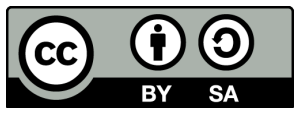
# Making Meaning With & Through Writing

## An Approach to Research Writing

**Ilknur Sancak-Marusa, Ph.D.**

A Member of The Pennsylvania Alliance for Design of Open Textbooks





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# About PA-ADOPT

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# About the Author

Starting in 2005, Ilknur Sancak-Marusa has been a faculty member of West Chester University's (WCU) English Department. Over that time, she has served as the First-Year Writing Director, contributed to multiple curricular efforts locally at WCU and at the state level through her active service on PASSHE committees. Sancak-Marusa currently serves as WCU's Writing Center Director and continues to teach in the English Department.

As an English Language Learner herself, Sancak-Marusa centers her approach to teaching academic writing skills as acts of translation. Regardless of a student's background or native language, academic writing is a competency that is learned and practiced, not a skill that is innate or intuitive. This brief text aims to position academic writing as a target language for students to acquire.

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# Introduction

## The Role and Practice of Writing

As humans, we must communicate to achieve daily, short-term and long-term goals. While we are intrinsically born to correspond with others, our ability to transmit words, in written and verbal form, must undergo significant training and practice. While this is not a surprise to any one of us, we often forget how our ability to communicate empowers us and gives us agency to be productive and successful in every facet of life.

Think back. Can you recall how long it took for you to learn the alphabet? Begin to accumulate words to build your vocabulary? Write your first sentence? Compose your first paragraph? Draft your first five-paragraph essay? Construct your first argumentative, research essay? While we may not recall those efforts in specific detail, we agree that we practiced, a lot, to help us develop our rhetorical agility. Writing is a skill that we build over time; it matures over a lifetime of use and practice.

Unlike most people assume, effective writers are not born with the aptitude and craft needed to write well. Rather, writing is a skill developed through a recursive process. This process requires the writer to engage in actions or stages that can be circuitous, often requiring the writer to return to previous steps to rethink and revise before moving onto the next writing stage. The result often better achieves the purpose for creating the written work.

While acts of writing can often lead to a usable result, the more complex the writing, no matter how concise or lengthy, will require a more intricate and time-intensive writing process. Why? Effective writing is not created by following a linear method. The many writing steps must be repeated, reviewed and repeated in order to achieve the writing goal. The nature of writing lies in the process of developing content. Ultimately, successful writing depends acknowledging and actively engaging with this recursive process.

# General Education Requirements

## First-Year Writing at West Chester University

At West Chester University (WCU), our General Education requirements include a First-Year Writing Program which necessitates students to take a two-course writing sequence to help prepare them for the rigor of their academic journey as well as their ability to communicate in all aspects of life. Just as this text is separated into three units, WCU's First-Year Writing Program outcomes are separated into three distinct, yet related outcomes:

- Think with Writing
- Think about Writing
- Compose Writing

These outcomes not only help navigate both courses in the writing sequence, but also build your skills to navigate any writing situation in the future.

In WRT120 or WRT123, you were introduced to the foundations of effective writing by learning about the writing process, rhetorical situation, rhetorical strategies, style and tone. This first course helped you develop and/or validate the necessary steps to be able to compose in specific genres, based on the genre conventions within a given rhetorical situation. Ultimately you learned that writing is a skill which is most effectively practiced by enacting the writing process to successfully compose. This realization also allows you to compose for any writing genre, familiar and unfamiliar, in any discipline if you understand its rhetorical situation and follow the writing process. The ability to transfer your knowledge and skills to any writing genre demonstrates your rhetorical agility. More importantly, this understanding leads you to developing agency as we acknowledge ourselves as writers in a world that personally, academically and professionally requires you to write.

In WRT200, you will further refine your relationship with writing and your identity as a writer by delving into more academic genres of critical reading and writing. This course will focus on helping build your ability to identify and evaluate credible research, including scholarly sources. It is important to note that the language and tone of a scholarly source is unfamiliar to most of us, because, frankly, these peer-reviewed articles were not written for the general reader, but rather for experts in the field who already have disciplinary knowledge. While the

words may be in English, the language choices and sentence structures are unfamiliar, which require you to translate these texts into words and concepts you understand to make meaning of these sources in our research journey.

WRT200 is an academic research writing course which will ask you to firmly position yourself as a researcher, reader and a writer. This course will also ask you to better understand the significant impact of research bias, reveal unconscious biases, as well as develop a more elevated understanding of the power that writing holds in every facet of your life.

