevant passage in a long or complex text (such as when you use only a short part of a book). (Lee, 2015, para. 3)

Try It!

Directions:

1. Review the criteria for an effective paraphrase:

- Synonyms are used where possible.
- New sentence structure and/or order is used.
- Original meaning is retained.
- Citation is included.

1. Carefully read this line from "Forgiveness Story" by June Callwood (2007): "Apologies are iffy because they are often contrived or coerced" (para. 9).
2. Decide whether each of the following paraphrases of Callwood's words is acceptable or unacceptable. Use the criteria for an effective paraphrase to help you decide and state your rationale. Compare your responses to the model.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=413#h5p-14

In this subtopic, you learned that

- paraphrasing is different from summarizing but has many similarities;
- a paraphrase should use distinct words and sentence order/structure;
- synonyms do not exist for all words; and

- a paraphrase is considered plagiarism if it is not correctly cited.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology. (n.d.). *Avoiding plagiarism – paraphrasing*. Academic integrity at MIT: A handbook for students.

https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/academic-writing/avoiding-plagiarism-paraphrasing

Paraphrase. (n.d.). Excelsior College Online Writing Lab. https://owl.excelsior.edu/research/drafting-and-integrating/drafting-and-integrating-paraphrasing/

University College. (n.d.). *Paraphrase and summary*. https://www.uc.utoronto.ca/paraphrase

References

See Paraphrase References

21.

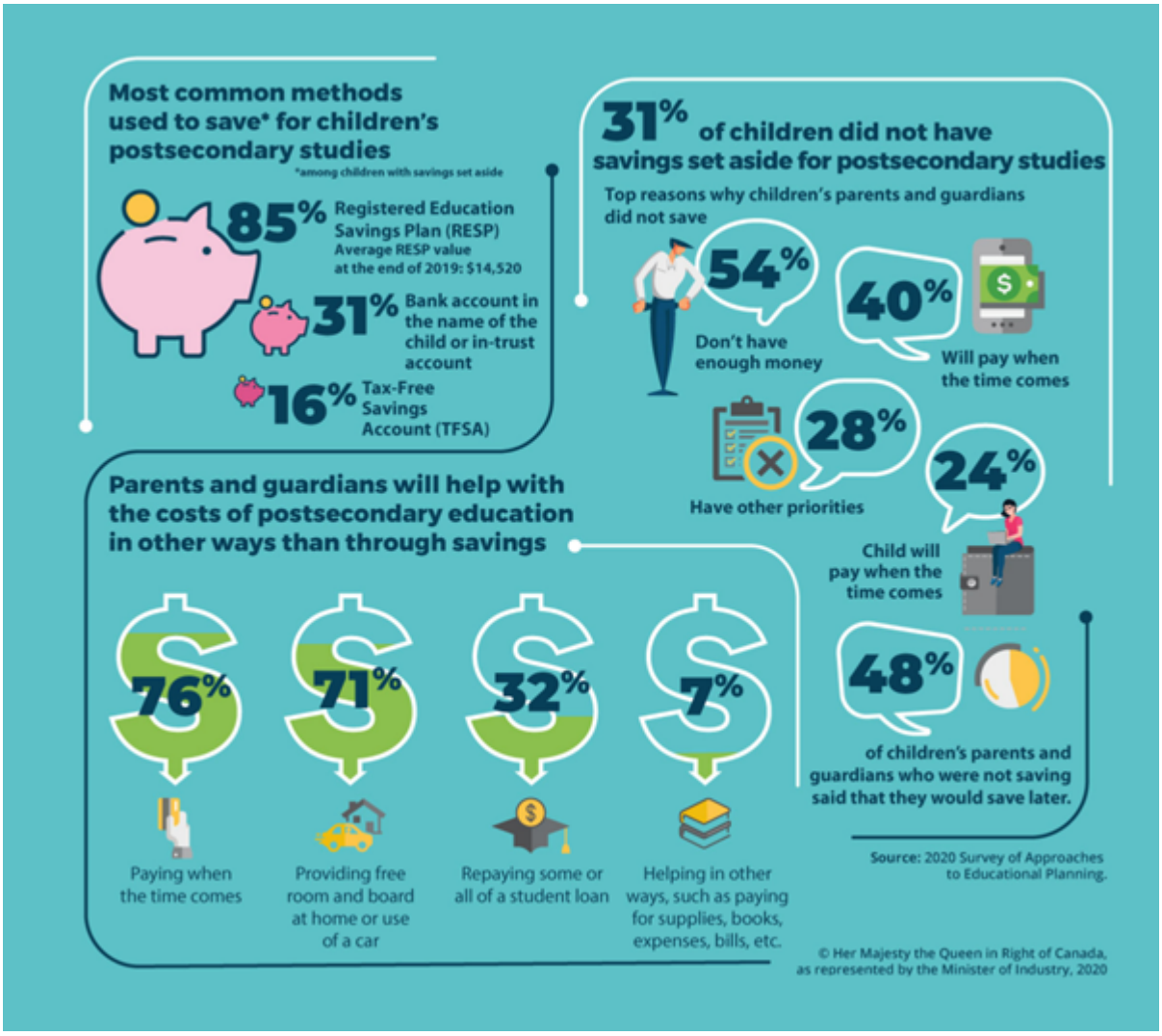
CLARIFY, RESPOND, AND INFER

Sarah Duffy

Raise questions about a source to clarify its message and context. Make personal connections and respond by drawing on your experience and world knowledge. Reach credible, respectful conclusions about a source's unspoken meaning.

What You'll Learn:

- Why clarify and respond personally
- How to clarify and respond personally
- Why infer
- How to infer



Have a look at this: In September 2020, Statistics Canada published an infographic titled "Saving for Postsecondary Education, 2020." Check out the full infographic here.

Think about this: Focus on the inserted portion of the infographic. What do you want to know about these numbers? What is unclear? Are there parts of the infographic that you would like to know more about? How does this information relate to your own experience with saving for postsecondary education? Have you learned anything from the infographic?

Why Clarify and Respond

Why Clarify

When engaging actively with a source, you will have questions about its content, its form, its author, its con-

text. These questions reflect your immersion in and connection with the source. Clarifying involves addressing these questions by

drawing on prior experiences;

decoding areas of the source that are confusing;

looking for answers if possible or relevant; and

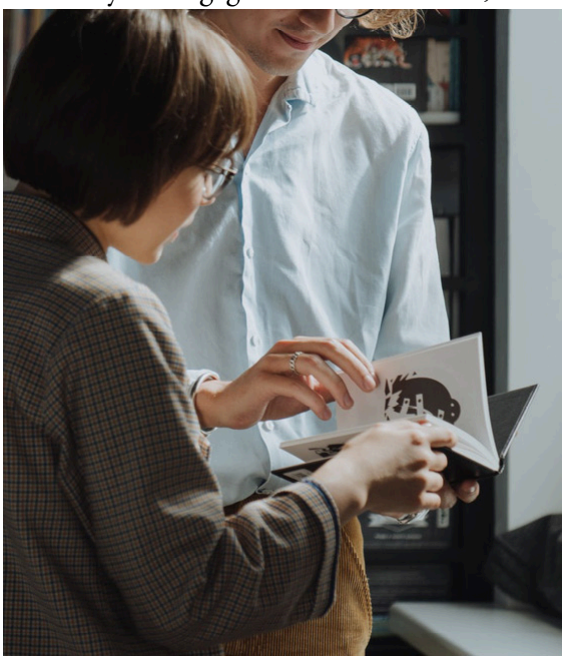
going beyond what is said by the author.

Why Respond

When you absorb a source, you will have a personal response to it since it will impact you in myriad ways. In some cases, you will share the author's viewpoint; in others, you will disagree. You may find some ideas surprising, interesting, and persuasive. Conversely, at times, you will be confused, disinterested, or even upset.

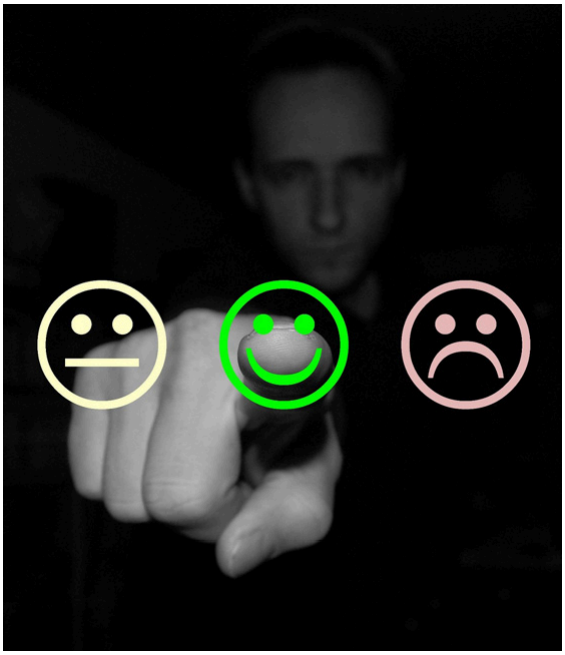
Capturing your response is important since it

furthers your engagement with a source;



helps in identifying areas "in common" with the author;

creates conversations; and



can be a starting point for critical evaluation.

How to Clarify and Respond

How to: Clarify

When you clarify, your questions will vary depending on the type of source and your prior knowledge. You might have questions about

- the author's life experience and background, including what motivated them to share their views;
- the political, social, or cultural environment at the time of writing or publication;
- the conclusions that were drawn by the author(s) and the support provided;
- verifiability of the source with others in the same field or on the same topic; or
- methodology, sampling, and data collection and use (if it's a journal article or research study).

At this point, you will search quickly to find answers since a more thorough and research-driven evaluation or critique will come later.

How to: Respond Personally

When developing your personal response, a number of questions can guide you:

- Is the content relevant to me as a reader? Does it support or contradict my life experience?

- In what ways do I agree/disagree with the point of view, the argument, the conclusions?
- Am I persuaded by the content?
- What challenged me? What have I learned? How have my views changed as a result of reading this material?
- What do I want to know more about?

There are no right or wrong answers. However, your response should be respectful and considerate, informed by reflection on your connection to the content and an open-minded absorption of the source.

You're reading an analysis report from Statistics Canada titled "Inequality in the Feasibility of Working from Home During and After COVID-19." It highlights imbalances that exist in the ability to work from home, an important and recommended containment strategy during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

"Inequality in the Feasibility of Working from Home During and After COVID-19" is a June 2020 report from Statistics Canada. Read the report here and learn more about Statistics Canada here.

Clarify

As you read this report carefully, you might have several questions about areas of the report that are unclear or seem limited in some way. These may include the following:

Question	Specific Example
What is the method of data collection that was used? Where does the data come from? How can I learn more about the data?	The Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey 2019 is cited as the source of data for chart 1. Could I learn more by looking at this survey?
Are there any flaws in how the study was conducted? In its use or explanation of terms?	For example, when discussing households (see chart 1), why are "husbands" and "wives" used when discussing dual income families? Why isn't the more inclusive term "partners" used?
Who was included in the study? Who was excluded?	If participation was voluntary, who chose not to participate? Were Canadians from across all provinces and territories sampled?
Does the evidence support the conclusions? Are there weaknesses?	What does table 1 show? Is it based only on "primary income earners" per its title, and if so, how does this impact the conclusions?
How do this study's findings compare with others on the same topic? Do they make the same or a related argument? What are the areas of disagreement?	How do the conclusions compare to these other articles on related topics? "Coronavirus Highlights the Inequality of Who Can — and Can't — Work from Home" by Abigail Hess (read it here) "Working from home reveals another fault line in America's racial and educational divide" by Christian Davenport, Aaron Gregg and Craig Timberg (read it here)

Respond

Your personal response to this report will be unique and will reflect your experiences. Here is a sample personal response:

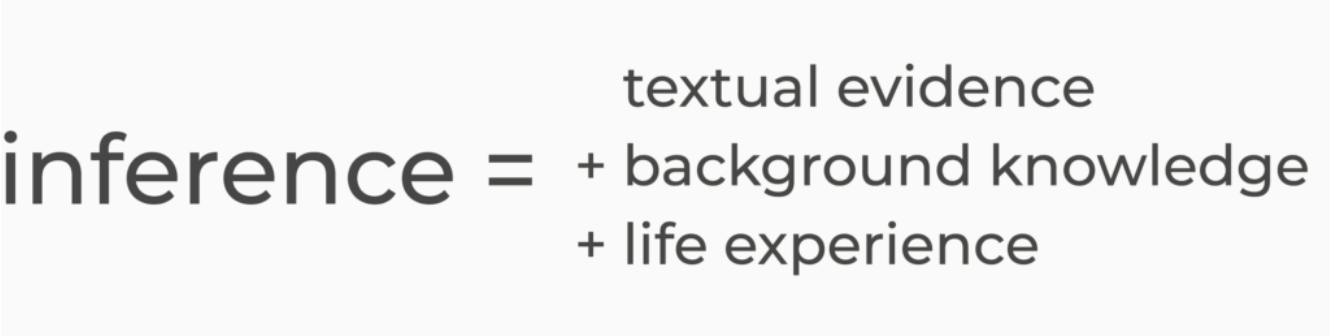
The findings relate to me since I have been able to work from home during the pandemic, a situation I have appreciated. While I would like to clarify some of the data and the authors' interpretation of it, I can see, based on observing life around me during the pandemic, that these inequalities are apparent. The choice to "stay home" during the pandemic was not possible for many. I am challenged to uncover what can be done to address this type of inequality and to learn more about other inequalities uncovered or driven by the pandemic.

Why Infer

You have absorbed the author's voice and perspective respectfully. Now, you're ready to move on and make inferences.

When you make an inference, you connect further with the author's message, draw conclusions, and read

"between the lines." You use knowledge of the world and your previous experience. You're looking at what is written or said—the evidence—to form opinions about what is not.



When you infer, there is no right or wrong answer, but any inference should be supported with logic and evidence. Others' inferences should be accepted and respected even if they differ from the conclusions you have drawn about the same source.

All About Schema

Did you know that when you apply your background knowledge and life experience to absorb a source, you are using your internal cognitive frameworks known as schema (plural = schemata)?

In a 2015 study, "An Empirical Study of Schema Theory and Its Role in Reading Comprehension," the term is explained: "Schema can be defined as the abstract knowledge structure the reader brings to the text" (Liu, 2015, p. 1349).

We all have our own internal schema, developed and molded by our life experience. No two schema will be the same. Schema are important for comprehension of sources. According to the same author, "meaning does not have a separate, independent existence from the reader, and prior knowledge of the reader or schema counts a lot in the extraction of meaning from the graphic words" (Liu, 2015, p. 1349).

Inference or Prediction?

Inferences and predictions are closely related but different.

Predictions are statements about the future that *can* be explicitly confirmed at some point. For example, if you predict at the start of a course that you will get an A grade, once the final grades are shared by the professor, the prediction will be verified as either correct or incorrect.

Inferences, however, *cannot* be explicitly confirmed. They are *reasonable conclusions* based on evidence, knowledge, and logical reasoning. For example, if you got a D grade in an online course but are typically a B-grade student in face-to-face courses, you may conclude that the online learning environment does not work for you. You would be using your knowledge (of yourself as a student) and the evidence (your grades) to draw this conclusion. However, other conclusions could be logically drawn too, including that your grade in the online course was influenced by poor course design, limited teacher interaction, and less peer collaboration.

How to Infer

To infer effectively, you should

- understand background and context (*see* Situate);
- use your knowledge of the author and the rhetorical situation (*see* Situate);
- look for clues and keywords (*see* Skim, Scan, and Use Tools);
- consider the "how" and "why" related to the "what";
- use facts, details, and evidence (*see* Break Down a Source);
- use your prior knowledge and personal experience;
- develop an informed opinion; and
- check and double check your logic.

When you infer, you can draw conclusions in a number of ways:

(Adapted from "Infer with Evidence" by Barbara Radner. http://teacher.depaul.edu. Used with permission.)

Infer motive	Why does the author believe this? What did the author want you to feel or understand?
Infer prior actions or experiences	What life experiences influenced the author?
Infer cause-effect	What caused _____ to happen?
Infer traits	What can you conclude about a person's personality or values?
Infer beliefs and values	What does the person believe or value?
Infer feelings	How do you think _____ felt about a subject, person, life, situation, etc.?
Infer the main message	What is the main message that the author is sharing?

When making inferences, you should track, support, validate, and iterate your thinking. These questions can help:

- What is my inference? (capture the conclusion you are drawing)

- What information did I use to make this inference? (capture the textual evidence and, when possible, the background knowledge and life experience)
- How valid is my inference? Do I need to change my thinking? (reflect on your logic)

You read the following passage about the use of TikTok:

> I stare at the screen. It's foreign to me, but I'm intrigued, entertained, sometimes inspired. Hearts and plus signs, arrows and comment boxes. Short dance routines. Lip-syncing memes. Strangers sharing life beliefs, life hacks, life stories. Should I watch? Should I swipe up? Should I follow or share or favourite? A tourist on TikTok, passing pandemic-restricted time. Thirty seconds becomes 30 minutes. Just one more video. Hours spent during lockdown.

You think about the inference(s) you can make from this passage, carefully considering what evidence is available. You consider these inferences:

a. The author is a millennial.
b. The author is a new user of TikTok.
c. The author does not like life hacks.
d. The author believes that it is easy to pass a lot of time on TikTok.

You decide that (b) and (d) are inferences that can be made logically from this passage; (a) and (c) are not.

(b) is an inference since the author's use of the terms "foreign land" and "tourist" indicate that they are new to TikTok. This is also indicated by the author's confusion about TikTok's functions—e.g. "How do I share again?" Further, the author indicates that their use of TikTok may be related to the global pandemic when stating "pandemic-restricted time" and "hours spent during lockdown."

(d) is also an inference since the author ends the passage by talking about time passing while using TikTok—e.g. "Thirty seconds becomes 30 minutes"; "hours spent."

Although (a) is possible since millennials are not the typical users of TikTok, the author could also be older, part of Generation X or the boomer generation. There is no evidence to indicate that the author does not like life hacks. Therefore, (c) is not a logical inference.

Try It!

Activity 1

Directions

1. Watch "Why It's Time for Black History Month to Go" by Bee Quammie, a Canadian freelance writer. In this piece, Quammie expresses her thoughts about the limitations of celebrating Black Canadians just one month of the year.
2. After watching the video, clarify Quammie's message by identifying questions you have about it. Then, respond to Quammie's message. Compare your clarifying questions and response to the sample provided, but remember there are no right or wrong ways to clarify or respond.

"Why It's Time for Black History Month to Go" is a CBC video by Bee Quammie, published in 2017. Watch the video here, learn more about the author here, and learn more about CBC here.

Activity 2

Directions:

1. Watch "What Non-Indigenous Canadians Need to Know" by Eddy Robinson, an Indigenous speaker, consultant, educator, and author. In this video, part of TVO's web series called "First Things First," Robinson provides advice to non-Indigenous Canadians.
2. After watching the video, clarify Robinson's message by identifying questions you have about it. Then, respond to Robinson's message. Compare both with a peer, but remember there are no right or wrong ways to clarify or respond.

"What Non-Indigenous Canadians Need to Know" by Eddy Robinson, an educator on Indigenous topics, is a 2019 video published by TVO Docs. Watch the video here, learn more about the author here, and learn more about TVO here.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=414#h5p-15

Activity 3

Directions:

1. Review the following four passages. For each, answer which of the four statements that follow are inferences. Can you support your answer with logic and evidence?
2. Check your answers with the solutions provided.

1. "It's not that digital immigrants are smarter or more talented than the digital natives that came after us. Our uniqueness, it seems, lies in the fact that we are the last of a dying breed and as such, living, breathing receptacles of a soon-to-be lost plane of human experience: empty yawning hours and days of nothing much at all" (McLaren, 2019, para. 11).

What inference(s) can you make from this passage?

a. The author is a digital native.
b. The author believes that digital immigrants are unique.

c. The author thinks that the human experience has been changed by technology.
d. The author does not like technology.

solution
(c) is an inference since it is supported with evidence from the passage; (a) is incorrect—the author is a digital immigrant; (b) is stated explicitly in the passage; (d) is not an inference because there is no evidence for this.

2. "So if you're a person that wants to be an ally to the Black community, let's begin here: Put down your phone. Just as neutrality won't put you in good stead with the cause of righteousness, neither will claims that you're 'not racist.' The notion is a myth; certainly 400-plus years of deeply ingrained social programming didn't simply skip over you, regardless of your good intentions. Racism lives within all of us. Your active allyship work begins with letting this realization sink in, and then taking steps towards becoming anti-racist" (Fequiere, 2020, para. 3–4).

What inferences can you make from this passage?

a. The author thinks that being a Black ally is not just about posting on social media.
b. The author believes that people want to be an ally to the Black community.
c. The author believes that becoming a Black ally begins with acknowledging your own racism.
d. The author believes that allies must take proactive and concrete action.

solution
(a) and (d) are inferences and can be supported with evidence from the passage; (b) and (c) are stated explicitly.

3. "Police use-of-force incidents across Canada have ignited public unrest and disapproval of law enforcement authorities. Many voices are calling for the widespread use of body-worn cameras to hold police officers accountable, while others are urging government to defund the police. An area that has not received the attention it deserves during this upheaval is police oversight" (Laming, 2020, para. 1–2).

What inferences can you make from this passage?

a. The author thinks that police should be defunded.
b. The author believes there should be focus on police oversight.
c. The author believes that police oversight in Canada should be examined.
d. This piece was written at a time of societal turmoil.

solution
(c) and (d) are inferences since they can be supported with evidence from the passage; (a) is not an inference since it is not supported with evidence; (b) is explicitly stated in the passage.

4. "Anyone who represents a 'different' point of view also needs to accept that questions may not be wrapped in a perfectly politically correct bow. That doesn't mean we should stop the questions from being asked. We need to keep conversations going; I would much rather someone stumble over their words or offend me or not know the HRC-approved way to ask me which pronoun I prefer than stay silent. Silence halts change" (Beckham, 2014, para. 3).

What inference(s) can you make from this passage?

a. The author has been asked politically incorrect questions.
b. The author believes that dialogue between people of different backgrounds and identities is necessary for societal change.
c. The author wants to keep conversations going.
d. The author does not like questions.

solution

(a) and (b) are inferences since they can be supported with evidence from the passage; (c) is explicitly stated in the passage; (d) is not supported with evidence.

In this subtopic, you learned that

- paraphrasing is different from summarizing but has many similarities;
- a paraphrase should use distinct words and sentence order/structure;
- synonyms do not exist for all words; and
- a paraphrase is considered plagiarism if it is not correctly cited.

References

See Clarify, Respond, and Infer References

PART IV
CRITIQUE

- Converse
- Verify
- Recognize Logical Fallacies
- Challenge Assumptions
- Understand Confirmation Bias

22.

CONVERSE

Robert Sternberg

To converse with a source, you first need to “listen” to what it has to say; after that, it’s time to “respond.”

What You’ll Learn:

- How to listen to your source
- How to formulate a response

Partial Understanding

Full Understanding

In the photographs above, we can observe the difference between a *partial* and a *full* understanding. It's ideal to acquire a *full* understanding of a text before we respond to it.

Listening

Exercise A: Reading to Understand

Take a look at the following three **claims** and determine whether or not the author made them. If Manjoo made the claim, answer "true"; if Manjoo didn't, answer "false."

On July 10, 2019, *The New York Times* opinion columnist Farhad Manjoo wrote an article titled "It's Time for 'They.'" Its main argument? "The singular 'they' is inclusive and flexible, and it breaks the stifling prison of gender expectations. Let's all use it" (Manjoo).

Read the source.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=5#h5p-31

Answering the true/false questions correctly shows that you understand—or have "listened" to—some of the main claims made in the article "It's Time for 'They'" by Farhad Manjoo. Listening is the first step when con-

versing with a source. After all, before responding to a claim, you first have to know what that claim is, right? Only then can you decide if you agree or disagree, and come up with your reasons why.

Responding

Exercise B: Reading to Respond

Using the same three claims from the previous activity, you'll again determine whether or not they are "true" or "false." *Hint: notice that there's something missing in the way these statements are presented compared to the previous activity*.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=5#h5p-32

Without the **prepositional phrase** "According to Manjoo," you take the fairly big step from "listening" to "responding." In doing so, the answers are not as obvious as when you completed the exercise the first time, are they? In fact, both answers could be right, because now you are expressing your own personal opinion. Which means you're not simply showing your understanding of the text anymore, as you were with the previous exercise; now, you're in the early stages of *responding*.

Tip

When determining whether or not an author's claim is true or false *to you*, or whether or not you agree or disagree with it, consider asking yourself some key questions:

1. Do the main ideas of the article match my experience or prior learning on this topic?
2. Does the author use convincing **evidence** to support their ideas?
3. Do the author's ideas seem **rational** or justified?
4. Has the author confronted or ignored ideas contradictory to their own?
5. Is the article well-structured, i.e. are the ideas within it logically connected?

Comments, or Letters to the Editor

Nowhere is the process of listening and responding to a text more clearly displayed than in the comments section of an online article, or Letters to the Editor in newspapers and magazines. Here, readers like you are given a chance to respond to an author's argument (once you've listened to it, of course).

Take a look at the following conversation between the author, Farhad Manjoo, and one of their readers:

Martin

Hillsborough, NC | July 11, 2019

Times Pick

I appreciate the need to be sensitive to some, but come on. I don't want to be refereed to as "they" unless it makes sense grammatically. I also can't stand reading it, it makes it nearly impossible to follow in prose. To be honest, let's drop this idea that we're stifling the vast vast majority of us. It's not language that is defining gender roles, it's how people behave and the their willingness to be exposed to different ideas and individuals.

This issue that doesn't have real meaning to something like 99% of us is being overblown and in some cases potentially causing harm to children who may still be figuring out their identity. As a Gen Xer I much prefer to adopt the attitude of "I don't care what you do, go make yourself happy" than the attitude that we must all conform to make everyone else feel special and perfect all the time.

1251 Recommend Share Flag

Farhad Manjoo

Columnist | July 11, 2019

@Martin "I appreciate the need to be sensitive to some, but come on" is a thing Joe Biden would say: It telegraphs an uncaring, unsympathetic attitude to the rest of the world. Sure, I care a bit, but I've got mine, so let's not upset the apple cart too much. I mean, come on, right?

Nobody is forcing you to call anyone anything. You're still in charge -- you're either making the choice to use language that is inclusive, or you're not, on the grounds that making people feel included giving them special treatment.

As for your 99% claim: I don't think your numbers are correct. And even if they are, what's wrong with including the other 1 percent? This was the same argument used against the Americans With Disabilities act: The overwhelming majority is fine! Why spend all this money to make this small number feel, as you say, "special and perfect all the time?"

I just disagree with that whole sentiment.

34 Recommend Share Flag

In the above example, you can see a conversation between reader and writer based on a difference of opinion. Maybe you too have differences of opinion with the author (see Exercise B: Reading to Respond). Or maybe you agree. Either way, determining what *you* believe in relation to an author's claims is what it means to *respond* to a source.

Tip

Typically, when responding to a source, it's unlikely that the author will be able to answer back, as Farhad Manjoo does in the above example, especially in an academic setting. But that doesn't mean you can't anticipate

what they might say. In fact, anticipating what an author might say in response to you is an effective strategy of argumentation. It can also encourage you to make your points as clearly and considerately as possible.

Tip

Before trying the activity below, consider the following conventional features of a comment, or a Letter to the Editor:

An introductory statement or topic sentence that clearly expresses the main point(s) of your comment, i.e. What specific point or points are you trying to get across?

Supporting details so that your main point(s) makes logical sense, not just to you, but to your reader.

A concluding statement, where you try to make a lasting impact on *your* reader.

Try It!

Try writing your own comment!

In the activity below, try writing out your own comment or letter to Farhad Manjoo's article "It's Time for 'They.'" You can draw on relevant skills and strategies covered in **Build Your Toolkit**.

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TECHNIQUE	SUMMARY
Listen	First, actively read the source so that you can "hear" what the author is claiming.
Respond	Then, consider the claims themselves so that you can have your own "say."

See related subtopics in **Absorb** and **Build Your Toolkit**.

References

See Converse References

23.

VERIFY

Robert Sternberg

"Everyone is entitled to [their] own opinion, but not [their] own facts."—Daniel Patrick Moynihan

What You'll Learn:

- How to verify the reliability of a source
- How to verify evidence to gauge credibility and accuracy
- How to examine a source for conflict of interest

As you are probably well aware, the internet is filled with both information *and* disinformation. In this topic, we'll discuss ways to distinguish between them.

Verifying the Reliability of a Source

Today, we mostly access information through various websites. So, what can we do to ensure that the information on these websites is reliable? The best place to start is with the website itself, or the source.

If you're a postsecondary student, you're fortunate to have privileged access to your college's library, whose online databases contain hundreds of thousands of articles from sources that you can trust. That's because they've been carefully selected by the librarians at your institution. In addition, your course instructors have likely included their own list of reliable sources for you to read and respond to.

The spread of disinformation became so controversial during the 2016 American election that it prompted Mark Zuckerberg to write an editorial in *The Washington Post*. In it, he urged his government to establish stricter online rules to protect elections.

Read the source.

Nevertheless, at some point during your studies, you'll probably use online search engines to find supplementary articles on a given topic for the purposes of research and inspiration.

When verifying a source's reliability, consider the three criteria discussed in Michael A. Caulfield's 2017 book *Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers*, which he bases on *Wikipedia*'s guidelines for reliable sources.

These three criteria are:

- Process
- Expertise
- Aim

Read more about them here.

Verifying Evidence to Gauge Credibility and Accuracy

Michael A. Caulfield's book *Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers* (2017) discusses "four moves" that students can make "when confronted with a claim that may not be 100% true" (Chapter 2, para. 1).

Read about them here.

For the following example, let's focus on the first of Caulfield's "moves," which is to "go upstream to the source" (Chapter 2, para. 3). Many of the articles we read online consist of an author's faithful—we hope—reporting on their sources. If you're ever in doubt of an article's credibility and accuracy, try to track down the original source and check. Let's try it!

Tip

Nowadays, most articles include hyperlinks directing us to an article's original source. This makes it fairly easy for us to verify the evidence. It also demonstrates the author's and source's commitment to transparency. However, if the hyperlink doesn't allow us to verify the evidence—for example, if the link is dead—then we should call into question its **credibility** and **accuracy**.

In October 2014, David Suzuki published the article "Commissioner's Report Shows Canada Must Do More for the Environment." In it, Suzuki highlights the major findings of a report by then Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development in the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Julie Gelfand. His conclusion? Canada must do more for the environment.

Read the source.

Because the commissioner's report is hyperlinked in Suzuki's article, we can easily verify his summary and conclusion. Let's take a look.

View the report here.

SUZUKI (2014)	COMMISSIONER'S REPORT (2014)
"Canada is not on track to meet its greenhouse gas emissions targets" (para. 4).	"[T]imelines for putting measures in place to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have not been met" (Chapter 1, para. 13).
"[Canada] . . . has delayed monitoring of oil sands pollutants" (para. 4).	"Most [oil sands] projects we examined are being implemented according to schedule" (Chapter 2, para. 37).
"[Canada] . . . has no clear guidelines regarding what projects require environmental assessments" (para. 4).	"Overall, we found that the Agency's rationale for identification of projects for environmental assessment is unclear, specifically in making its recommendations to designate projects that may require an assessment" (Chapter 4, para. 20).

In red, we see a discrepancy between Suzuki's summary of the report and the report itself. Although the majority of Suzuki's article is faithful to the report, this one discrepancy can impact its overall credibility and accuracy. As a result, Suzuki's conclusion that "Canada must do more" is compromised. Of course, we would never have known this if we hadn't made the extra move of "go[ing] upstream to the source" (Caulfield, 2017, Chapter 2, para. 3).

Examining a Source for Conflict of Interest

Up to this point, we have looked at ways to

- verify the reliability of the source; and
- verify evidence to gauge credibility and accuracy.

Similar to verifying reliability of your source is examining it for the possibility of conflict of interest. Take a look at the following excerpt from the "Conflict of Interest" section in the CBC's Journalistic Standards and Practices:

CBC's journalists are, first and foremost, expected to be independent and impartial. This means that our primary allegiance is to the public. Any conflict, real or perceived, between that allegiance and our personal or professional interests risks corroding the trust placed in us by Canadians.

This means we strive to avoid actions that create an impression of partisanship or of advocacy for a cause. It means we consider carefully what organizations we associate with. It means that we are mindful of our public statements. And it means we recognize that our personal and business relationships have the potential to affect the perception of our work.

To guide our actions, we refer to the code of conduct and the corporate policies on conflict of interest and on political activity, and comply with their requirements.

Dealing with any real or perceived conflicts of interest requires transparency. We have a duty to disclose such situations to our supervisor and to strive to resolve any problems that may arise from them. (CBC, n.d.)

As Canada's public broadcaster, we should hope that the CBC lives up to these standards and practices when it comes to conflict of interest. Either way, such noble aims are useful to keep in mind when looking at *other* sources. Ask yourself:

- Does the source's publisher also have a mission statement on maintaining journalistic integrity and

avoiding conflict of interest?

- Do they also encourage their journalists to be "independent and impartial"?
- Do they put a similar emphasis on transparency when there *is* a "real or perceived conflict of interest"?

If the answer is "no" to any or all of the above questions, then it's probably wise to be suspicious of the information you find in that source.

Tip

Look out for **conflict of interest**. For decades, tobacco companies claimed that smoking was not unhealthy. They supported their position with scientific tests to prove they were right, but tobacco companies were funding the tests, thus controlling the conclusions. Years later, objective research conducted by scientists independent of the tobacco companies proved the opposite—that smoking is a serious health hazard. This classic example of a conflict of interest is dramatized in the 2005 movie *Thank You for Smoking*.

You can read about the movie here.

Try It!

While thinking about the three criteria for verifying a source's reliability—process, expertise, and aim—rank

the following websites in order from "most" to "least" reliable. This is based on your opinion; there is no right or wrong answer. Share your list with your class and see if it differs from your peers.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=29#h5p-49

PRACTICE	SUMMARY
Verifying the reliability of a source	Consider the three criteria discussed in Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers: process, expertise, and aim.
Verifying evidence to gauge credibility and accuracy	Consider the four "moves" discussed in Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers: 1) "Check for previous work"; 2) "Go upstream to the source"; 3) "Read laterally"; and 4) "Circle back" (Caulfield, 2017, Chapter 2, para. 3).
Examining a source for conflict of interest	Consider the CBC's "Conflict of Interest" policy in order to see if your sources measure up to their standards.

See related subtopics in **Build Your Toolkit**, and **Absorb**.

References

See Verify references

24.

RECOGNIZE LOGICAL FALLACIES

Robert Sternberg

A logical fallacy is “a failure in reasoning which renders an argument invalid” (“Fallacy,” n.d.).

What You’ll Learn:

- How logical fallacies work
- How to avoid logical fallacies in your own writing

Does the following conversation between roommates look familiar to you?

Roommate 1: *You were on dish duty yesterday. Why's the sink still full of dirty dishes?*

Roommate 2: *Relax. This is an apartment, not a laboratory.*

Roommate 2's response is a classic example of the "straw man" fallacy, in which a person's point is intentionally misrepresented, making it easier to defeat ("Straw man," n.d.).

In this case, it's easy for Roommate 2 to defeat the idea that a student apartment should conform to the same

standards of cleanliness as a laboratory. Who would insist on that? Of course, Roommate 1 never said anything of the sort. All she asked was "Why's the sink still full of dirty dishes?" and pointed out it was Roommate 2's turn to clean them.

Logical fallacies are as widespread in daily life as they are in writing. Understanding how they work is the best method of protection against their faulty logic.

How Logical Fallacies Work

There are plenty of online resources that classify logical fallacies by name, definition, and example. The Purdue University Online Writing Lab, a web resource for English students and instructors, is an excellent place to start.

You can access its page on logical fallacies here.

Let's examine a few from the list while keeping the following two questions in mind:

1. Why is the fallacy effective *at first*?
2. Why is the same fallacy ineffective *on closer inspection*?

In June Callwood's 2007 essay "Forgiveness Story," published in the Canadian magazine *The Walrus*, she disapproves of sympathizing with abusers if they—the abusers—were also victims of past abuse; or, in Callwood's words, she disapproves of the idea that "bad parenting comes from being badly parented" (para. 11).

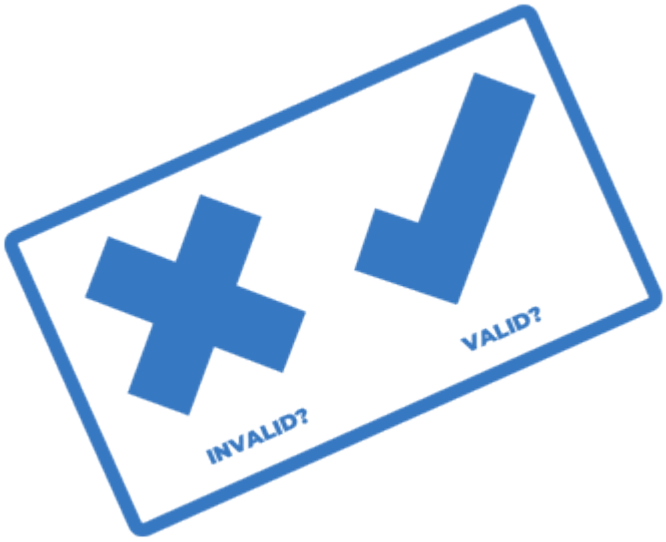
The reason for Callwood's disapproval? "This technique can be applied to almost any injustice and falls within the rapists-were-beaten-as-children, *poor them* school of thought, which for some sceptics veers perilously close to non-accountability" (para. 13).

Read the source.

You may find her argument to be valid and persuasive at first. It's reasonable to concede that Callwood has made a strong point here (her graphic language, coloured by sarcasm, may add to its persuasiveness). After all, shouldn't abusers be held accountable for their actions and not be excused of them due to the hardships they have faced in their own lives?

However, consider that within criminology and social theory, many books have been written and studies conducted on the *cyclical* nature of abuse, with conclusions presenting different and more nuanced insights than Callwood's.

If you believe an argument oversimplifies matters, it may be an example of a fallacy known as "hasty generalization" or "straw man." Do you believe Callwood's claim to be accurate, or overgeneralized? Is it...



You decide.

"This technique can be applied to almost any injustice and falls within the rapists-were-beaten-as-children, *poor them* school of thought, which for some sceptics veers perilously close to non-accountability."

In the same essay, Callwood describes our day and age—the 21st century—as one in which we no longer have the ability to forgive. Why? According to Callwood, we do not understand the religious teachings on forgiveness as well as we used to.

This, then, is how Callwood describes the 21st century, in her own words:

[T]his is the age of anger, the polar opposite of forgiveness. Merciless ethnic, tribal, and religious conflicts dominate every corner of the planet, and in North America individuals live with high levels of wrath that explode as domestic brutality, road rage, vile epithets, and acts of random slaughter. (para. 4)

Again, readers may find Callwood's claim to be persuasive (notice again the powerful, graphic quality of her language: "merciless," "dominate," "explode"). If we've just watched or read the news, we may find ourselves nodding in agreement with her harsh critique of our century.

Other readers, however, may question whether past centuries weren't *just as* plagued—if not more so —by "merciless ethnic, tribal, and religious conflict" (para. 4). Yet people in those times, according to her argument, would have had a better understanding of the religious teachings on forgiveness than ours does.

If you judge that the argument is flawed, it may be an example of "post hoc ergo propter hoc" or, once again, "hasty generalization." Do you believe this claim is...

You decide.

"[T]his is the age of anger, the polar opposite of forgiveness. Merciless ethnic, tribal, and religious conflicts dominate every corner of the planet, and in North America individuals live with high levels of wrath that explode as domestic brutality, road rage, vile epithets, and acts of random slaughter."

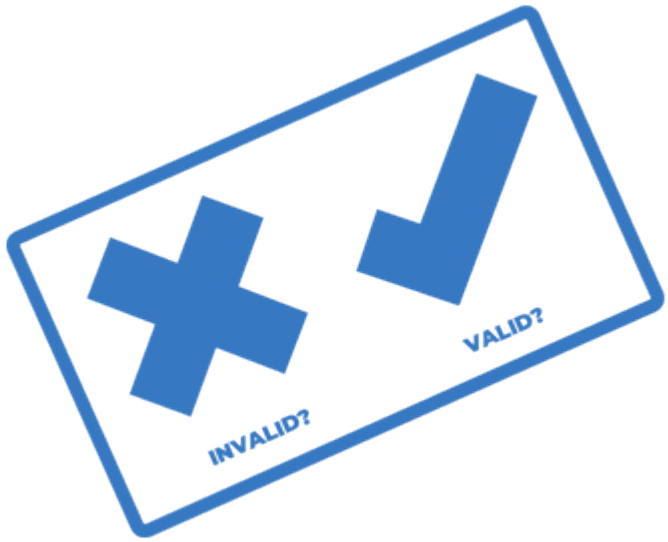
For our final example, let's look at the central question at the heart of Callwood's essay: to forgive, or not to forgive? She clearly answers "forgive" because of the benefits forgiveness can have on our health, both mental and physical.

The way that Callwood presents it, there are two outcomes attached to either choice:

The choice may seem simple. If given the choice between having "scalding thoughts of revenge" or "peace of mind" (para. 18), what would you choose? Most of us would have to agree with the author's choice here.

Yet some may feel that "scalding thoughts of revenge" and "peace of mind" are but two extreme poles on a spectrum. Between them lie a host of other outcomes, each less extreme in degree than the two poles.

If that's your judgment, you may feel that you're looking at an example of a fallacy known "either/or." With that in mind, do you feel that the argument is...



You decide.

To forgive ("peace of mind"), or not to forgive ("scalding thoughts of revenge")

Avoiding Logical Fallacies in Your Own Writing

It's important to be on the lookout for fallacies in the context of arguments and opinions. This applies to your dual roles as reader *and* writer.

If you agree that logical fallacies can be effective *at first*, but not as much *on closer inspection*, then you will probably want to avoid using them in your own writing.

Tip

Because logical fallacies often appear early in the writing process, as in the rough draft, consider using strategies covered in Practice Iterative Design and **Peer Review** for the purposes of checking your work for logical fallacies

Try It!

Using this list of logical fallacies, try to determine the fallacy in the following example:

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=31#h5p-34

We covered logical fallacies—how they work and how to avoid them in our own writing. Continue to keep logical fallacies in mind by:

Learning about the different types (their names, definitions, and examples)

Recognizing specific instances when other writers use them

Understanding their superficial effect (if closely examined, they're rendered invalid)

Watching out for them in your own writing as you move through the writing process

See related subtopics in Build Your Toolkit and Share.

References

See Recognize Logical Fallacies References

25.

CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS

Robert Sternberg

An assumption is the "taking of anything for granted as the basis for argument or action" (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.).

What You'll Learn:

- How to challenge the assumptions in a writer's claim
- Some strategies for challenging our own assumptions

Does the following conversation between acquaintances look familiar to you?

Acquaintance 1: *You* would love this movie. I just *know* it.
Acquaintance 2: Ok, thanks. I'll check it out.