# Chapter One: Theory of Writing

## Definition

An integral part of the first-year writing program at West Chester University is guiding every student to understand how pivotal writing is to achieve every goal we set for ourselves. Whether personal, professional or academic, knowing how to communicate effectively in any given situation is a necessary skill for each of us to develop. To that end, every student develops a progressive *Theory of Writing* in their writing courses.

While it may feel difficult for you to develop a theory, the *Theory of Writing* is based on our individual experience and journey as a writer. The theory aims to explain how writing works, what is needed to compose writing, and how to compose for any writing situation. In addition to isolating the importance of a writing process, an individualized theory of writing provides insight into the nature of writing, the skills it involves, as well as the importance of understanding the rhetorical situation.

Writing your theory enhances your learning about writing. It helps you become more aware of how you approach writing tasks, which will lead to deeper learning experiences. You may arrive at insights into how you can develop your skills, understand writing processes, and engage with various genres and audiences.

## Why Should You Develop Your Own Theory of Writing?

Developing a personal theory of writing requires you to reflect on your writing experiences, practices, and challenges. Reflection can lead to insight that helps your learning advance. It helps develop a self-awareness about what strategies work best for you as you prepare to write and while you write as well as identify areas that need improvement.

Along with improving your writing skills, developing a personal theory of writing allows you to take control over your own learning, because only you can know how you best learn and what motivates you to overcome challenges. This process also supports your ability to develop your analytical and critical thinking skills. When reflecting on past writing experiences, you must analyze and evaluate all aspects of the selected piece of writing. This includes recalling the writing process, rhetorical situation, genre and genre conventions that governed the

writing. Reviewing these details allow you to identify strengths as well as areas that can improve. For example, many may argue that waiting until the last minute, the night before an assignment is due, results in "working best under pressure." However, writing a five-page essay the night before will inevitably lead to either missed opportunities to develop better content, or skipped steps that yield sentence level errors in writing that could have been corrected if the writing process was followed.

Often, you may hear a peer claim, "I'm not an English major, and I'm not going to write for a living, so I don't need to know how to write well!" The reality is that all of us, regardless of our profession or discipline, must know how to write effectively. While it is certainly possible that you may not have to write an eight-to-twelve-page research paper for your other courses, the practice of writing the research paper, the planning, organization, research, drafting, are the same steps you use when drafting any type of writing, for any reason, even if the genre is unfamiliar to you. The skills you are reflecting on and improving are transferrable writing skills which will help you to approach any writing with confidence, because all writing requires a similar set of skills and steps to compose.

In short, the theory of writing gives you the opportunity to *Think with Writing*. By defining your own approach to writing, you will become more effective at expressing your viewpoints and arguments. Conversely, you will also be able to understand and evaluate the writing of others. Understanding your own personal writing process will help you to become a more confident writer who can persist through writing difficulties. Most importantly, this process will teach you to take personal responsibility for your own learning and growth through this course and life in general.

Over the course of this semester, you will develop three phases* of your Theory of Writing. Each will be created based on your previous writing experiences and your evaluation of each of those experiences. Each phase will become progressively more complex and require you to think more deeply** about writing, not only in this course, but also in your other courses and in life. Remember, this should not be a performative writing exercise. This should be a deeply personal, critical reflection about your own knowledge about the power of writing and your writing process. Ideally, all of the phases will align with the work of this course, but your reflections should also include writing experiences outside of our coursework.

## Formulating Your Theory of Writing

As you begin to think about formulating your theory of writing, you must reflect on and consider the following:

1. **Practice of Writing**: This includes understanding writing as a means of communication, a tool for thinking, and a way to engage with various genres and audiences.

2. **Writing Processes**: The stages of writing, from prewriting to drafting, revising, and editing. Your theory examines cognitive processes, such as how writers plan, generate ideas, organize thoughts, and refine their work.

3. **Rhetorical Situation**: The importance of audience and purpose in shaping writing. Your theory considers how writers adapt their language, style, and content to meet the needs and expectations of different audiences.

4. **Genre and Genre Conventions**: Writing is influenced by genre and genre conventions. Your theory reflects on how contextual factors, entrenched in cultural, academic, or professional norms, and genre-specific conventions impact writing and writing practices.