Two hours later…

Acquaintance 2 (thinking): What a waste of time. I'll never get those two hours back.

This could've been avoided if Acquaintance 1 had not taken for granted Acquaintance 2's taste in movies; in other words, if they'd *challenged* their own assumption first. Doing so might've saved Acquaintance 2—*not* a science fiction fan—the two hours she spent watching *Flaming Globes of Sigmund*.

Try not to let this happen to you! If you've taken anything for granted en route to an argument, action, or claim,

- stop;
- retrace your steps; and
- challenge your underlying assumption.

Challenging the Assumption in a Writer's Claim

On June 12, 2005, the late Steve Jobs delivered a commencement address at Stanford University. Its main message? "You've got to find what you love" (para. 15).

Read/view the source.

In Jobs's speech, he preaches the concept of self-reliance. This is illustrated by his decision to drop out of college. Jobs's faith in himself was so strong that he believed he could achieve his goals without institutional support. And he did. Jobs encourages his audience of recent graduates to have the same reliance and faith in themselves:

> Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma—which is living

> with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary. (para. 23)

In "'Just Three Stories': The Career Lessons Behind Steve Jobs' Stanford University Commencement Address," authors Julia Richardson and Michael B. Arthur (2013) challenge the following assumption in Jobs's message of self-reliance: "Whereas Jobs was in a situation where he could drop in and out of classes and presumably had parental support to do so, others may not be quite as fortunate due to their social and economic circumstances" (para. 25).

In other words, it was Jobs's good fortune that enabled him to rely on himself, and in preaching his message of self-reliance to others, he *assumes* that they are as fortunate as he was; as a result, Jobs may be *taking for granted* the idea that "in all careers there are constraints on which opportunities can be accessed" (King et al., 2011, as cited in Richardson, Arthur, 2013, para. 25).

Jobs's first story, on "connecting the dots," is about gaining the rewards of patience. After dropping out of college in just six months, Jobs stayed on campus for another 18 months as a "drop-in." During this time, he "dropped in" on classes, like the one on calligraphy that would later influence Apple's "beautiful typography." About this period of his life, Jobs says the following: "And much of what I stumbled into by following my curiosity and intuition turned out to be priceless later on" (para. 6).

Richardson and Arthur (2013) challenge the assumption in Jobs's advice here. According to them:

> Although Jobs was able to spend time searching for his calling, for some—if not most—people, responsibilities to others and social and economic circumstances do not allow them to search for their calling, let alone fulfill it (see Berg, Grant & Johnson, 2010). Similarly, as Jobs himself acknowledged, he found his calling early in life whereas others may not. (para. 26)

By encouraging his audience of recent graduates to patiently follow their curiosity and intuition, Jobs is *assuming* they have the same amount of time and freedom from responsibilities as he did. As a result, he may be *taking for granted* his audience's diverse "social and economic circumstances."

In Jobs's second story, about "love and loss," he says "that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life" (para. 13).

Not only did getting fired lead Jobs to fall in love with his future wife, but it also led him to start two successful companies before his triumphant return to Apple. Based on this experience, he urges his audience not to lose faith in themselves during difficult times.

Richardson and Arthur (2013) challenge the assumption in this part of Jobs's speech as well:

> Regarding the proclaimed positive side of involuntary job loss, it should be acknowledged that Jobs was in a very different situation than most people who lose their job. Indeed, recent research has suggested that most people are likely to experience lower self-esteem, depression, and health problems after losing their job (Zeitz et al., 2009). (para. 27).

The authors then **paraphrase** the following point: "[W]hereas Jobs welcomed his newfound freedom to explore and craft further career opportunities, for many people the change and uncertainty incurred during job loss is more likely to be a source of stress than liberation (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004)" (para. 27).

By encouraging his audience of recent graduates to embrace the times when, as he puts it, "life hits you in the head with a brick" (para. 15), Jobs is *assuming* that they will be able to rebound as successfully as he did. As a result, he may be *taking for granted* that other people will find opportunity in a job loss, too.

Some Strategies for Challenging Our Own Assumptions

Steve Jobs was an incredibly successful person in his lifetime. But, as we learned in the previous section, not even *he* could avoid making assumptions. That's because we all make them. No matter who we are or what we've accomplished, assumptions are a part of life. So, let's take a look at some strategies for challenging our own assumptions.

1. Practise the Assumption-Challenging Habit

An effective method of grammar instruction is based on *correction*. For example, to learn to avoid run-on sentences in your own writing, you may find it effective to correct run-on sentences in someone else's. This same method can be used for assumptions. The more we practise challenging assumptions in *someone else's* writing, the better we'll become at challenging those that may appear in *our own*.

As was demonstrated by Julia Richardson and Michael B. Arthur's commentary on Steve Jobs's commencement speech, challenging assumptions means figuring out what the author might have *taken for granted* en route to a claim.

2. Practise Iterative Design and Peer Review

If Steve Jobs had given a draft of his speech to Richardson and Arthur for advanced feedback, they could've flagged his assumptions listed above. At that point, Jobs might've gone back and revised his points.

Assumptions are like blind spots in our own thinking. Which is why we need others—friends, family members, teachers, and peers—to help us *see* what we might be taking for granted. Therefore, review the material covered in **Practice Iterative Design** and **Peer Review**. With the help of others, we can challenge our own assumptions.

Tip

Assumptions are tricky because they can sometimes be correct. For example, a college professor assigns her automotive students a reading about the history of cars because she *assumes* they will like it, given their program of study. The first time, her assumption is correct. The second time, however, she discovers what she'd *taken for granted*: not *all* automotive students are interested in cars as a historical subject. Now, before assigning this reading again, she polls her class first.

3. Practise Asking before Assuming

Here's an alternate version of the conversation we looked at earlier.

> **Acquaintance 1:** Do you like science fiction movies?
>
> **Acquaintance 2:** No. That's my *least* favourite movie genre.
>
> **Acquaintance 1:** Good to know! I was almost going to recommend that you see *Flaming Globes of Sigmund*.

Similarly, in the example of the college professor and her automotive students, she asks them about their interest in the history of cars *first*, before assigning that particular reading. As for Steve Jobs, if he'd done some research on the effects of involuntary job loss *first*, maybe he wouldn't have put such a positive spin on getting fired.

An assumption is like jumping to a conclusion. Especially when it's a big jump, you don't want to take anything for granted. Instead, take all the necessary precautions first, which means ask yourself and others some key questions. If you do that, your jump—i.e. your conclusion, claim, argument, or action—might be a success!

Try It!

In the following claim, consider what the author might be taking for granted.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=33#h5p-70

Here are some key takeaways from our topic on challenging assumptions:

- An assumption is "the taking of anything for granted as the basis for argument or action" (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.).
- Practise the assumption-challenging habit: challenge the assumption in a writer's claim.
- Keep assumptions in mind when practising iterative design and peer review.
- Try asking before assuming.

See related subtopics in **Build Your Toolkit** and **Share**.

References

See Challenge Assumptions References

26.

UNDERSTAND CONFIRMATION BIAS

Robert Sternberg

Confirmation bias is defined as "the tendency to seek or favour new information which supports one's existing theories or beliefs, while avoiding or rejecting that which disrupts them" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019).

What You'll Learn:

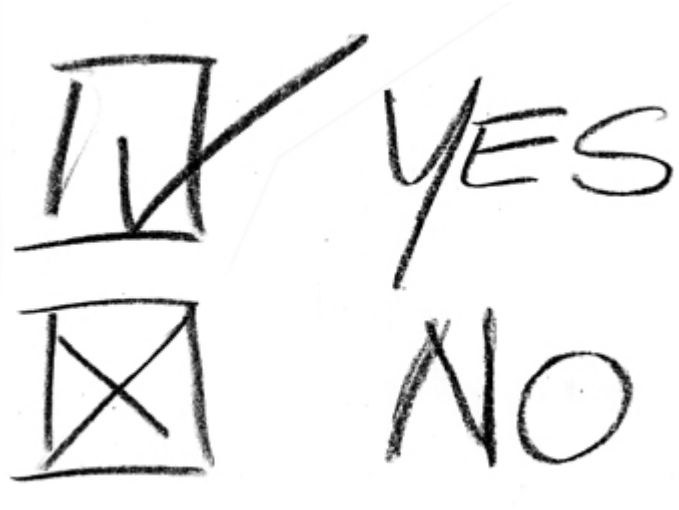
- What confirmation bias is
- What confirmation bias looks like in action (or lessons for how to avoid it)

Do you like puzzles?

"A Quick Puzzle to Test Your Problem Solving" by David Leonhardt (2015) is based on an experiment conducted by Peter Cathcart Wason, who is credited with coining the phrase "confirmation bias."

Try solving the puzzle yourself here. Make sure to take note of the following instruction: "You can test as many sequences as you want" (Leonhardt, 2015), *but you only get one guess*.

What Is Confirmation Bias?



If you're like most people, when you tried to solve "A Quick Puzzle to Test Your Problem Solving" you probably entered sequences of numbers that *obeyed* the rule rather than *disobeyed* it. And maybe that led you to guess that "[e]ach number is double the previous number" (Leonhardt, 2015). A good guess! But incorrect. And possibly premature.

According to Leonhardt, entering a sequence of numbers that *disobeyed* the rule rather than *obeyed* it may have been the key to solving the puzzle. However, as the author states in their explanation, the majority of people "don't want to hear the answer 'no.' In fact, it may not occur to them to ask a question that may yield a no [...] It's a lot more pleasant to hear 'yes.' That, in a nutshell, is why so many people struggle with this problem" (para. 3).

In other words, it's a natural human tendency to seek information that *confirms* our beliefs (yes's) rather than *contradicts* them (no's). Or, as Leonhardt explains, "[n]ot only are people more likely to believe information that fits their pre-existing beliefs, but they're also more likely to go looking for such information" (para. 6).

Confirmation Bias in Action (or Lessons for How to Avoid It)

Author David Leonhardt offers the following two examples of confirmation bias within the context of reading and writing:

> If you're politically liberal, maybe you're thinking of the way that many conservatives ignore strong evidence of global warming and its consequences and instead glom onto weaker contrary evidence. Liberals are less likely to recall the many incorrect predictions over the decades, often strident and often from the left, that population growth would create widespread food shortages. It hasn't. (para. 7)

Reading this, are you surprised that there is such a growing divide between liberal and conservative viewpoints today? Maybe one explanation for this is that each side is virtually ignoring the other.

Let's take a detailed look at two other examples of possible confirmation bias in action. By doing so, hopefully we can learn some lessons for how to avoid it.

Example 1: Cellphones in School

If you already believe that cellphones should be kicked out of school, then this editorial, and many others just like it, will serve as confirmation of your belief. And if you *only* give your attention to articles like this one, you may be less open to hear the other side.

Now, let's imagine you've come to this editorial as someone who does *not* believe that cellphones should be kicked out of schools.

Let's take an issue we can all relate to: cellphones in the classroom. On October 25, 2017, an editorial was published in Bloomberg News called "Kick Mobile Phones Out of School"; in it, research was used to show that cellphones "[contribute] to sloppy work, reduced concentration and lower problem-solving capacity" (para. 2), among other adverse effects.

Read the source.

Looking Up is an award-winning blog by Andrew Campbell, an Ontario-based primary school teacher. In his blog post "We Need Cellphones in School Because They're Distracting" (2017), Campbell, who opposes banning cellphones in the classroom, discussed the Bloomberg News editorial mentioned above.

Campbell doesn't dispute the editorial's claim that cellphones can be a distraction in school. In fact, he accepts it. What he disputes is *the solution* to this problem. "The ability to self-regulate the use of devices," he claims, "is a critical skill if students are to become productive adults" (para. 10). He goes on to write the following:

> This, not their role in learning, is the most important reason we need cell phones in [the] classroom. Students

> need to learn, from an early age, how to regulate their use of digital devices. Soon cell phones won't be considered technology. They'll be tools we use for certain jobs and then put away. But until then schools and teachers can play a vital role in teaching students how to use cell phones effectively and responsibly. (para. 11)

Andrew Campbell's blog post is an excellent example of what we can do to avoid confirmation bias. Consider the following habits he demonstrates in his blog post:

1. He took the time to read and understand the other side. Even though he remains opposed to the ban, reading and understanding the other side has enabled him to clarify and maybe even modify his own position on the issue.
2. He found a point of agreement. Both he and the editorial agree that cellphones can be distracting for students, just as they can be distracting for drivers. Even though they disagree on a solution, finding other points of agreement can often lead to a constructive dialogue between opposing viewpoints.

Example 2: Climate Change

Maxime Bernier, the leader of the People's Party of Canada, wrote a controversial tweet during the lead up to the 2019 Canadian federal election in which he disputed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's use of the word "pollution" to describe carbon dioxide, or CO_2 (Trudeau had used the word while proposing his plans for a carbon tax).

"CO2 is NOT pollution," Bernier (2019) tweeted. "It's what comes out of your mouth when you breathe and what nourishes plants."

You can read more about his controversial tweet here.

Bernier (2019) repeated his claim that "CO2 is NOT 'pollution'" in a tweet appearing a few months later, which received 7.4 thousand likes. Here's a brief sample of its favourable replies:

- "Thank you Max for speaking the truth" (Nelmes, 2019).
- "Bravo [. . .] I said it all along, CO2 is food for plant" (Phoenix, 2019).
- "Maxime Bernier, thank you, thank you, thank you for speaking TRUTH" (Shayne, 2019).

Whereas a carbon tax can and should be debated among citizens and politicians, the same can't be said for the way that CO_2 pollutes our planet. In fact, in 2007, the US Supreme Court ruled that CO_2 *is* a pollutant. And it's not alone in its judgment. Climate scientists and world leaders from around the globe agree.

Here, we may see confirmation bias in action, and a lesson for how to avoid it. Despite the unscientific nature of Bernier's tweets, there were many who not only liked them but replied to them favourably. Why is that?

- Is it because their opposition to a carbon tax was so strong that they were inclined to agree with him, despite the absence of science in his tweets?
- By agreeing with him, is it also possible that they were avoiding or rejecting contradictory information, like the US Supreme Court's 2007 ruling that CO_2 *is* a pollutant?

If you answered "yes" to both questions, then you will probably agree that confirmation bias played a role in their decision to like and favourably reply to Bernier's tweets.

Tip

Did you know that confirmation bias is just one form of bias? Familiarize yourself with these other forms of bias by looking up their definitions:

- Implicit bias
- Explicit bias

Try It!

As we learned from the puzzle activity at the beginning of this unit, "[w]hen you seek to disprove your idea, you sometimes end up proving it—and other times you save yourself from making a big mistake. But you need to start by being willing to hear no" (Leonhardt, 2015, para. 14).

With that in mind, sort the following two claims into their appropriate columns:

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Now, go search for information online that contradicts your opinion. For example, if you "agree" that cell-phones are harmful for students, seek information that claims the opposite. Similarly, if you "disagree" that climate change is primarily caused by humans, seek information that claims the opposite. Share your findings with your class.

Tip

One proven method to combat confirmation bias is to seek and be open to information that *disproves* or *contradicts*—rather than supports—your opinion.

Before continuing, evaluate your learning so far and think if you...

- have a strong understanding of what confirmation bias is.
- know what confirmation bias looks like in action.
- can think of some strategies for how to avoid it.

See related subtopics in Foundations, Build Your Toolkit, and Absorb.

References

See Understand Confirmation Bias References

PART V
RESEARCH

- Plan
- Search
- Assess
- Integrate
- Contextualize
- Explain

27.

PLAN

Karolyn Zuccarelli

Focus your research project and define its parameters before you really dive in.

What You'll Learn:

- How to define the scope of a research project
- How to come up with keywords and use search operators
- How to start organizing your research

Have you ever thought of research as an everyday activity?

Driving, preparing for a special event, or cooking a meal are all activities that involve research and planning. Here are some research and planning questions you might ask before going on the trip:

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online here:
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The Planning Phase—Process and Scope

The planning phase is an essential part of the research process. In this phase, you think about the information you will need to gather. You map out a strategy for identifying potential resources, and you focus your research topic.

Try beginning with the **scope**. The scope of a research question identifies the breadth and boundaries of your topic. A research question can be broad, or it can be focused and specific.

Narrowing the scope of your research question can help tailor the information you find. This can make the research process faster and smoother.

Think about researching a recipe.

A Google search for "*best pizza recipe*" produces over one billion results! Narrowing the scope of the search by using the more specific keywords "*best vegetarian paleo pizza recipe*" gives nine million results. It's still a lot to sort through, but you are more likely to find useful information faster.

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— *online here:*
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=122#h5p-53

Once you have defined the scope of your research question, try:

- Brainstorming
  - Make rough notes and come up with new ideas that are more broadly related to your topic.
- Making a research plan
  - Start thinking about how you might gather research. This could include performing a Google search, utilizing the library e-resources, or going to the library in person to look through books.
- Mapping out some keywords related to your topic. (Hint: The keywords will inform the quality and types of results produced.)

Keywords

Keywords capture the main idea of what is being researched. Use keywords to search for the most relevant information on your topic. Use them when searching Google or your school's library database.

When searching for information:

- Refine keywords after your first search.
- Refine again after subsequent searches!
- Keep an open mind, as some search results might be different than what you originally expected.
- Try an entirely new search with refined keywords—small changes can yield different results. (Bobkowski, 2018a)

Check out a video from Conestoga College (2016) on keywords here, and answer some of the questions below:

- What is translation in regards to the research process?
- What are the steps of the translation process?
- What are the differences between a broad versus narrowed search?

Let's put keywords into practice.

Broad Topic:

Benefits of exercise

Narrrowed:

Physical and mental benefits of exercise for students

Keywords:

students, reasons to exercise, physical benefits, mental benefits, exercise

When searching using keywords, make sure to:

- Note the keywords you use.
- Use definitions when developing keywords.
    - Definitions often include synonyms, and these can help widen your search.
- Document and save your search results often.
    - Save a list of search results in a Word file.

To learn more about keyword searches:

See the following source from Centennial College Library Services.

Search Operators

Search operators help narrow the scope of your search results. Search operators include:

- Quotation marks
- Minus sign
- The word *or* (Harnish, 2017; Bobkowski, 2018b; Common Sense Education, 2018)

QUOTATION MARKS

What happens when you search using quotation marks?

The search will include only sources that include the exact words between the quotation marks.

If you search *"physical benefits of exercise for students,"* the search will return results that use this exact phrase. Sources on this topic that do not use this exact phrase will not show up as a search result.

MINUS SIGN

What happens when you use the minus sign in your search?

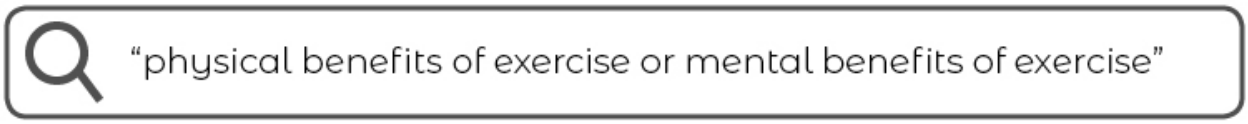
The search performed will leave out any additional words or phrases included after the minus sign.

If your keyword search includes "*mental benefits of exercise for students – physical,*" the results will include only sources that discuss the mental benefits of exercise for students. It will exclude sources that discuss physical benefits

OR

What happens when you use the word *or* (between keywords)?

The search performed will include information from either only one of your key search phrases or both together.



If your keyword search includes "*physical benefits of exercise* ***or*** *mental benefits of exercise,*"your results will include sources that discuss either the physical benefits of exercise on its own or the mental benefits of exercise on its own.Therefore, using *or* casts a wider net than using *and*.

Organizing and Documenting Research—Stage 1

Keeping research organized will help in the planning and documentation phases of the research process. Research can quickly pile up in tabs opened on your browser or books scattered across the floor. It can easily become overwhelming to remember where your information comes from. It's never too early to start taking notes and documenting the sources you've found (Bobkowski, 2018a).

Documentation tips:

- Keep a Word file open with any relevant information you've found.
- Copy and paste the URLs/links of relevant information into the Word file.
- Write a brief description of the source: what it is about and why it might be useful.
- Keep track of the keywords you use during your search.

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- Write a brief description of the source: what it is about and why it might be useful.
- Keep track of the keywords you use during your search.

Try It!

Here is a drag and drop activity on scope. Drag the narrowed topic and match it with the broad topic.

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Planning can help you focus your topic during the beginning of the research process. Planning has multiple stages, including:

- Narrowing the scope of the research topic
- Using keywords and search operators to find relevant information
- Gathering information
- Organizing research

References

See Plan References

28.

SEARCH

Karolyn Zuccarelli

Learn to navigate the ocean of data to find the information and types of sources you need.

What You'll Learn:

- How to locate sources in different places
- The difference between primary and secondary sources
- How the information cycle works

Think about the research you might conduct when buying a new laptop for school. Some research questions you might consider include:

- What is the best laptop for students?
- What laptop companies offer student discounts?
- What is the difference between a Mac and a Chromebook?
- What laptop has the best warranty?

Now think about how you will go about getting answers to these questions. Some approaches to searching for information could include:

- A Google search
- Consumer reports
- Asking a friend
- Going to a store and asking an expert

- Going to the library bookstore (if they sell laptops)

Consider: What are the strengths and limitations of the information you will receive from each of these sources?

No matter what you are researching, consulting multiple sources of information, and being aware of which offers the most useful information for your purpose, is a key step of the research process.

Locating Information Using Search Engines and Databases

Once you have planned and mapped out your ideas, you can use your focused research question and keywords to search for supporting evidence.

When we need information, many of us start with a Google search. Searches on Google will often produce first hits from **crowdsourced** publications like Wikipedia or blogs. You are also likely to find corporate material or paid company advertisements at the top of your search results. For these reasons, you may want to expand your search to other search engines and databases.

Google Scholar is a search engine for **scholarly work**. However, usually only excerpts from the academic works are given. Access to the full text is often restricted and requires a paid subscription.

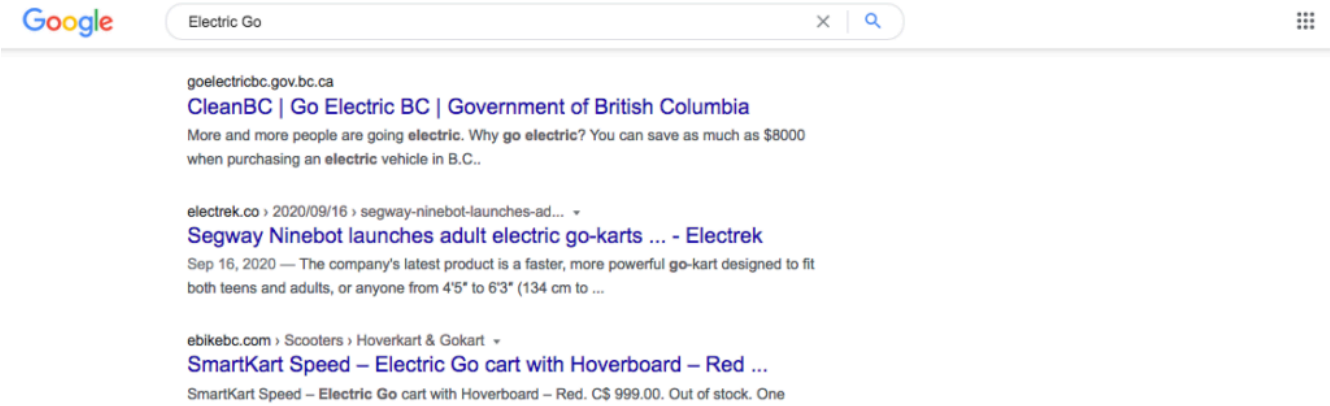
The library **database** offers the greatest variety of credible and accessible resources. It provides full-text

access to most academic and professional journals, newspapers, and books. You will learn more about how to evaluate credibility of sources in the Assess subtopic.

View this source for an overview of library resources at Centennial College.

Let's now use a series of search terms and see what comes up in different search engines. From there, we can compare and contrast the results.

Scenario: You have been tasked to write an essay on the broad topic of green energy. After doing some planning and brainstorming, you've narrowed the scope of the topic to "the benefits of electric vehicles." The keywords you will use when searching for information are: *benefits of electric vehicles*. You are required to have three sources in your essay. You decide to search for information in three places: Google, YouTube, and the Centennial College library database. The following is a breakdown of your search results.



The first search result on Google is a sponsored advertisement for the company Electric Go.

Some key characteristics of the search result include:

- It is a non-profit organization dedicated to building awareness of the benefits of electric vehicles.
- The organization is Canadian.
- It has sponsorships from government agencies.
- On the website, there is general information on electric vehicles, but no links to sources or references are provided.

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The second search result comes from YouTube. The first video found is produced by Carfax.Some key characteristics of the search result include:

- Carfax is a company that provides reports on a vehicle's history for consumers.
- The video provides a top five overview of the benefits of an electric car. The video also links to the company's website where you find an "electric car buying guide."
- No links to sources are provided (Carfax, 2015).

Academic OneFile

Scholarly journal and magazine articles in all subject areas. Millions of full-text articles. Covers the physical sciences, technology, medicine, social sciences, the arts, theology, literature, etc.. Includes full text of the New York Times from 1995 to present.

TYPE: Magazines, Newspapers, Scholarly Journals

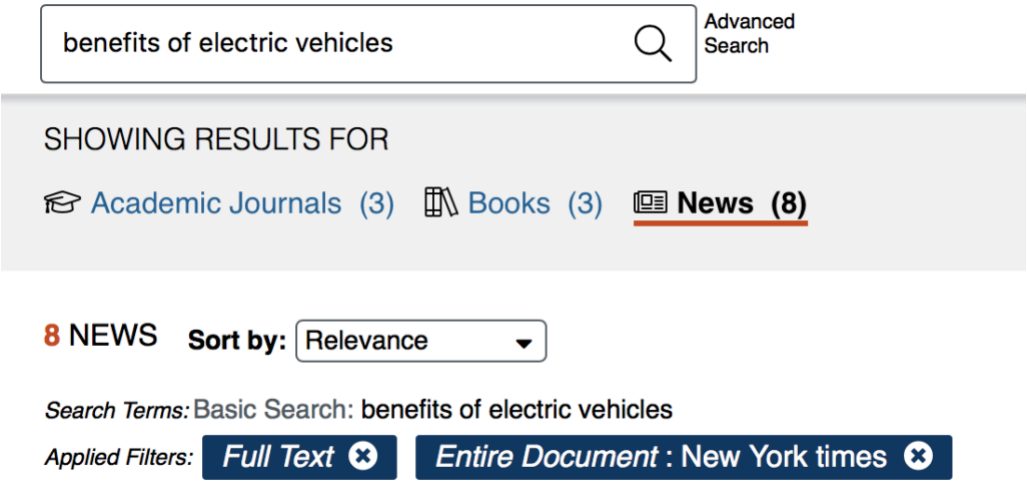
SOURCE: Gale

(Centennial Library E-Resources Database Listing, n.d.)

The third search result comes from the library database. You use your keyword search with an additional filter for "*New York Times*" news articles only.

Some key characteristics of the search result include:

- There are eight news articles on the topic of the *benefits of electric vehicles*.
- All of the news articles are published in *The New York Times*.
- The full text of each article is available.



The first of the eight search results is titled "The Electric Car Revolution" (2017). Read the source. Some of the key characteristics of the source include:

- There are hyperlinks included within the article to additional credible information related to your keyword search.
- The article references research from Bloomberg New Energy Finance and International Energy Agency.
- There is an explore area with links to additional credible articles on your topic.

This example illustrates the different search results produced by Google, YouTube, and the library database. The credibility of the results varies. For example, the first result is a company website. The data provided on the site supports the company's mission and agenda. This makes it less likely to be a source of objective and neutral information. On the other hand, the third result is from a credible newspaper, and links to additional credible sources are included.

Primary and Secondary Resources

Before we look at the differences between primary and secondary resources, view this source from The Learning Portal and Conestoga College (2016) on the types of resources available to you and why using different sources is beneficial for your work.

Please answer the following questions on the types of resources:

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Primary Resources

According to the Purdue Online Writing Lab (2020), "primary research is any type of research that you collect yourself. Examples include surveys, interviews, observations, and ethnographic research" (para. 1). The observations made through primary research document first-hand observations of an issue, idea, or event.

View this source from the University of Guelph (2019) for more information on primary research.

The Information Cycle

The information cycle outlines how information about a particular event or issue is created and cycles through various media outlets. It informs which information we consume, and when and how we consume it.

For example, information often arrives on our radar through social media, Wikipedia, and news channels. Later on, it is analyzed in academic journals and reports (Thompson Rivers University Library, 2020).

Watch this source on the information cycle from John M. Pfau Library (2016).

Please answer the following questions about the information cycle:

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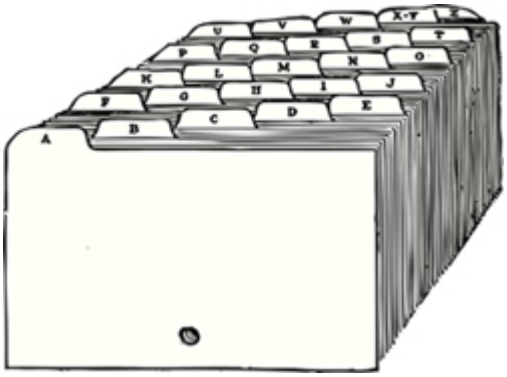
Organizing and Documenting Research—Stage 2



So far, you've been keeping a Word document open with source links and a brief description of the source. You can also email yourself promising sources you find through the library database. File these so you can refer back to them when writing.

Some sources will be more relevant to your research question than others. For these sources, you may want to make rough notes of key points and why they are particularly relevant and interesting. You may also highlight important pieces of information you might use in your work.

If you want to quote, paraphrase, or summarize from a particular source, make note of the:

- author
- publisher
- date of publication
- page number

If you find something you want to quote directly, note that it is a quote and where it comes from. This way you won't forget and include it as if it were your own words. Documenting your sources as you begin your research ensures you don't plagiarize others' words or ideas.

Later in this chapter, you will learn how to use this documentation to create in-text citations and a reference page for your sources.

Try It!

Begin your journey with the search process here. Identify the key features of Google Scholar and the Library Database. Using the images and information provided in this activity, correctly identify features of Google Scholar and the Library Database.

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This subtopic covered what the search process includes and how it builds upon the planning phase of research. We explored:

- The credibility of sources from different search engines and databases
- Locating different types of sources in a variety of places
- Looking for primary and secondary research
- The information cycle
- Documenting your research

References

See Search References

29.

ASSESS

Karolyn Zuccarelli

Critically examine potential sources to ensure their relevance, credibility, accuracy, authority, and purpose.

What You'll Learn:

- How to determine the relevance/usefulness of a source
- How to determine the credibility/authority of a source

You recently read a friend's social media posting about her daily use of vitamin D. She mentions a number of positive health benefits, ranging from improved cognition to a strengthened immune system. You've never heard of vitamin D but wonder about its uses. You do a quick Google search and see a few interesting sites. The first is a paid advertisement from a health and wellness clinic. The next site is a medical journal article by a doctor.

- Who are you more likely to trust with providing health information?
- Would you trust a doctor more than a friend? Why?

Writers can learn something from this example. The source of your information and the credibility of the publication and author matter. Being able to assess the reliability of a source is an integral part of the research process.

The CRAAP Test

It is important to evaluate and assess first, as not all sources are written by authoritative, knowledgeable experts.

In the last section, we discussed the different search results you might encounter when looking for infor-

mation. For example, some search results will link to paid, corporate advertisements. Some of the information on these web pages may be verified and fact-checked, while other content may not be. Does this mean that this information is not credible? No. It means that it is important to be **critical** when assessing your sources of information.

One way to assess a source's content is through the CRAAP test.

Currency	Is it a recent publication?
Relevance	Is it directly on topic?
Authority	Do you trust the author or the organization that is presenting the information?
Accuracy	Is this quality information? Can you verify it in another source? Is there a citation list?
Purpose	Does the author/organization have an agenda?

The CRAAP test can be applied to all sources found in your search results. Knowing that a source is reliable ensures that you have effectively evaluated your research content (Tucker & Chafe, 2018).

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Watch the video above from Western University (2012) on the CRAAP test and answer the questions below:

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Let's use the CRAAP test to assess a source.

Start by viewing the source (Colier, n.d.), then look at the table below.

Currency	Is it a recent publication?	There is no date on the article. According to the chronology on the author's site (http://nancycolier.com/read/), it appears to have been published in Fall 2016.
Relevance	Is it directly on topic?	This question depends on your research topic. If you are writing about the effects of social media or the effects of technology, then the answer is yes.
Authority	Do you trust the author or the organization that is presenting the information?	The author is credible because of her qualifications. She is a psychotherapist and mindfulness teacher. She is also an author with a book published on this same topic.
Accuracy	Is this quality information? Can you verify it in another source? Is there a citation list?	There is no citation list provided. However, a link to the author's book with expanded information on the article's topic is provided. The author does cite some statistics in the article ("forty-six percent of smartphone users say their phone is something they couldn't live without" (Collier, 2016, par. 3)). It would be useful to see where/how this information was collected, as well as the size of the study.
Purpose	Does the author/ organization have an agenda?	The author is promoting her book on the same topic as the article. The article is published by Best Self Media, a digital magazine.

Assessing Source Relevancy

A relevant source is one that is closely associated with your topic of choice. It is important to assess a source's relevancy to ensure it aligns with your topic, research question, and purpose for writing.

To assess the relevance of a source:

- Read the source thoroughly and in its entirety.
- Read the source again and take notes.
- Look at the ideas being presented in the source.
- Identify whether the ideas presented support your own research topic.
- Identify the author's bias, if there is one.
- Analyze the source's content and writing critically.
    - Is it too formal or technical?
    - Is it too informal and does it contain **slang**?
    - Did you learn anything new after reading the information?

(Adapted from Loyola Marymount University – William H. Hannon Library, n.d. Additional information adapted from The Learning Portal, 2020)

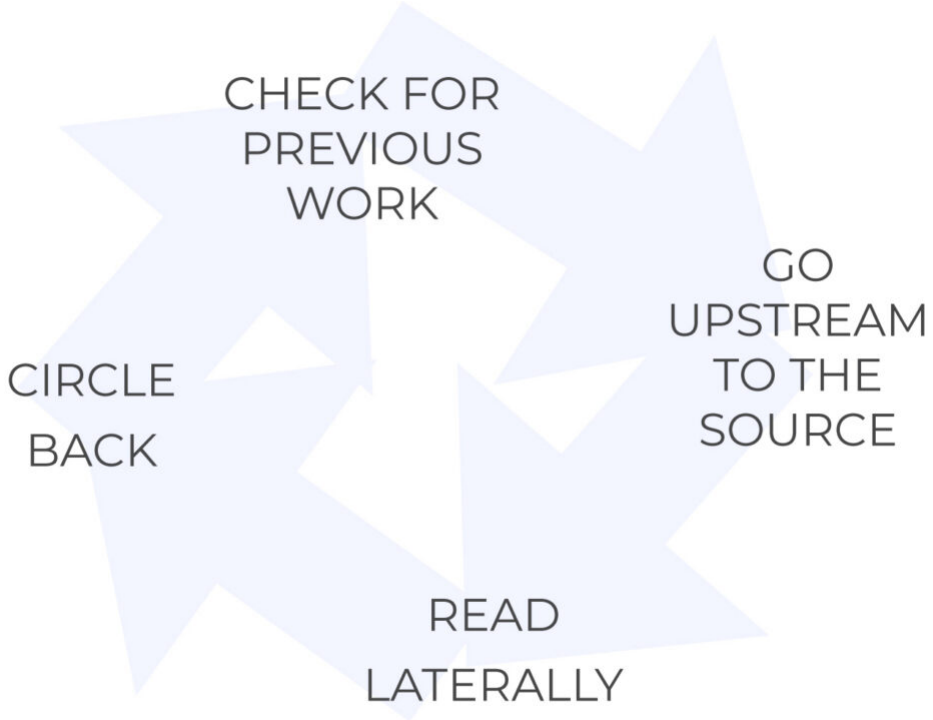
Assessing Source Credibility and Fact Checking

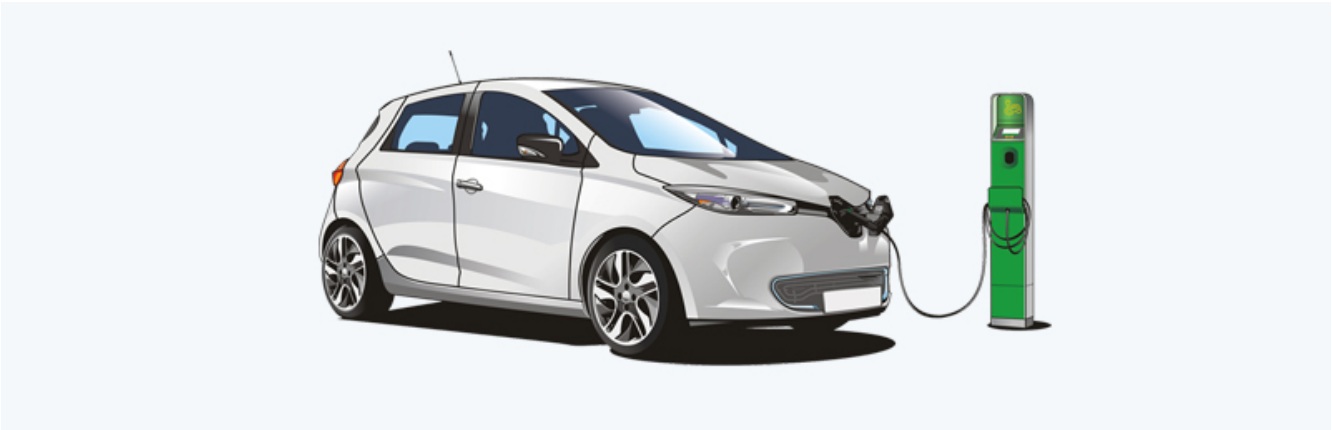
Information on the internet can seem believable and authoritative. But until you assess the credibility of the information's source, you can't know whether its claims are complete, accurate, and true.

In the Critique chapter, you were introduced to a strategy, adapted from Michael A. Caulfield's *Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers* (2017), that explains four steps you can take to check the credibility of a source.

View the source.

Now let's explore those four steps in more detail.





Let's circle back to one of the examples from the previous subtopic: the *New York Times* article "The Electric Car Revolution" (2017). You can read the source here.

Step 1: "Check for previous work" (Caulfield, 2017, para. 3).

The article cites a number of reputable organizations and publications to authenticate the facts being claimed. Some of the other publications cited in the article include:

- Department of Energy
- International Energy Agency
- Bloomberg New Energy Finance

Step 2: "Go upstream to the source" (Caulfield, 2017, para. 3).

We can verify the credibility of the source as the piece is published by the *New York Times*. The *New York Times* is a reputable news agency that fact-checks data and staffs writers with credentials and expertise.

Step 3: "Read laterally" (Caulfield, 2017, para. 3).

When researching online, you are probably familiar with having multiple tabs open within your computer browser. This is an example of lateral research. When verifying credibility and fact-checking data, be sure to look at what other authors and researchers are saying in regards to the source. Have multiple tabs open! Cross-check the information being presented (Younger, 2018).

The "Electric Car Revolution" (2017) article links to a number of credible, external resources through an "explore area" in the database. Some of the articles include:

- "New Environmental Clean Technologies Data Have Been Reported by Researchers at Kanagawa University (Life Cycle Emissions Assessment of Transition To Low-carbon Vehicles In Japan: Combined Effects of Banning Fossil-fueled Vehicles and Enhancing"

  (Ecology, Environment & Conservation, 2020).

- "Green car sales signal the death of diesel"(The Times London, 2020).

Step 4: "Circle back" (Caulfield, 2017, para. 3).

Remember, it's ok to get lost or confused when comparing and contrasting various opinions and sources. This is especially true when you are engaging
critically with a source. Know that once you've done this process once, you will be better equipped to do it again for the next source.

When reading laterally, ask:

- Are there critiques of the source?

- Are there different interpretations of the data?
- Are there opinions being presented?

Try It!

Recognize some key characteristics of searching for and identifying reliable sources in the following activity.

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This subtopic covered what it means to assess a source for quality, relevant, and authoritative information. We explored some steps you can use to assess a source, such as:

- The CRAAP test
- Looking for context
- Incorporating fact-checking

References

See Assess References

30.

INTEGRATE

Karolyn Zuccarelli

Weave research material seamlessly into your project.

What You'll Learn:

- How to incorporate sources into an essay
- Citation techniques and mechanics
- Documentation of sources in APA

From a research perspective, *integrate* means to unify and bring your ideas together clearly.

When it comes time to supply supporting evidence for your ideas, it is important to be able to identify where you found a particular piece of information, which is why using a consistent filing system to organize secondary research is a key technique.

Then you will integrate your secondary research, being careful to document which words and ideas come from secondary sources. Let's learn how to do this!

Incorporating Evidence from Sources

After evaluating and selecting sources to support your research question, the next research step is to incorporate them and cite them in your work.

There are three ways to incorporate outside work from either a primary or secondary source: direct quote, summary, and paraphrase.

The three ways can seem quite similar, but there are some fundamental differences.

Direct Quote

A direct quote is when you use information from another source by copying it directly or word for word into your work.

To indicate to your audience that words have been directly copied, you use quotation marks. The quotation marks also indicate that the ideas, as well as the words of the original author, are being used in the exact same way.

When directly quoting, you must include an in-text citation. This will be further explained later in this subtopic.

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Summaries and Paraphrases

Summaries and **paraphrases** also include borrowed information from another source. However, the words borrowed are changed and put into your own words. Essentially, the words of the original source change, but the ideas stay the same.

A summary includes the main ideas presented in the original source. The main points are the key pieces of information integral to understanding the entire source. A summary takes a whole text and provides a condensed version of all the main points.

On the other hand, a paraphrase takes just a section of a text and restates the ideas in your own words. A paraphrase is more detailed than a summary. A paraphrase includes the main ideas, as well as some of the supporting detail presented in the original source (Purdue Online Writing Lab, n.d.).

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=146#h5p-59

When summarizing and paraphrasing, it is important to remain neutral. Giving attribution to the author by using an in-text citation is also required. More to come on this later in the subtopic.

Scenario and example:

You've been tasked to write a research paper on alternative medicine. You've narrowed the scope of your research to look at the benefits of meditation. Particularly, you're wanting to incorporate the physical health benefits of meditation and have found a source with great information. View the source. Now it is time to decide what information you will use from the source and how you will incorporate it into your work.

The paragraphs you're most interested in begin:

> "*The health benefits of meditation are so potent that…*" ("Spring Cleaning," 2019, para. 5).
>
> "*High blood pressure. Eliciting the relaxation response has been found to…*" ("Spring Cleaning," 2019, para. 6).

Option A:

DIRECT QUOTE

According to Dr. Randall Zusman, meditation can help "people who would like to avoid the use of medication if at all possible" ("Spring Cleaning," 2019, para. 6).

Show Answer

- Information from the original source is copied word for word.
- Use of quotation marks is included.
- In-text citation is included.

Option B:

SUMMARY

Meditation is a powerful way to treat a number of physical ailments. Meditation has a number of benefits ranging from reducing inflammation to decreasing blood pressure ("Spring Cleaning," 2019).

Show Answer

- Includes all the main ideas presented in the original source.
- Words change, but ideas stay the same.
- Can you find the main ideas?
  - Answer: highlighted in pink

Meditation is a powerful way to treat a number of physical ailments. Meditation has a number of benefits ranging from reducing inflammation to decreasing blood pressure ("Spring Cleaning," 2019).

Option C:

PARAPHRASE

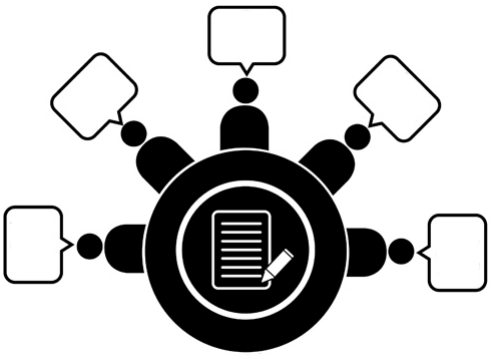
Meditation can improve an individual's health in a number of ways. It is often used to treat physical ailments. In addition, it can be used to support traditional therapies. One well-known benefit is it can help people manage stress by relaxing the mind and body. ("Spring Cleaning," 2019).

Show Answer

- Paraphrase is more detailed than the summary.
- Paraphrase includes the main ideas, as well as some of the supporting detail presented in the original source.
- Words change, but ideas stay the same.
- Can you tell which paragraph has been paraphrased?
  - Answer: paragraph 5
- Can you find the main ideas and supporting detail?
  - Answer: main ideas highlighted in pink, supporting detail highlighted in grey

Meditation can improve an individual's health in a number of ways. It is often used to treat physical ailments. In addition, it can be used to support traditional therapies. One well-known benefit is it can help people manage stress by relaxing the mind and body ("Spring Cleaning," 2019).

Documentation of Sources



When you use direct quotes, summaries, or paraphrases in your work, you need to document and source the information used. This acknowledges and gives credit to the original author of the work. It tells your reader not only that you've borrowed information from a secondary source but also important information about the source, such as who wrote it, who published it, and when it was published (Purdue Online Writing Lab, n.d.-b).

This is important:

- For academic honesty purposes
- To give context to the audience regarding how current the information is (Note: Your reader is likely to interpret data from 1970 versus 2010 differently.)
- It shows you understand and value the role of documentation conventions and styles (APA, MLA)
    - This is especially relevant to students because proper documentation of sources prevents plagiarism and shows a commitment to academic honesty.

There are two components to documenting sources:

- In-text citations
- A References page

Before we consider these elements more closely, let's explore different documentation styles.

Documentation Conventions and Styles

There are a number of different style conventions for how to document references, usually connected to different subject matters.

A few main ones are:

- APA – The American Psychological Association
- MLA – The Modern Language Association
- CMOS – The Chicago Manual of Style

For a complete overview of each style, see the Citation Chart published by Purdue Online Writing Lab (2018).

Please note the following examples and explanations use APA format.

In-text Citations

Here is a brief overview of the basics you'll need to know to create a correct in-text citation:

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Answer some questions on citations after watching the source from Western University Libraries (2017).

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Creating a References Page

Now that you've cited your sources directly within the text of your work, it's important to provide your reader with a detailed list of sources on the reference page. The references page is an expanded, more detailed version of the in-text citations you've included. For every in-text citation you include, there should be a corresponding reference page entry as well.

Answer some questions on creating a reference page after watching the following source from Western University Libraries (2017).

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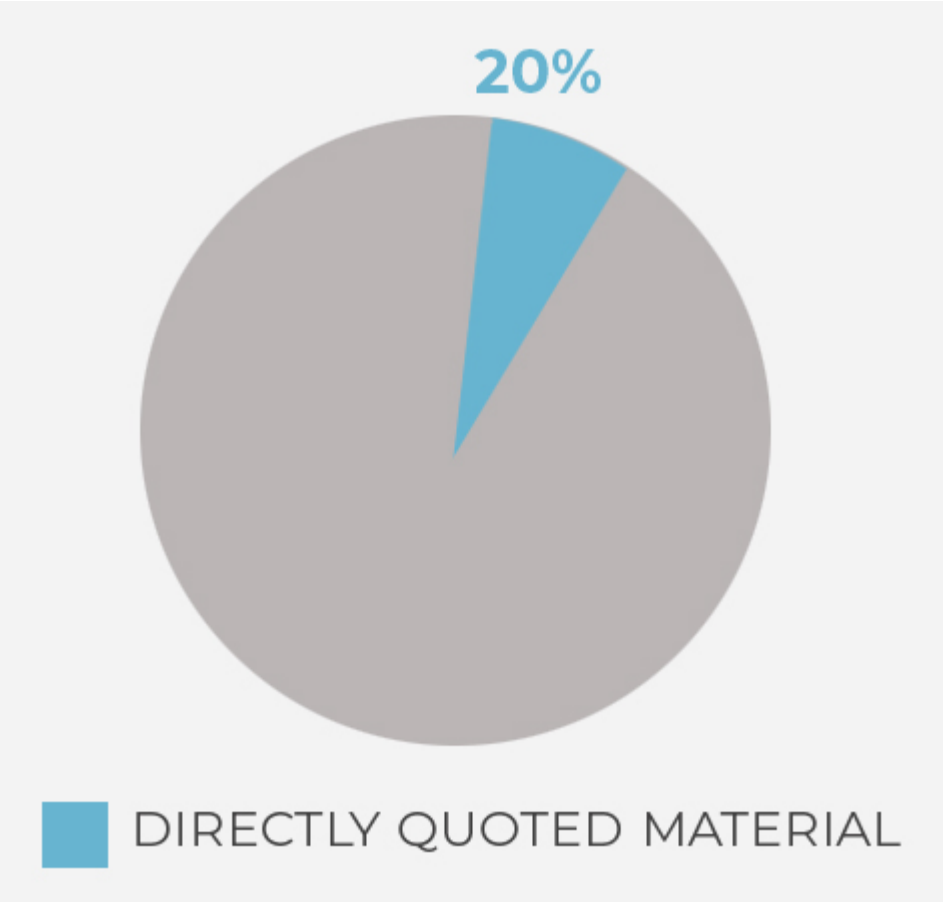
Try It!

Begin your journey with integrating quotes, summaries, and paraphrases in the activity below. Each question has a passage that requires an in-text citation. Use the reference information provided to edit the passage to include an in-text citation.

(Portions of this section have been adapted from the Thoughtful Learning article "Should Smoking Be Banned in Public Restaurants?" and "The Killer Bean" and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

View one source.)



Be mindful with the amount of directly quoted material you include in your work! A general guideline is to use no more than 10% directly quoted material.

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online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=146#h5p-41

References

See Integrate References

31.

CONTEXTUALIZE

Karolyn Zuccarelli

Ensure that your readers have all the background information they need to understand how you're using your sources.

What You'll Learn:

- The importance of context (think of the reader)
- The problem with "info-dumping" and quote-dropping
- How to successfully integrate supporting evidence

Scenario: You and a friend are texting about plans for your birthday party next Saturday night. You're going over the list of things you'll need: music, food, extra chairs, etc. All of a sudden, your friend says, "We the North—Raptors for life." The comment came *out of nowhere*. You're confused and ask for clarification. Your friend then texts back saying, "Oh, I know you love the Raptors. Maybe we could do a purple and red Raptors-themed party?"

Why were you confused? The Raptors comment was unclear and out of context. Once the comment was explained and put in context, it made sense.

Writers can learn something from this example. Providing **context** in your writing matters greatly to your audience understanding your message.

Contextualizing Quotes, Paraphrases, and Summaries

Making connections between your ideas and supporting evidence is a key part of the writing process. Any time you include information from another source, whether it be a summary, paraphrase, or direct quote, be sure to

guide your reader. This will help your audience to better engage with and understand your writing. It will also prevent your ideas from being misconstrued.

Let's think about this in terms of essay writing. You already know that your thesis will have multiple parts and that each part will require supporting evidence (in the form of quotes, paraphrases, or summaries). This is where the following process for adding supporting evidence can be of value.

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=641#h5p-60

Check out this source from Lauren's the Write Way (2016) for an overview of the quote sandwich.

Now let's practice contextualizing the following quote:

"How much is society entitled to penalize smokers for their decisions because—in society's view—those decisions are unhealthy?" (Samuelson, 1998, p. 47).

This quote needs an introduction and explanation in order for the reader to understand its significance. An in-text citation is given, but the reader needs more information to make sense of the quote.

Below, the quote is integrated into a sample student piece of writing from Thoughtful Learning (2020).

(Portions of this section have been adapted from the Thoughtful Learning article "Should Smoking Be Banned in Public Restaurants?" (2020) and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.)

> While the argument rages over the effects of smoking on public health, the question that remains is this: "How much is society entitled to penalize smokers for their decisions because—in society's view—those decisions are unhealthy?" (Samuelson, 1998, p. 47). Smoking tobacco is not an illegal act, yet the 25 percent of Americans who do smoke are often treated as if they were criminals. They are incessantly nagged, blamed for numerous illnesses and unpleasantries, and made to feel guilty by self-righteous nonsmokers (Bork, 1997, pp. 28-30). ("Should Smoking Be Banned in Public Restaurants?," 2020)

The quote from Samuelson is integrated because it contextualizes and supports the author's main point—the effects of smoking on public health. Another paraphrase is used (from Bork, 1997) to provide further supporting evidence.

When integrating evidence, you may want to use signal phrases. Using signal phrases helps add variety to the way you introduce and integrate summaries, paraphrases, and direct quotes (Purdue Online Writing Lab, n.d.).

Here are some examples of signal phrases:

- According to Samuelson…
- Samuelson claims that…
- Bork argues that…
- Bork implies… (Purdue Online Writing Lab, n.d.)

According to Samuelson (1998), "How much is society entitled to penalize smokers for their decisions because—in society's view—those decisions are unhealthy?" (p. 47).

For more information on signal and lead-in phrases from Purdue Online Writing Lab (n.d.), view the source.

Info-dumping—What Is It and Why You Should Avoid It

Info-dumping is when a writer includes blocks of text (think: direct quotes or paraphrases) from a primary or secondary source without providing context or background information for the reader. This can be confusing for the audience as it affects the flow and overall style of the writing.

Some ways to avoid info-dumping are:

- Provide background information (who, what, where, when, why, how)
- Be clear and avoid **ambiguity**
- Explain the information being integrated

Let's compare and contrast a piece of writing that uses info-dumping with one with better and clearer research integration.

> (Portions of this section have been adapted from the Thoughtful Learning article "The Killer Bean" (n.d.) and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.)

The following is from a sample student essay on the environmental impact of growing coffee. The two examples have been adapted from Thoughtful Learning, "The Killer Bean" (n.d.).

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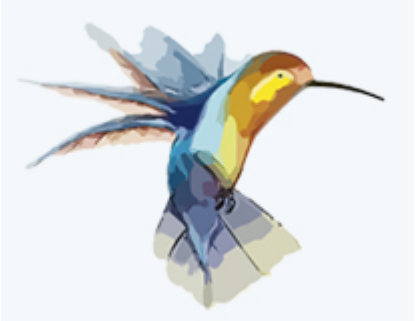
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=641#h5p-61

Bird species in coffee plantations have diminished by 94-97 percent since many farmers switched to sun-grown plantations (Smithsonian Institution, 1997). At the turn of the century, there were 65 species of common migratory birds found in Guatemala. Today, only one-third of these birds have stable populations, another one-third seem to be in decline and 25 species are missing (Wille, 1994, pp. 58–64). ("The Killer Bean," n.d.)



Here, the writer has provided data (from the Smithsonian Institution and Wille) without context or background information. The supporting evidence is not explained or clearly integrated.

As the rainforests disappear, so do the animals, especially migratory birds (Topic sentence introduces the content and provides some background information). One study found (clearly introduces the type of supporting evidence: a study) that bird species in coffee plantations have diminished by 94-97 percent since many farmers switched to sun-grown plantations. This is not surprising (gives commentary on the evidence) considering the fact that two-thirds of birds found in shade-grown coffee plantations live in the canopy of the trees, and less than ten percent actually feed among the coffee plants (explains why) (Smithsonian Institution, 1997, n.p.). At the turn of the century, there were 65 species of common migratory birds found in Guatemala. Today, only

one-third of these birds have stable populations, another one-third seem to be in decline and 25 species are missing (Wille, 1994, pp. 58–64). ("The Killer Bean," n.d.)

This example integrates research information in a number of ways:

- Topic sentence introduces the content and provides some background information
- Introduces the type of supporting evidence included: a study
- Gives commentary on the evidence
- Explains why bird species are diminishing

Read the source.

When adding a quote from a secondary source into your work, ask yourself:

- How does the quote relate to the information immediately before it and after it?
- How does the quote support the thesis statement or the author's main argument?
- How does the quote contribute to the analysis of the author's writing?

Try It!

Provide context for the following quotes by completing the following drag and drop activities.

Use this formula to help you: add context + introduce source with signal phrase + quote or paraphrase + document + explain.

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=641#h5p-64

In this subtopic, we covered how contextualizing information from sources can help provide clarity for your audience. We explored:

- How to avoid quote-dropping
- Understanding the needs of your audience
- Using signal phrases

References

See Contextualize References

32.

EXPLAIN

Karolyn Zuccarelli

Avoid information-dump: interpret and explain the research material you offer readers.

What You'll Learn:

- How to explain and give commentary on a chosen passage

Let's take a look at an example of an unclear statement.

A friend needs help formatting an invitation using themes available on a computer program. She is a computer novice and calls you over the phone to discuss. She knows you've done this type of formatting before. This is your exchange:

Friend: "Can you help me make the formatting for my e-invitation look fancy?"

You: "Of course! It's easy. Click on *Design* at the top of the page and choose your theme. That's it."

Friend: "Wait, at the top of the page? What do you mean?"

You: "At the top of the page, next to the other options. Click there."

Friend: "I still don't see it."

"*Click on* Design *at the top of the page and choose your theme*" appears simple, but it is unclear. The statement needs context and an explanation. Here is one reason why:

- "At the top": People very familiar with computer systems might know where to look for a feature bar within an application window. A novice will undoubtedly ask, "At the top *of what*?" The top of the application window, the system menu bar, the top of the menu ribbons, the top of the start menu list? For a novice, the statement "at the top" is unclear.

How can the statement be clearer?

"Click on the *Design* menu option in the blue-coloured row of icons, within the application window. The *Design* tab is in between *Insert* and *Layout*."

Now, the statement provides more detail, specific navigation, and context for your friend.

What Is Commentary?

In this subtopic, we will look at one more way you can interact with secondary sources—by providing commentary on them in your writing.

Commentary includes:

- Your own attitude towards the original writing ("opinion")
- Your own explanation of the original writing ("insight")
- Your own assessment of the original writing ("interpretation") (Tepper, 2013)

View the source from Tepper, 2013.

Adapted with Permission from Kibin.com.

It is important to differentiate providing commentary from paraphrasing and summarizing. When you summarize and paraphrase, you change the words of the original author but leave the ideas the same. Essentially, you provide a surface-level synopsis of the original writing. When you add commentary, you provide your own original ideas on the secondary source.

Let's take a look at an example.

(This full writing example is from Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing – Volume 2, by Stedman, 2011. The article excerpted is titled: "Annoying Ways People Use Sources." This work is licensed under the Creative Commons AttributionNoncommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 United States License and is subject to the Writing Spaces' Terms of Use. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/ or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA. To view the Writing Spaces' Terms of Use, visit http://writingspaces. org/terms-of-use.)

In the first two paragraphs, the author takes a defensive position when explaining the perception that the public has about scientists by saying that "there is anxiety that scientists lack both wisdom and social responsibility and are so motivated by ambition . . ." and "scientists are repeatedly referred to as 'playing God'" (Wolpert, 2009, pp. 345–48). With this last sentence especially, his tone seems to demonstrate how he uses the ethos appeal to initially set a tone of someone that is tired of being misunderstood. (Stedman, 2011, pp. 245–246)

We will be looking at three parts of the example:

- The original quote
- The documentation used
- The commentary provided

Let's start with the original quote.

"There is anxiety that scientists lack both wisdom and social responsibility and are so motivated by ambition . . ." and "scientists are repeatedly referred to as 'playing God.'"

Now, let's add in the documentation used.

"There is anxiety that scientists lack both wisdom and social responsibility and are so motivated by ambition . . ." and "scientists are repeatedly referred to as 'playing God'" (Wolpert, 2009, pp. 345–48).

As a reader, you have some basic pieces of information here. You know this is a quote because of the "direct quotation" marks. You also know the source ("Wolpert") and the year the source was published (2009) as well as the page numbers (345-48). But if this is the first time you are reading this quote, you will likely need some additional **context**. Remember, context provides your reader with additional commentary about how the quote relates to your own writing and ideas.

Let's finish by looking at the commentary and context provided in the quote.

> In the first two paragraphs, the author takes a defensive position when explaining the perception that the public has about scientists by saying that "there is anxiety that scientists lack both wisdom and social responsibility and are so motivated by ambition . . ." and "scientists are repeatedly referred to as 'playing God'" (Wolpert, 2009, pp. 345–48). With this last sentence especially, his tone seems to demonstrate how he uses the ethos appeal to initially set a tone of someone that is tired of being misunderstood. (Stedman, 2011, pp. 245–246)

You'll see there is now commentary and context added before and after the quote. In a couple brief sentences, the writer has:

- expressed an opinion on Wolpert's quote (Wolpert's quote is a defensive position);
- offered some explanation (Wolpert's tone uses ethos appeal); and
- provided an assessment (Wolpert is tired of being misunderstood).

When adding commentary to a direct quote, summary, or paraphrase, be sure to:

Dig deep

Look for meaning

Explain and provide support for your opinion

View the chart in this source for an overview of types and definitions of commentary.

Now, try identifying commentary by looking at one of your current or previous pieces of writing. Look specifically for any use of quotes, summaries, or paraphrases.

Ask yourself:

- How does my work include commentary?
- Out of the list of five types of commentary in the chart ("opinion, interpretation, insight, personal reaction, evaluation"), how many have I integrated (Tepper, 2013)?
- What additional commentary might I add?
- Do I have sufficient documentation for any quotes, summaries, or paraphrases used?

Documentation Reminder

Watch this source from Lehman Library (2014) and answer the following questions:

- What is paraphrasing?
- How do you paraphrase correctly?
- What are three steps you can take to avoid plagiarism?

Try It!

Identify whether each sentence is a commentary, paraphrase, or quote. You can read the full source here.

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of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=649#h5p-43

This subtopic covered what explaining is and how to provide commentary on secondary research for your reader. When you provide commentary, you:

1. Express an opinion, interpretation, or insight
2. Move beyond surface-level overviews
3. Use support when explaining

References

See Explain References

PART VI
SHARE

- Public Speaking
- Audience Analysis
- Persuade and Inform
- Drafting a Speech
- Presentation Tools and Software
- Practice and Rehearse
- Delivery

33.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Qing Mao

Public speaking means connecting with a live audience, establishing a relationship with them, and hopefully changing their perspective on an issue or topic through the power of your voice.

What You'll Learn:

- Why public speaking is important
- Why master the art of verbal communication
- What role non-verbal communication plays
- How to speak with your own style

If you're afraid of public speaking, you're not alone. According to John Montopoli (2017), a therapist at the National Social Anxiety Center, "The fear of public speaking is the most common phobia ahead of death, spiders, or heights. The National Institute of Mental Health reports that public speaking anxiety, or glossophobia, affects about 73% of the population."

So how do you overcome a fear of public speaking? You can ask yourself: What is it that I'm afraid of? Then you can do something to overcome that fear. Look at the following factors that can make you nervous giving a speech.

You can learn more about why many of us are afraid of public speaking here.

And you can gather some useful ideas about how to conquer your fear here.

Why Public Speaking Is Important

Public speaking is a powerful way of sending information, spreading ideas, making connections, influencing decisions, and promoting changes ("3 Reasons Why Public Speaking Is Important," 2014). Unlike writing, speaking more directly wakens people's senses by employing not only words but also voice and body language.

These are the major reasons why public speaking is an essential skill.

To give information

Giving information in a logical and clear manner is one of the most important skills across all work fields. From giving presentations in school to presenting ideas to your boss or colleagues, you need the ability to make your audience remember your words and enhance their understanding on your subject.

To send a message

During public speaking, you're engaged with a dynamic interaction with the audience. You can use your voice and body language to help drive home the core message. Whether in product promotion or political debate, mastering public speaking helps boost confidence and advocate ideas in a more efficient way.

To motivate change

A great public speaker has the potential to motivate the audience to make positive changes and reach goals. During public speaking, you convey your passion to the audience more directly. Unlike a writer, a public speaker can make emotional connections through auditory and visual channels.

Listen to this source to learn about the greatest speakers in history.

What information do you get from the talk? What message do you get? Do you feel motivated to become a successful public speaker after listening to the talk?

Why Master the Art of Verbal Communication

What's verbal communication?

Verbal communication is either spoken or written communication. It is the most direct way to share your ideas and experience with others.

During verbal communication, you choose words to send messages. Carefully chosen words can help you send a message effectively, and should fit the context, whether more casual or more formal.

Also, remember that verbal communication is a two-way interaction—it's easy to miss, but the listener is just as important as the speaker.

Use simple words and short sentences to ensure effective communication

Words used in a public speech should be simple and accurate, and as free as possible of **jargon**, technical terms, and other long or unfamiliar words.

Sentences should be **concise** and vigorous. Short simple sentences are more effective in helping send a clear message.

The following is the opening of the commencement address delivered on May 25, 2017, at Harvard University by Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook CEO, who dropped out to pursue his own dream.

"President Faust, Board of Overseers, faculty, alumni, friends, proud parents, members of the ad board, and graduates of the greatest university in the world. I'm honored to be with you today because, let's face it, you accomplished something I never could. If I get through this speech, it'll be the first time I actually finish something at Harvard. Class of 2017, congratulations!" (The Harvard Gazette, 2017).

In the opening of his speech, Zuckerberg uses simple words, short sentences, and humour to build a connection with the audience.

You can listen to Mark Zuckerberg's full speech here.

Role of Non-verbal Communication

What's non-verbal communication?

Non-verbal communication is any system of communication that doesn't use language. It includes gestures, posture, facial expressions, tone of voice, eye contact, and other ways people convey ideas without using language.

Think, for example, of what a smile communicates—or a frown.

Non-verbal communication skills are essential. When you give a public speech, you should avoid behaviours such as monotone delivery, fidgeting, lack of eye contact, poor posture, or overuse of gestures.

Use tone of voice and body language to create impact

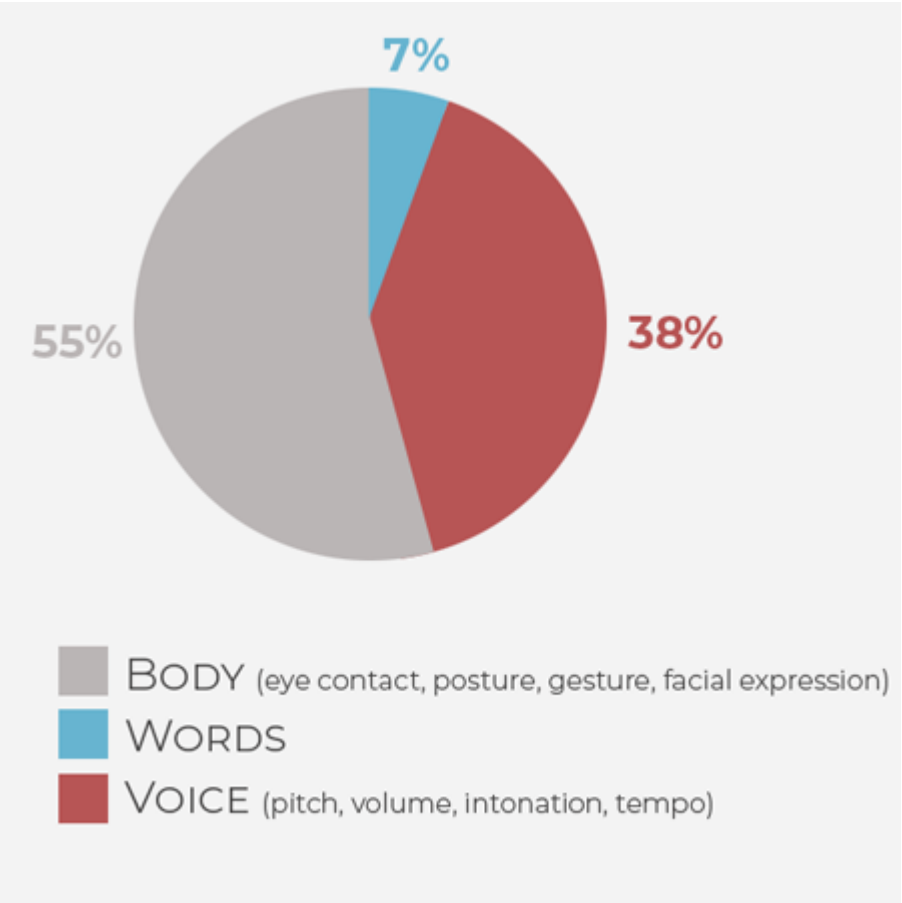
Tone of voice and body language have audio and visual impacts on the audience. They can demonstrate a speaker's personality, attitude, and emotion.

	TONE OF VOICE	BODY LANGUAGE
Definition	Tone of voice is the **pitch**, intonation, volume, and tempo of your voice. It can be used to change the meaning of your words. A public speaker uses tone of voice to emphasize certain information and to inspire and empower the audience.	Body language can be more truthful than words. Body language uses physical actions or behaviours to convey meaning. Arching an eyebrow, squinting, frowning, crossed arms and legs, and steepling fingers can reveal a speaker's emotions.
Example	A deep voice tends to convince an audience. Raising voice pitch can draw an audience's attention. Tone of voice can also be used to soothe or excite an audience. For example, salespeople may use an upbeat tone to try to get their audience excited to buy products. Doctors often use a soothing tone to put patients at ease.	Using positive body language can help you promote your idea, ace a job interview, start a relationship, and win an argument. Negative body language can make you lose opportunities at work, offend people you want to impress, or lose a friendship. For example, making good eye contact and sitting with a relaxed posture during a conversation can bring you trust from friends, while fidgeting and rubbing your nose can cause your friends to lose interest in the conversation.
Extra Information	Learn more about tone of voice here.	Learn more about how body language can help us to transmit information.

Did You Know?

"An estimated 60 to 65 percent of interpersonal communication is conveyed via nonverbal behaviours" (Foley & Gentile, 2010).

Have you heard of the 7-38-55 rule of personal communication? The rule, which was developed by Albert Mehrabian, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of California, suggests that spoken words only communicate seven percent of meaning. Thirty-eight percent of communication is achieved through voice, and 55 percent through body language (MasterClass, 2020).


7%
55%
38%
BODY (eye contact, posture, gesture, facial expression)
WORDS
VOICE (pitch, volume, intonation, tempo)

Speak with Your Style

History boasts many master speakers. For example, Mahatma Gandhi, who called for a passive but determined resistance against England's rule of India in his "Quit India" speech, and Barack Obama, whose victory address to crowds in Chicago after his historic election is regarded as one of the most powerful speeches in modern politics. What makes them powerful speakers?You can hear the speech that made Obama president here.

Speakers have unique ways to deliver their message to the audience. Directed by your purpose, you can develop your own style of public speaking. The key is to gracefully deliver a speech with confidence and **charisma**. The goal is to catch your audience's attention and drive home your message.

You can learn more about speaking styles here.

Watch this source for a TED Talk given by Celeste Headlee, an award-winning journalist, author, and accomplished speaker, on how to have a better conversation.

What makes her stand out as a powerful speaker? What is her speaking style?

Try it!

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=214#h5p-69

You learned why public speaking is important, and the role of both verbal and non-verbal communication in public speaking. You also learned qualities of language (concise, accessible speech) and voice (style and tone) that help make speeches powerful and effective.

References

See Public Speaking References

34.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Qing Mao

Audience analysis is a task performed at the early stages of preparing a public speech. A speaker needs to assess the audience to make sure the information provided to them is at the appropriate level.

What You'll Learn:

- How to analyze the audience
- How to determine the purpose of your speech

Your audience's needs determine your word choice and tone.

Before you give a speech, ask yourself: Who's your audience? What's the appropriate tone and mood? How do you achieve your purpose by responding to your audience's needs?

Look at these two scenarios. Answer these questions: Who's the audience? What language is used? What's the tone? What does the audience expect?

"That patient is suffering from separation anxiety disorder. I'd like to try cognitive behavioural therapy."

"It's okay, sweetie. Don't cry. Your mama will be back soon."

(Engkent, 2011, p. 3)

In the first scenario, the audience is a specialist. Medical jargon is used to describe the patient's symptoms and treatment. The tone is calm and professional. The audience wants to hear the doctor's diagnosis.

In the second scenario, the audience is a child. Very simple language is used. The tone is comforting and reassuring. The audience wants to be assured that mother will come back soon.

If you don't fully understand the first scenario, you'll surely understand what's happened to the patient after looking at the second scenario. The patient is a child who is crying because the mother is away.

How to Analyze the Audience

What's audience analysis?

When you analyze your audience, you identify your audience members' attitudes, beliefs, level of understanding, and interests to understand the world from their perspectives. This can help you determine the content of your speech, what language to use, and listener expectations. You can **tailor** your message to the needs of the listener to communicate more effectively.

Approaches to audience analysis

	DEFINITION	SCENARIO
Situational Analysis	Consider the time and place of a speech, the audience size, and the speaking occasion.	Giving a talk in a meeting room with the capacity of 20 people or in an auditorium that holds 1,000 people means entirely different expectations for a speaker. Temperature, size of the room, the level of surrounding noise, time of day are some factors that influence the audience's desire to listen. A speaker needs to find out these factors ahead of time to resolve these issues appropriately.
Demographic Analysis	"Whenever addressing an audience, it is generally a good idea to know about its age, gender, major, year in school, race, ethnicity, religion, et cetera" (DeCaro, Adams, & Jefferis, n.d.). Knowing these details, you can include useful and relevant information to engage your audience.	Talking to a group of 25–35 year olds about economic development after World War II is a different experience from talking about the same topic to a group of 55–65 year olds. People from the older group are more likely to feel connected to the topic. The speaker needs to include more background knowledge while addressing the younger audience. Alternatively, the speaker can ask the younger audience to do some research on the topic before the speech.
Psychological Analysis	Understand what beliefs and attitudes your audience already have regarding your topic. "It's always important to know where your audience stands on the issues you plan to address ahead of time" (DeCaro, Adams, & Jefferis, n.d.).	Suppose you're giving a talk about environmental protection to a group of economists. Very likely they hold the idea that a strong economy is key to human development. In this case, you may want to start your speech by providing facts and examples to prove that unsustainable economic growth is responsible for the depletion of natural resources, animal extinction, and excessive greenhouse gases. This can give you credibility and help you gain the trust of the audience.
Multicultural Analysis	Be aware of cultural differences. Become a culturally effective speaker. The capacity to appreciate other cultures can help you build common ground with audience members from diverse ethnic backgrounds.	Your topic may not be shared among other cultures. Avoid sensitive topics. Also, be careful with humour. It can be risky to tell jokes when you address a multicultural audience. What's funny in one culture may be taboo or incomprehensible in another.
Topic Interest and Prior Knowledge	You need to know ahead what prior knowledge your audience has. You don't want to present information that your audience already knows. You want to sound resourceful, knowledgeable, and confident.	If you are giving a talk on "Overcoming Cyber-Bullying" to parents, consider what they may already know about cyber-bullying and what they need to know to support and protect their children. You may want to define technical terms and concepts that aren't mainstream such as "trolling" or "flaming." You may avoid giving a history of the internet or defining social media because your audience is familiar with these things.

You can learn more in this University of Pittsburgh page on Audience Analysis.

Try it!

Watch the TED Talk "You Don't Find Happiness, You Create It" by Katarina Blom, a psychologist and the first author to publish a Swedish book on positive psychology. Pay attention to her tone, body language, word choice, sentence structure, and audience management.

Choose the better answers to the following questions.

Public Speaking Statistics

When a speaker does all the talking without giving the audience an opportunity to participate, audience engagement drops by 14%.

Adding facts and figures to a presentation increases audience retention by 20% (Allison, 2018).

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=231#h5p-4

Before you begin to draft your speech, it is important to analyze your audience to tailor your speech to their needs.

Analyzing the Audience

Situational analysis
Demographic analysis
Psychological analysis
Multicultural analysis
Topic interest and prior knowledge

References

See Audience Analysis References

35.

PERSUADE AND INFORM

Qing Mao

In a public speech, speakers often attempt to convince the audience to agree with their opinion. To accomplish this, they provide strong and adequate information and use tools of persuasion.

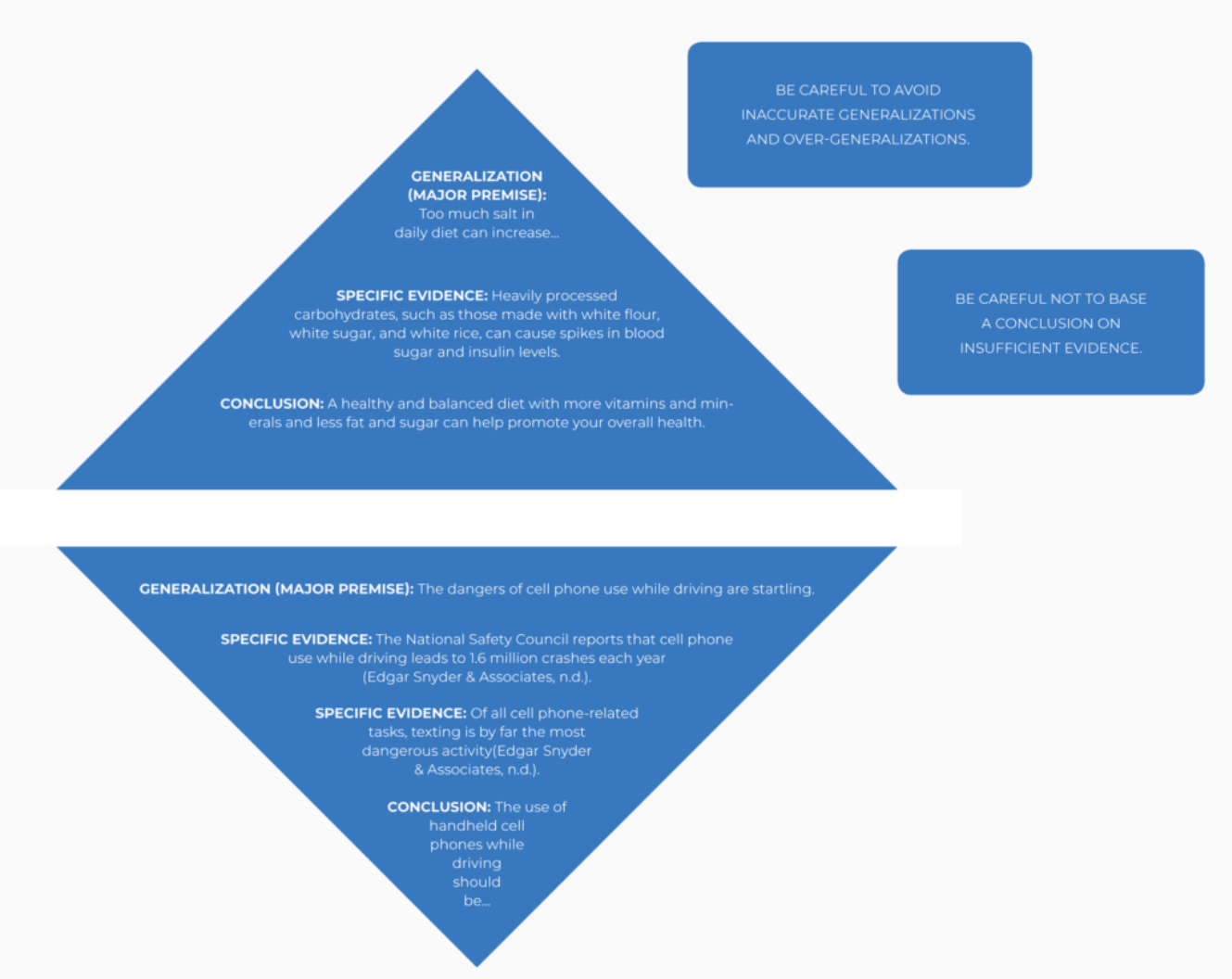
What You'll Learn:

- How to make your speech persuasive
- How to make your speech informative

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=259#h5p-5

How to Make Your Speech Persuasive

Keep your audience at the centre. If your audience has built up their own perspectives on your topic, you may want to provide strong and adequate evidence before stating your opinion. If your audience know very little about your topic, you might want to state your opinion at the beginning, then provide evidence for it.



To persuade your audience, you need to give them ample attention. You should have direct and extended eye contact and pay attention to their reactions.

Audience-centred communication allows the speaker to tailor the message to the needs of their listeners.

How to Combat Short Attention Spans

- Give a surprising statement at the beginning of the speech.
- Include an anecdote or personal experience in the speech.
- Engage the audience with questions or activities.
- Do not linger over unimportant details.
- Use transition signals to lead the audience through your story.
- Use humour to make your audience laugh.
- Make slides image heavy, not text heavy.

Build credibility in your introduction

It's essential to win trust from the audience at the beginning of your speech. For example, if you are giving a speech on the benefit of sports, you could use the following strategies in your opening.

OPENING STRATEGIES	EXAMPLES
Reveal a personal connection to your topic.	Running a marathon has completely changed my life. I've learned to be resilient. Success doesn't build character; failure does.
State your credentials.	I'm a marathon coach. I've won the Boston Marathon three times. Now I'm teaching people how to build resilience not only physically but also mentally.
Establish common ground with your audience.	Have you ever tried running a marathon but had to give up because it was too challenging to continue? I've been there.
Show your knowledge, experience, and insights.	I've been running marathons for 15 years. I started running to build my stamina, but then I realized it also enables me to achieve so many other things, such as social skills, confidence, and expression of emotions.

Remember, you're the message. Speak loudly, clearly, and confidently. Use your gestures and facial expressions to reinforce your credibility.

Learn more about establishing credibility here.

View the source for seven memorable ways to open a speech.

Choose the right persuasive approach

Aristotle proposed three argumentative appeals (three ways to persuade your audience): logical, ethical, and emotional. Strong arguments have a balance of all three.

Logical appeal is the strategic use of logic, claims, and evidence to convince an audience of a certain point.

Ethical appeal is used to establish the speaker as fair, open-minded, honest, and knowledgeable about the subject matter. If audience members believe the speaker is trustworthy and credible, they are more likely to be persuaded by the speaker's points.

Emotional appeal targets the emotions of the audience to create some kind of connection with the speaker ("The Three Appeals of Argument," n.d.).

Logical Appeal

(Reason/Proof)

Structured speech (opening/body/conclusion)

References to studies, statistics, case studies…

Use of comparison, analogies, metaphors…

Ethical Appeal

(Credibility/Trust)

Personal branding

Confidence in delivery

Cite credible sources

Emotional Appeal

(Emotion/Values)

Stories

Inspirational quotes

Vivid language

See more about the three appeals here.

Let's say a speech is about individual endeavours to stop and overcome environmental destruction:

APPEALS	EXAMPLES
Logical Appeal	Our earth provides us with air, food, and many other needs. Humanity depends on a healthy and sustainable environment to carry on our daily activities. It is essential for us to protect the natural environment.
Ethical Appeal	The environment is deteriorating. I've spent the past 10 years studying how climate change has brought detrimental effects on our surroundings. David Attenborough, a British natural historian, says, "If we don't take climate action, the collapse of our civilizations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon" (Katowice, 2018).
Emotional Appeal	Every day animals lose their homes when trees are chopped down. This makes them more vulnerable to predators and other dangerous conditions. If we become more aware of this serious issue and start to take protective action, we could save these beautiful forests and the animals who call them home.

You can learn more about persuasive speaking here.

How to Make Your Speech Informative

Use lots of evidence

Examples serve as logical appeal. They help prove your point. They also serve as emotional appeal. Examples are more interesting to listen to than opinion or a long list of facts.

Evidence used in your speech needs to be credible. It can be facts and figures from respected authorities, charts and graphs, anecdotes, and personal experience.

A speaker talking about the valuable lesson learned from failure uses a variety of evidence to support their ideas in the following passage.

> *People always enjoy the moments of success and avoid the experience of failure without knowing the latter can be the catalyst for life-long development. While feeling successful brings pride and confidence, failure makes us feel lost and discouraged. In this success-driven society, failure is considered deficiency. However, failing doesn't mean failure. Bill Gates, an American business magnate, says, "Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose." Failing can push people to reach their potential and help them gain new perspectives. Walt Disney was told he lacked creativity. Milton Hershey started three candy companies before Hershey's and watched all of them fail. It is those who can't lose who will fall victim to setbacks. If Thomas Edison could take 10,000 steps before the invention of the light bulb, why can't we learn the lessons from failure and gain a real sense of achievement?*

In this example, the speaker is quoting Bill Gates to support their ideas. The speaker also uses real-life examples to build common ground with the audience: While success can make us complacent, failure can inspire us to carry on.

Address the counterargument

This gives you a chance to address your audience's possible objections and make your argument stronger.

You're giving a talk on euthanasia- also known as medically assisted suicide. Your argument is that ending a loved one's life in order to ease their pain should be allowed if the patient has consented. During the talk, you could address the opposing viewpoint: Allowing someone to murder another living human is immoral. Then, provide strong and adequate evidence to prove this argument isn't valid in this case.

Including a counterargument in your speech shows you know and understand that other positions exist, you've considered those, and you can respond to them. Doing this gives you credibility and can strengthen your argument.

You can learn more about counterarguments here.

Conclude with a call to action

If you add a call to action at the end of your speech, you tell your audience the role they can play after they leave your talk. It gives an audience concrete tasks to tackle, which helps bring your ideas to life.

If your talk is about charitable work, you could ask your audience to donate to a charity at the end of your speech. If your talk is about the importance of a balanced diet, you could urge your audience to eat more vegetables. If your talk is about how running can help strengthen the immune system, you could encourage your audience to train for an upcoming marathon.

Now you've learned how to make your speech persuasive and informative. When you draft your speech, remember to use some of these strategies to make it more engaging and effective.

Try It!

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=259#oembed-1

Watch the TED Talk by Brian Little, an internationally acclaimed scholar and speaker in the field of personality and motivational psychology.

Strong speakers use strategies to win over the audience. Match what Dr. Little does in the speech in column B with the strategies in column A.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=259#h5p-65

We explored how to make speeches persuasive and informative. Persuasive speeches are audience-centred and use strategies to increase the speaker's credibility. Informative speeches rely on evidence and counterarguments. We learned that speeches often end with a call to action.

References

See Persuade and Inform References

36.

DRAFTING A SPEECH

Qing Mao

Preparing a preliminary version of a speech creates a solid foundation for what you want to address and focus on in your speech.

What You'll Learn:

- How to pick ideas and impress the audience
- How to organize ideas
- How to choose a language style

If you want to give a speech on e-learning, what main points would you include?

All about E-Learning

CAUSES	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	SOLUTIONS TO POTENTIAL PROBLEMS
• Technological development • Saves cost and time • Higher level of accessibility	• Convenient • Efficient • Inclusive • Flexible • Affordable	• Social isolation • Limited feedback • Lack of communication skill development • Lack of face-to-face communication • Requires strong time management skills	• Create awareness about e-learning • Set clear objectives for learners • Stimulate learner's curiosity • Create effective assessments

Talking about all these points in your speech is not effective. You want to avoid "all-about" speeches; try to focus on one aspect of a topic instead.

How to Pick Ideas and Impress the Audience

	FOCUS ON ONE OR TWO IDEAS	CREATE A MEMORABLE PHRASE
Why	Do not try to put too many ideas into your speech. The audience will likely recall only three points from your presentation ("Presentation Skills 3: The Rule of Three," 2009).	Clearly state your main argument and provide a memorable phrase. This can help you reinforce the ideas throughout your speech.
How	For the e-learning topic, you could discuss problems created by online education and try to come up with solutions. Or you could address the differences between e-learning and in-class learning. Watch the first two minutes of this TED talk here and consider the following questions. What are the main ideas of the talk? What topics related to happiness will not be addressed in this talk?	The phrase "I have a dream" is repeated throughout Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech, which created a great impact on the audience. In Mark Zuckerberg's Harvard commencement address, he states at the beginning, "I'm here to tell you finding your purpose isn't enough. The challenge for our generation is creating a world where everyone has a sense of purpose" (Harvard University, 2017). He returns to this message—that we need to make a difference in the world, not just in our own lives—throughout the speech. You can see Mark Zuckerberg's full address here.

How to Organize Ideas

Have a structure

A disorganized speech will cause your audience to lose interest. In his article "10 Keys to Writing a Speech," Jeff Schmitt (2013) says, "Audiences expect two things from a speaker: A path and a destination. They want to know where you're going and why."

Split your speech into three sections: introduction, main body, and conclusion.

STRUCTURE OF A SPEECH	
Introduction	Your aim is to tell your audience who you are and what you're talking about. You want to grab their attention.
Body	You make your argument. Divide the main body into 2–3 points and use adequate and reliable examples to support these points.
Conclusion	A good conclusion summarizes what you said and reinforces the main arguments.

See more on how to structure a speech here.

Make an impressive opening statement

Your audience will be most receptive at the beginning of your speech.

Design an engaging introduction. You can share a shocking fact or statistic. You can tell a humorous anecdote related to your core message. You can open with a question and have your audience raise their hands. Get your listeners engaged early.

Techniques to Open a Speech

AN ANECDOTE	A SURPRISING STATEMENT	A CONTRAST
An anecdote is a short, interesting story about a person or an incident. Use it to intrigue an audience at the beginning of your speech.	"Surprise is a powerful tool in any speech. It makes your audience sit up and pay attention" (Ogahara, 2019). Think of the most surprising opinion or fact you want to convey in your speech and use it right at the beginning.	You can start your speech with a contrast that is relevant to your topic. You can make the audience think by creating images in their minds.
I'm here to talk to you about how to reduce stress in our daily life. Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook, wears the same T-shirt every day. The reason is that he wants to focus on more important decisions at work. Why? Small decisions such as what to eat or wear can consume our energy and make us mentally fatigued.	We are experiencing a biodiversity crisis. The rapid loss of species we're seeing today is estimated by experts to be between 1,000 and 10,000 times higher than the natural extinction rate.	Thirty years ago, we had to leave home to do many things. We went to the library to borrow books and restaurants to enjoy a meal. Now, all these can be done on the internet. Many services are available at the click of a mouse. Technology has revolutionized our life.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=269#oembed-1

Watch the first three minutes of the TED Talk "Searching for Love to Escape Ourselves." How does the speaker Hayley Quinn start her talk?

Learn more ways to start your speech here.

End strong

Your ending note is what your audience will remember. So add your biggest takeaway. Tie everything together. Share a success story. Make a call to action.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=269#oembed-2

In the TED Talk "Programming Your Mind for Success," Carrie Green, founder of the Female Entrepreneur Association, argues that fear, obstacles, and lack of motivation prevent people from achieving their goals. At the end of the speech, she calls on people to remember their purpose in life and take action to make their dreams come true.

Keep it short

Remember your audience's attention will naturally disappear after seven minutes. The longer you stay on the stage, the more likely you are to stray or make mistakes. Therefore, cut unnecessary words. Keep your speech short.

A study by Harvard psychologists Matthew Killingsworth and Daniel Gilbert found that 46.9 percent of waking hours are spent thinking about what isn't going on (Bradt, 2010).

How to Choose Language Style

Set the right tone

Given your purpose and the audience's needs, choose an appropriate tone for your speech. You want to sound trustworthy, confident, and resourceful. Be careful with humour. Appropriate use of humour can attract interest, but inappropriate jokes can distract from your goal.

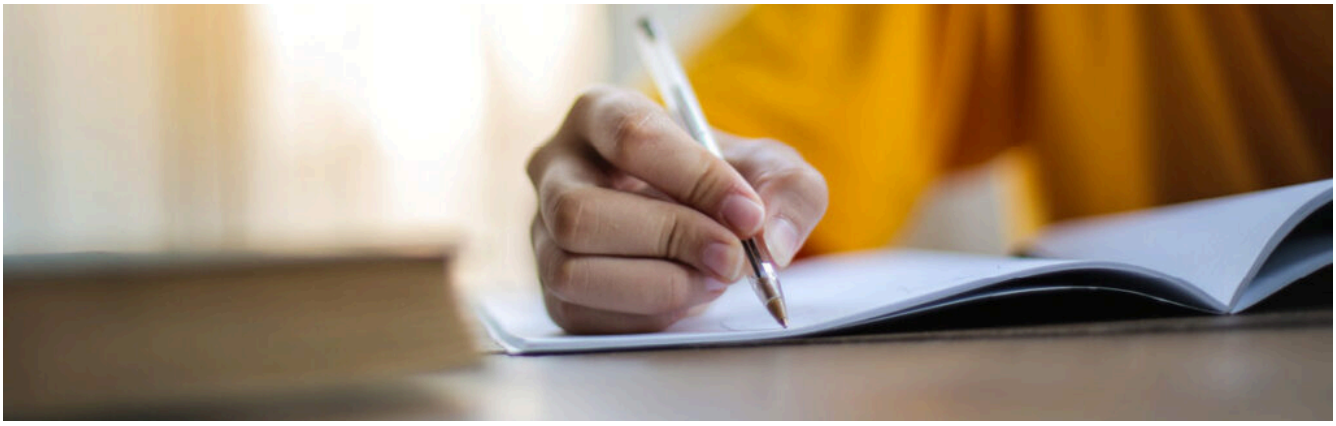
Simplify your speech

Remove anything confusing and contradictory.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=269#oembed-3

In this TED Talk "The Psychology of Self-Motivation," Scott Geller, a behavioural psychologist, sets a very clear goal at the beginning of the talk and uses simple language to walk the audience through the talk.

Use conversational language



"Remember that you're writing a speech, not an essay. People will hear the speech, not read it. The more conversational you can make it sound, the better" ("Tips from the Pros," n.d.). Having a heartfelt conversation with your audience can bring your speech to life.

Now look at the differences between conversational language and written language.

Conversational Language	Written Language
Use short sentences	Use more complex sentences
Use contractions	Avoid contractions
Don't use big words that you wouldn't use when talking to people	Use academic words to communicate ideas
Don't have to follow all the rules of written English grammar	Follow written English grammar rules
Write in the first person and engage your audience	Always try to write in the third person to stay objective
Always read your speech aloud when you're writing it	Reading aloud while writing an essay may disrupt your thoughts

In an essay about writing, you may write: "Strong writers are not always eloquent speakers. My passion for writing dates back to my middle-school years. Writing short stories in the old library in my school is one of my fondest memories."

In a speech about writing, you may say: "I was never a good public speaker. But writing? My school's old rundown library is where I found my true calling."

Use contrast

Contrast brings flavour to your figurative language. It highlights your points because it creates a clash of imagery in your audience's mind.

For example, you may say, "I love music, but I hate loud and noisy music." Or you could describe one person as "fiery and passionate" and another as "cold-hearted."

Use repetition

In a speech, repetition leaves an impression. Emphasize keywords, phrases, and themes. Always try to reinforce earlier points and repeat critical points.

If you start your speech by saying, "Silence is gold," repeat that phrase in the conclusion to your speech.

Use transitions

Use transition words and phrases to signal important points.

"Likewise" and "however" indicate comparison and contrast. When you say, "What does this mean?" and follow it with a pause, you will get attention from the audience. When you say, "So here is the lesson," you highlight that what you are about to say is important.

Use concrete words and examples

Concrete language can help you send your message to the audience quickly. Concrete words refer to things that we know through our senses. "If a word is concrete, you will know which of the five senses it appeals to. Does it appeal to sight, smell, touch, taste, or hearing? This kind of description is often more useful to readers because it offers more vivid details" (Hill, 2017).

ABSTRACT LANGUAGE

The views in Banff National Park are wonderful.

CONCRETE LANGUAGE

Banff National Park's towering peaks and flower-strewn meadows make it one of the most popular holiday areas in Canada.

The word "wonderful" is abstract. It does not evoke the experience of being in the park. The use of the concrete words "towering" and "flower-strewn" creates a sensory experience, so your audience visualize the high mountains and colourful grassland.

Now, you've got a draft of your speech. Rehearsing and preparing to deliver your speech will be the next steps.

Try it!

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=269#oembed-4

Watch the TED Talk "Power Foods for the Brain."

In his talk, Neal Barnard, professor of medicine at the George Washington University School of Medicine, lists some food that is healthy for our brains.

Choose the correct answers for the following questions.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=269#h5p-44

We explored how to draft a speech by focusing and structuring ideas, and by using appropriate language. It's important to zero in on a limited set of ideas in most speeches, and to have a strong sense of beginning, middle, and end. Language can be used to attract listeners and reinforce ideas—for example, figurative language, contrast, and repetition.

References

See "Drafting a Speech" References

37.

PRESENTATION TOOLS AND SOFTWARE

Qing Mao

Presentation tools and software make it possible for us to create and experience engaging presentations.

What You'll Learn:

- How to use software for your presentation
- How to give a synchronous virtual presentation
- How to give an asynchronous virtual presentation

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=338#h5p-45

At the end of this subtopic, we'll come back to look at some of your answers.

How to Use Software for a Presentation

Some advantages to using presentation software include:

Quick and Engaging Design	Easy and Inclusive Delivery
Simple bullet points	Easier to be seen by a large audience
Easy to create a colourful and attractive design	Easy to present
Easy to modify content	Easy to build a connection
Easy to re-organize presentation	No need for handouts

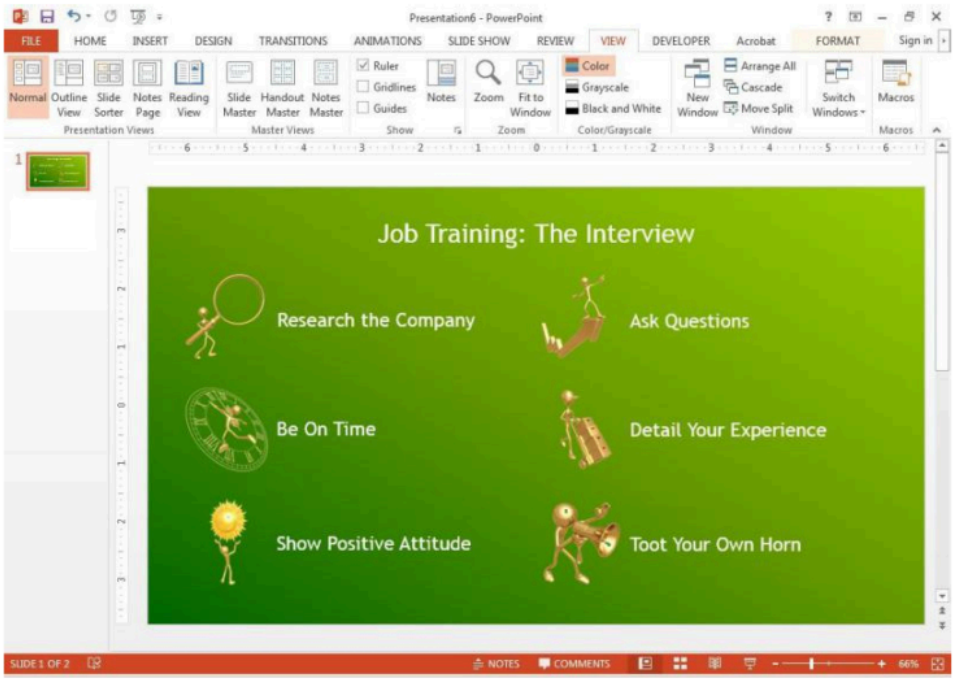
One of the most popular and commonly used presentation formats is PowerPoint. In PowerPoint, you can combine text, graphics, and multimedia content to create a professional presentation.

You can also use alternative presentation formats such as Prezi, Vyond, Google Slides, Haiku Deck, and so on.

Visual aids can help you emphasize main ideas, illustrate a concept, or stimulate the interest of your listeners. However, misuse or overuse of visual aids can cause a negative impact. When you create a slideshow for your presentation, you want to keep the following principles in mind.

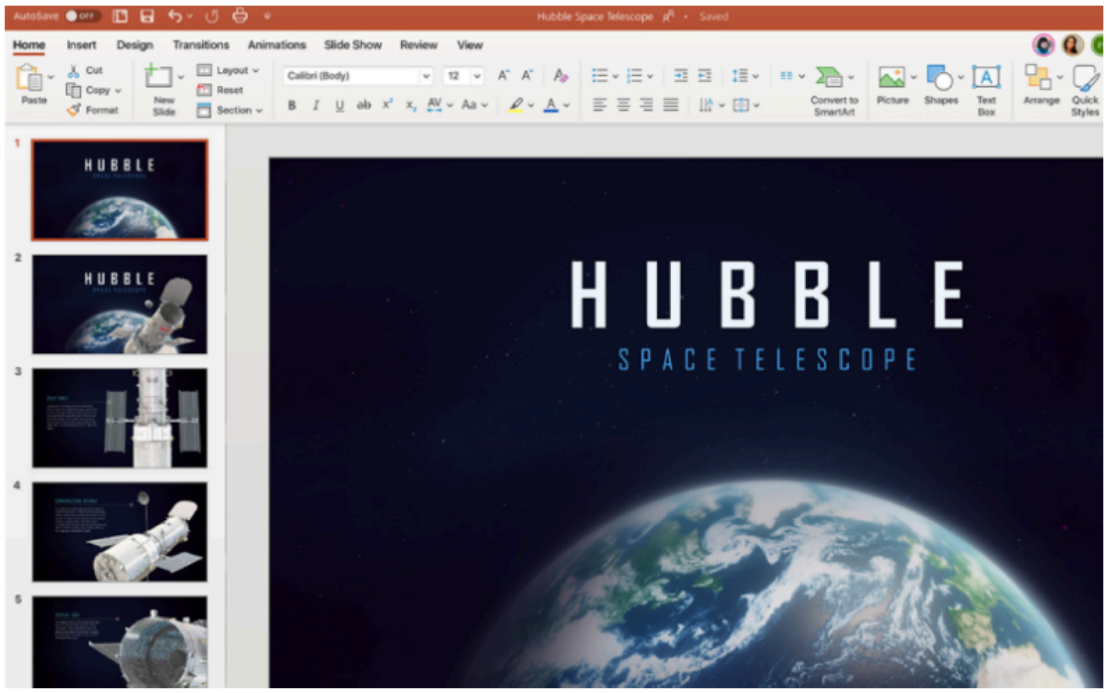
Emphasize important points and add interest to your presentation

The following slide includes very short and concise key points that the speaker wants to communicate to the audience.



Give the visuals a consistent appearance

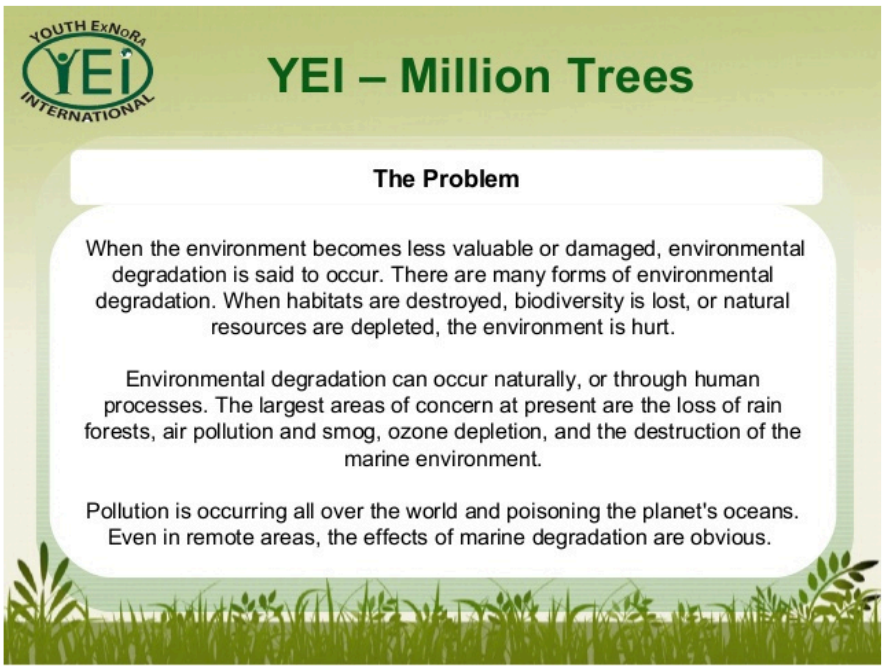
Apply the same colour and spacing for all slides. For example, the following slides use a black background to show the mystery of space and all slides are consistent.



Minimize the text

Make sure the slides are image heavy with minimum amount of text. If you present on tree plantation, here is a very simple image that sends a powerful message.

Avoid putting too much information on a slide. The audience will be reading the slide rather than listening to you.



Make sure the text is large enough for people to read

If you have a large audience, make sure all the audience can see the text on your slides.

Don't read the text that's on the visual aid, but do paraphrase and add to it. Reading from slides reduces the interaction between the speaker and the audience. When you read text on the slides, you're not looking at your audience.

Finally, keep your slides simple and clear by:

- Using minimal design and content
- Avoiding distracting images
- Avoiding acronyms
- Avoiding logos

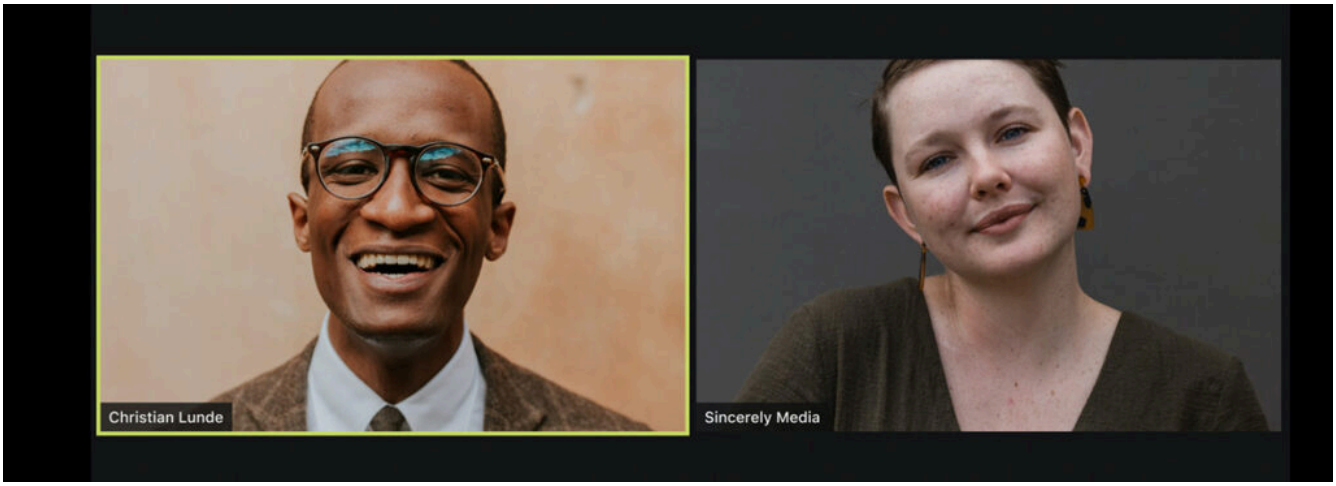
Common Mistakes in Slideshow Presentations	
Distracting transitions and sound effects	"Transitions and sound effects can become the focus of attention, which in turn distracts the audience" (Sommerville, 2017). Avoid using them and focus on your topic.
Bad clipart	Poor clipart may bore the audience. Use your own photos or better-quality graphics from companies such as Flickr (flickr.com) or Imgur (imgur.com).
Overused templates	Create your own style. Keep your slides clean and simple. Minimalism helps your audience focus on the content.
Text-heavy slides	Keep text to a minimum. Avoid sentences. Use bullet points and keywords.
Bad choice of size	Ensure text and images on slides are large enough to be seen easily by your audience.
Reading from slides	Do not read from your slides. Know your presentation well and be able to talk casually.
Faith in technology	Malfunction of technology can ruin your presentation. "Always familiarize yourself with the presentation, practice it and be ready to engage the audience regardless of the technology that's available" (Sommerville, 2017).

The 10/20/30 Rule of PowerPoint

The most effective PowerPoint presentations should contain no more than 10 slides, last no longer than 20 minutes, and feature font no smaller than 30 points (Jonson, 2016).

Here are some tips for making effective PowerPoint presentations.

How to Give a Synchronous Virtual Presentation



A synchronous virtual presentation takes place live using video conferencing software. Given that virtual con-

ferencing is now a typical part of professional life, it's important to think about how to present effectively in this medium.

What You Need to Do as a Presenter	
Use video and be visible	Technology such as Zoom, Skype, and Microsoft Teams helps recreate the atmosphere of an in-person meeting. Seeing each other's facial expressions and body language can improve engagement.
Test the technology ahead of time	The presenter should test the microphone, screen sharing, and camera 5–10 minutes before going live (Yarbrough, 2020). Check lighting to ensure the video feed is clear.
Eliminate distractions	Before you share your screen, make sure you have the content you want to present prepared. Make sure your slides are relevant and tailored to the room. Ask participants to mute their microphones if they're not presenting.
Build rapport	Using an icebreaker can help to create a vibe of authentic communication.
Set clear objectives	Use an agenda and outline next steps at the end of the presentation.
Be succinct	Be mindful of the time and maintain your audience's attention by focusing on your main point and avoiding digression.
Plan interaction to engage the audience	Use visuals, Q&A, questions, and polls to create audience engagement.

Learn more effective ways to keep your audience engaged in an online presentation here.

What You Need to Do as an Audience Member	
Minimize technical problems	Virtual presentations can be plagued by poor video and audio quality. Check your equipment ahead of the presentation.
Minimize distractions	In-person presentations allow for controlled environments. Virtual presentations, on the other hand, aren't as controlled, so try to stay focused and listen to the presenter.
Ask well-thought-out questions	Take notes. Ask questions to increase your knowledge and show the presenter that you are listening.

How to Give an Asynchronous Virtual Presentation

In an asynchronous virtual presentation, the presenter and the audience engage with the presentation at different times. The presenter records the presentation and uploads it online so the audience can access it later. While synchronous presentations enable more effective interaction, asynchronous virtual presentations allow the participants to re-watch the recorded presentation to deepen their understanding.

How to add voiceover to PowerPoint presentations

When you use PowerPoint tools to record your voice over the slides, the audio file is put within PowerPoint. This makes it easy to play your presentation on any device.

Learn how to do a voiceover on PowerPoint here.

Try it!

Now let's look at your answers to the questions in the engagement activity.

I'm very confident using technology to present.

If your answer is yes, great! Presenting confidently in public is an essential skill.

If your answer is no, keep practising. Strong presentation skills will bring you more opportunities.

I've used different tools, such as PowerPoint, Prezi, and Google Slides, to present.

Try different presentation tools. Each one has its own unique features.

I like to include animation on presentation slides because it can engage the audience more.

This isn't the best idea. Including animation on slides can be distracting.

I usually include only key points on presentation slides.

Good idea! Your audience are there to listen to you, not to read your slides.

I always create colourful slides to attract the audience's attention.

You may want to think twice. Too many colours can distract the audience.

I don't like to use video during virtual conferencing.

Making your face visible during virtual conferencing can create a more authentic environment for communication.

I often try to raise an open-ended question at the end of my presentation for the audience to discuss.

Good idea! Involving the audience in your presentation makes the audience concentrate and think.

Now let's look at a few scenarios. How would you solve the following problems during a presentation?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=338#h5p-66

Presenters have a choice of presentation formats to deliver their points through well-designed slides. Virtual presentations allow individuals to present online without having to gather at the same location. These presentations can be either synchronous or asynchronous.

References

See Presentation Tools and Software References

38.

PRACTICE AND REHEARSE

Qing Mao

Rehearse your presentation to increase your confidence, familiarize yourself with your material, and polish your delivery.

What You'll Learn:

- Why rehearsal helps
- How to rehearse effectively

What do you do when you prepare for an important job interview?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=353#h5p-7

Why Rehearsal Helps

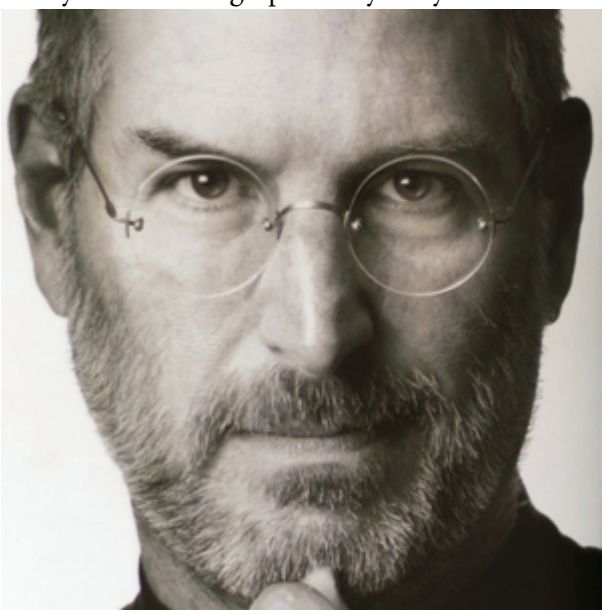
In his book *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Malcolm Gladwell (2008) states that 10,000 hours of dedicated practice in your particular field is sufficient to make you an expert or master performer. In other words, we build expertise through practice.

Practising your speech will help ensure smooth, fluent, confident delivery.

Rehearse to improve fluency—to reduce/eliminate unnecessary content

When we are nervous, distracted, or at a loss for what comes next, it is easy to lean on filler words such as "um," "ah," and "you know." However, if we start to overuse them, they can diminish our credibility and distract from our message.

Try the following tips to stay away from fillers.



Steve Jobs was a master presenter. According to the book Becoming Steve Jobs, "Steve would rehearse endlessly" (Schlender & Tetzeli, 2016).

RØDE

How to Reduce Fillers	
Get comfortable with silence (Communication Coach Alex Lyon, 2017)	Pause to create silence moment to make the audience think.
Develop a new habit during practice (Communication Coach Alex Lyon, 2017)	Practise out loud to hear the fillers and eliminate them
Record your rehearsal	Count how many filler words you include to become aware of them
Practise in a formal setting	Get feedback from your listeners

Look at more ideas to reduce fillers here.

Rehearse to use tone and stress to emphasize, and to reduce monotone

As mentioned before, tone of voice and stress on certain words can serve as signposts for your audience. Use them to engage your audience and enhance your message.

Avoid monotone, which can cause your audience to lose interest.

How to Get Rid of Monotone		
Tone of Voice	Our tone of voice shows our concern for the audience. A monotone speaker can come across as boring even if the content is stimulating.	Speak loudly to grab the audience's attention and drive your message home. Speak softly to engage the audience. Whispering and lowering your voice makes the audience think there is a secret being told.
Stress	Stress certain words. When you stress the right words in your presentation, it helps you get your points across with impact.	You can slow down your voice and emphasize the point or sentence you want to get across. Say it slowly to engage the audience.
Pace	An appropriate pace can give your speech rhythm and allow the audience to follow attentively.	Speaking too fast or too slowly will cause you to lose your audience. Slow down to engage the audience. Pause to allow your audience to think.

Look at more ideas how to reduce monotone here.

Rehearse to build rapport—to make an emotional connection with the audience

By appealing to emotion, your speech can strike a sympathetic chord among your listeners.

There are many ways to use emotion in your presentation.

How to Use Emotional Appeal		
Tell a story	Storytelling is a powerful tool that sparks emotion, excitement, and anticipation while connecting to your audience and revealing something about yourself.	In the TED Talk "The Skill of Humor," Andrew Tarvin starts with a story about his grandmother and himself. By telling a story, he successfully sends his message to the audience. Watch it here.
Describe a scene or a character	You can also describe a scene or a character that your audience relates to. Ask them to share their thoughts and experiences.	In the TED Talk "The Power of Zero Tolerance," Isabelle Mercier mentions a state of mind that can kill creativity, performance, and dreams. The audience can closely relate to this situation: Many people worry about something every day. Watch it here.
Use humour, compassion, and empathy	Laughter is contagious. Use humour to entertain your audience by telling a joke or anecdote. Or inspire compassion in your audience by sharing personal experiences.	In the TED Talk "The Life-changing Power of Word," Kristin Rivas, a hypnotherapist, recounts her journey from crippling mental illness following the death of her sister to healing and liberation. She manages to win compassion from the audience and make them feel her pain and joy. Watch it here.
Ask the right questions to make your audience think	Is there a hot topic that your audience wants to hear your opinion on? Raise a question on the topic and ask them to share their opinions. Encourage healthy debate.	In the TED Talk "After Watching This, Your Brain Will Not Be the Same," Lara Boyd starts her talk with a couple of questions that everyone closely relates to: How do we learn? Why do some of us learn things more easily than others? Watch it here.

Rehearse

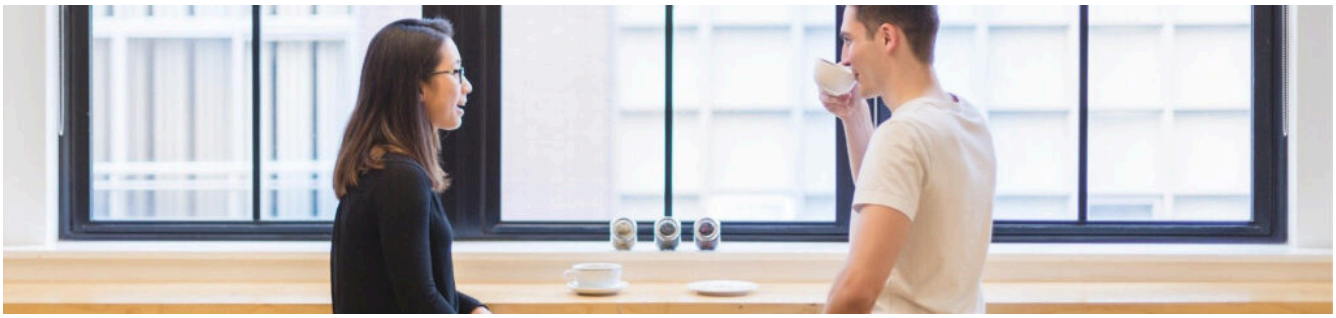
Knowing your presentation thoroughly will help you rehearse to improvise if something doesn't go according to plan, for example, if you are interrupted or face technological issues.

Rehearse to stay calm and confident

The more familiar you are with your material, the calmer and more confident you will be when delivering your speech.

How to Rehearse Effectively

(Information in this section adapted from "Rehearse Your Presentation," n.d.)



Rehearse by yourself and with others

Record your rehearsal, so you can make adjustments. Then, rehearse to your friend or colleague and ask them for advice.

Time yourself

Reduce repetition and unnecessary details if necessary to finish speaking within your time limit.

Practise with your slideshow

Rehearse your talk using the visual aids you plan to use in your presentation. Make sure your speech is in line with your slides. Speak at a good pace, not too fast or too slowly. Ensure you don't have too few or too many slides for the information you want to cover.

Look at more tips for rehearsing a presentation here.

You may also want to use a rehearsal tool to help you rehearse.

Try it!

Watch this TED Talk by Emily Esfahani Smith and give comments on the following aspects of the speech. The first comment is given as an example. Then compare your answers to the model.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=353#h5p-8

Rehearsal is key step to giving a presentation. Rehearse with your visual aids to ensure you are prepared to deliver your speech.

References

See Practise and Rehearse References

39.

DELIVERY

Qing Mao

Make an impact on your audience with a well-written presentation that is lively and interesting.

What You'll Learn:

- How to communicate in a presentation
- How to use visual aids to enhance your message
- How to dress for a presentation
- What role the audience plays in a presentation

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=376#oembed-1

Now it's your time to get on the stage and use your charisma and knowledge to make an impact. But will your presentation proceed as you expected?

Watch this video presented by students from Stanford Graduate School of Business on how to use body language to win over your audience during your presentation. In this subtopic, we will discuss other important aspects to pay attention to while giving a presentation.

Presentations

Techniques for building the delivery

To maximize the effectiveness of your presentation, pay attention to the following tips.

USE OF WORDS IN A SPEECH	
Start with an anecdote	Sharing an interesting anecdote can be one way to grab the reac
Build a conversation	A presentation is a two-way interaction, so find ways to interac can whether it be through Q&A or tone of delivery.
Simplicity	Keep the length of your presentation appropriate to your audie

Tone of Voice

Andy Eklund (2012) says, "Tone vocalizes what the speaker is feeling. A positive tone might be described as 'friendly' or 'confident,' while a negative tone might be 'bored' or 'dreadful.'" Use a speaking voice that is conversational, warm, and positive.

USE OF VOICE IN A SPEECH	
Project your voice	Project your vo
Vary your tone	Vary your tone
Alter pace	Maintain inter suspense. Spea them" ("Deliv

Body Language

Body language is extremely important. It provides non-verbal cues to the audience. Use these tips to make an impact right from the beginning of your presentation.

USE OF BODY LANGUAGE IN A SPEECH	(adapted from "Delivering the Presentation," n.d.)
Eye contact	Make eye contact with your audience to keep them interested. This will allow you to notice if they are showing signs of being bored or confused, in which case you may want to change your tone or expression.
Facial expression	Make sure your face is enthusiastic. Smile and use your eyes to express feelings like joy or excitement. Avoid blank facial expressions, which will trigger disengagement.
Posture	Stand straight with your shoulders back, feet slightly apart, and arms naturally relaxed at your sides. Avoid slouching and leaning.
Gesture	For a small audience, use more fine gestures with your fingers. For a larger audience, use big gestures with your hands and arms to add emphasis. Avoid fidgeting.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=376#oembed-2

Now, let's watch another video from Stanford Graduate School of Business, demonstrating the importance of using body language properly in a presentation.

How to Dress for a Presentation

Clothes can communicate and showcase your unique personality and enhance audience focus. It is important to dress according to your audience, purpose, and environment. Choosing appropriate attire can help you win your audience.

Some examples of professional attire that is appropriate for the context and environment include:

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationcommons/?p=376#h5p-67

While clothing is an important aspect of your presentation, don't forget that it is your ideas, delivery, and passion that add to your success when presenting.

Click here to learn more about dressing for a presentation.

What Role the Audience Plays in a Presentation

Audience members have important roles during a presentation, such as responding to the interaction offered by the presenter, listening critically, and being open-minded.

The body language of audience members can positively or negatively affect the speaker. Dzik, Miller, & Vossen (2015) recommend avoiding yawning, staring, fidgeting, and looking away, among other behaviours. They encourage audience members to nod, smile, and lean forward.

How to Communicate with a Presenter

- Listen critically while being able to decode the message from more angles than just your own.
- Keep your mind open to all topics.
- Make notes on all aspects of the speech.
- Be willing to speak up during feedback periods.
- Give constructive feedback.

Learn more about audience's responsibilities here.

Try it!

Watch this video and compare the two presentations.

	PRESENTATION 1	PRESENTATION 2
Eye contact	The presenter reads from his notes. There is no interaction with the audience.	The presenter has direct contact with the audience.
Facial expression	The presenter looks nervous.	The presenter keeps a smile on his face.
Tone	The presenter uses monotone. The audience can't catch the important points.	The presenter uses stress and pauses to emphasize his main points.
Gesture	The presenter is holding his notes. He doesn't use any gestures.	The presenter uses appropriate gestures to help send the core message.
Engagement with the audience	The presenter does not engage the audience.	The presenter mentions a personal experience to build connection with the audience.

Voice and body language convey 93% of your message to an audience. Adjusting your tone and voice and being aware of your body language can help you give a successful presentation.

References

See Delivery References

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GLOSSARY

abstract nouns

Nouns that refer to concepts ("truth," "beauty") rather than specific, concrete things ("car").

accuracy

Correctness. An accurate statement is factual and precise.

Accurate

Correctness. An accurate statement is factual and precise.

Activists

People who champion and fight for a cause, typically those engaged in fighting for justice and equity.

addresses

Speeches, or one-to-many public communications.

ambiguity

Multiple legitimate but clashing interpretations are possible. Meaning is ambiguous if a passage can be understood in different, contradictory ways.

Bucket list

A list of things you want to do before you die.

charisma

Personal magnetism, a quality that attracts others to you.

claims

Argument or evaluation based on evidence and a process of reasoning. The main claim of an essay is its thesis.

collegial

Collaborative and cooperative in spirit.

concise

Communicating your full meaning in the fewest possible words.

conflict of interest

A circumstance where someone communicating on a topic, promoting an idea, or occupying a position of authority stands to gain personally from others going along with their position.

constructively

Productively, with good will and the intention to cooperate. When you disagree constructively, you show respect for and understanding of whomever you're disagreeing with.

context

The background situation or larger ground within which something is situated.

contexts

The background situation or larger ground within which something is situated.

credibility

The trustworthiness of a source. If a source is credible, we have reason to believe that it's factually accurate and reliable.

credible

The trustworthiness of a source. If a source is credible, we have reason to believe that it's factually accurate and reliable.

critical

Discerning;, practising careful reasoning and judgment.

critically

Discerning; practising careful reasoning and judgment.

critique

Judge or evaluate a source.

critique essay

An essay that analyzes (breaks down) a text, event, or some other source, and evaluates it. A critique is not necessarily negative, but it does judge the source, whether positively or negatively.

crowdsourced

A widely networked, collaborative, democratic form of content creation where many people contribute.

database

An online collection of materials.

deconstruct

Break down, question, or interpret through a rigorous process of critical examination.

evaluation

A judgment on an issue or argument, made after consideration of evidence and opposing viewpoints.

evidence

Data in support of a position or argument. Can take the form of testimony, eyewitness account, analogy, statistics or quantitative data, example, and more.

excerpts

Short passages from a larger text.

figures of speech

A rhetorical, non-literal use of language, such as metaphor or simile.

first-person

The "I" point of view (as opposed to second person, "you," or third person, "she/ he/ it").

foundational literacy

The basic building blocks of communication, such as being able to interpret literal meaning and understand simple terms and basic language rules.

fragment

In grammar, a fragment is a word or group of words that cannot stand on its own grammatically.

framing

Another term for contextualizing, i.e., understanding the background of the source in question.

grammar

The accepted rules for how parts of a language fit together. The system of a language taken as a whole.

hashtagged

Marked with a hashtag, the "#" symbol used in social media to group similarly themed messages together.

hedge

Allowing for the possibility of being wrong. You "hedge" your argument by acknowledging the possible legitimacy of an opposing view. See also qualification.

ideologies

A system of beliefs, values, and ideas that individuals and groups are deeply committed to.

implied

Conveyed indirectly, not stated directly.

inquisitive

Curious, questioning, wanting to discover more.

Iterative design

means to loop repeatedly through the design process, gradually refining the product through feedback.

iteratively

Repetition of a process, looping through a sequence of actions again and again.

jargon

Terms specific to a discipline, profession, or other group. Often difficult for outsiders to understand.

main clause

A group of words that can stand alone as a complete sentence, independent of any other group of words. It has at a minimum a grammatical subject and finite verb.

medium

Channel or technology for communicating ideas, such as the medium of television, book publishing, online content, and so on.

modifiers

Words or groups of words that modify our understanding of a noun. For example, in the phrase "The red car," "red" is an adjective modifying the noun "car."

narration

The method by which a story is told.

nuances

A subtle meaning, or meaning that is present but not immediately obvious until closer inspection.

paraphrase

Expressing someone else's idea in your own words, capturing the same meaning in about the same length, but with new words.

paraphrases

Expressing someone else's idea in your own words, capturing the same meaning in about the same length, but with new words.

personification

A comparison where you describe something non-living as if it is living. "The wind roared" compares the wind to a wild animal.

pitch

How high or low you speak relative to your range.

polarized

Division into extremely different views by groups or parts of the population.

prepositional phrase

A group of words starting with a preposition ("about," "at," "for," "in," "on," etc.) and a noun or group of words acting as a noun.

prosody

The accepted rules for how parts of a language fit together. The system of a language taken as a whole.

Prototype

A rough draft meant for getting feedback as part of the writing process (or some other process of creation).

qualifications

A restriction or limitation on the meaning of a statement. When you qualify your argument, you acknowledge limits or opposing viewpoints.

qualified

A restriction or limitation on the meaning of a statement. When you qualify your argument, you acknowledge limits or opposing viewpoints.

qualifies

A restriction or limitation on the meaning of a statement. When you qualify your argument, you acknowledge limits or opposing viewpoints.

rational

Logical; characterized by cognition and critical thinking as distinct from a more emotional approach.

reasoning

Logical thought process leading to a conclusion in an argument.

reasons

Statements that explain why someone holds a particular opinion or believes a particular claim to be true.

rhetoric

Broadly speaking, related to use of language, especially (but not exclusively) for persuasion.

rhetorical modes

Basic types of writing or communication, characterized by their purpose and the structural or rhetorical conventions used to achieve that purpose. Examples of rhetorical modes are persuasion, classification, compare and contrast, and cause and effect.

scholarly work

Research and publications by professional academic scholars.

scope

The focus or "field of vision" of a research project. The smaller the scope, the more the writer goes into detail about a smaller area of study.

slang

Informal language, typically limited to and understood by a particular group, the "insiders" who know that language.

social cues

Nonverbal forms of communication such as use of the body, facial expressions, and personal space to express meaning.

social norms

Expectations or standards for behaviour in society at large.

stereotyping

Labelling groups by some characteristic, usually in a prejudiced and oversimplified fashion.

Summaries

A neutral overview of a text in highly condensed form; the main lines of an argument.

synonymous

Two different words having the same meaning.

synonyms

Two different words having the same meaning.

tailor

Customize a message with a specific audience in mind.

textese

The language that characterizes texting, such as use of acronyms, short forms, sentence fragments, and so on.

thesis

Central argument or main idea of an essay.

Unbiased

Impartial, nonprejudiced, fair. See bias.

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