**Appendix A provides details on each of the three phases of the Theory of Writing.*

***Appendix C provides a chart of WCU's first-year writing keywords.*

# Chapter Two: Rhetorical Situation

## An Overview

In all writing, including research writing, the rhetorical situation describes the relationship between the writer, the audience, the purpose of the writing, and the context in which it is produced. It involves understanding why the research was conducted, who is expected to read it, and what the writer hopes to achieve, whether to inform, persuade, or analyze. Conceptually, the rhetorical situation also considers the broader context, including the time, cultural influences, and any societal factors that might affect how the research is interpreted. By understanding the overall concept of rhetorical situation, writers can craft more effective research papers that are purposeful, clear, and relevant to their intended audience.

While you may not have actively engaged in thinking about rhetorical situations, you have been passively and instinctively engaging with the concept for most of your life. Why? The reason is you ALL write … ALL of the time. Be it a text, grocery checklist, e-mail, essay, resume or even a dissertation, your response to each of these writing opportunities is best crafted after considering the answer to a reliable set of questions which help establish the rhetorical situation:

- **Audience**: Who is the writing composed for?
- **Topic**: What information is necessary to communicate in the writing?
- **Purpose**: What is the reasoning for the writing or the action the writing requires?
- **Writer**: Why is the writing significant to the writer?
- **Context**: What are the elements of time, setting, culture that guide the writing?

Now, let’s delve deeper into each of these five aspects of the rhetorical situation.

## The Audience: Who Is the Writing Composed for?

In research writing, understanding the audience is one of the most essential components of the rhetorical situation. The audience refers to the individual or group of people who will read, review, or respond to the research. This could be a specific group such as academic professionals, policymakers, or the general

public. As a writer, when you understand who your audience is, you can tailor the content, tone, and style of your writing to effectively engage and communicate with them. For instance, an academic paper for a scholarly journal would need to use formal language, precise terminology, and a logical structure to appeal to experts in the field. Conversely, a research paper intended for a general audience might require a more accessible writing style, explanations of technical terms, and less industry-specific jargon.

The *chosen audience* also influences the type of evidence and the depth of analysis you choose and present as your research. If the writing is intended for a specialized academic audience, you may choose to delve deeper into complex theories and cite more intricate studies. However, if the audience is broad or general, you must ensure that complex ideas are simplified and made understandable without losing their meaning. You must also consider the audience's values, beliefs, and knowledge base. For example, writing for a group of educators may require focusing on the implications of the research for teaching practices, while writing for a political audience might emphasize how the findings could inform policy decisions. Your understanding of the audience’s needs ensures that the research is not only engaging, but also meaningful to those reading it.

## The Topic: What Information Is Necessary To Communicate in the Writing?

Effective research writing is built on selecting a topic that is specific enough to allow for in-depth exploration and discovery. Focusing on a broad or vague topic may leave you overwhelmed with information, making it challenging to draw clear conclusions or support the main argument. It's also crucial to determine what information is necessary to explain and address a chosen topic. As such, you must conduct thorough research which includes identifying the key concepts, data, and arguments that need to be included to give a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

In addition to choosing a topic, as the writer (and researcher in this case), you are also responsible for ensuring that the included evidence is credible, timely, accurate and appropriate to support your chosen thesis. Along with presenting facts and data, you must decide how to analyze and interpret these elements to advance the written discussion. This will involve synthesizing existing research, providing examples, and identifying trends or emerging patterns in the data. In short, the chosen topic is the central subject or issue that the writer is exploring.

## The Purpose: What Is the Reasoning for the Writing or the Action the Writing Requires?

The purpose of a research paper is to define the specific reason for the writing and the action it aims to evoke or provoke, which drives your approach and shapes the content of your essay. This purpose could range from informing the audience about a particular issue to persuading them to adopt a specific viewpoint or encouraging a particular action.

It is critical for you to clarify the purpose early in your writing, because it influences every aspect of the direction of the research, including the choice of sources and the way the argument is structured. For example, a persuasive paper might focus on providing compelling evidence and presenting a strong case to sway the audience's opinion, while an informative paper may aim to present a balanced view of the topic, offering facts and analysis without attempting to push a specific agenda.

## The Writer: Why Is the Writing Significant to the Writer?

Your personal investment in the research paper plays a crucial role in the rhetorical situation. You bring a unique perspective to the research, shaped by their background, interests, and academic goals. For some writers, research writing offers an opportunity to explore a topic of personal or professional interest, or even to address a gap in existing research or challenge prevailing assumptions. For others, it may be a way to gain credibility in a specific academic community or to develop expertise in a particular area. However, you must also be able to unpack your own biases on a topic, as well as the power you wield when you sift, picking and choosing evidence to use in your essay, through the research.

Remember, engaging in the process of crafting a research paper contributes to your own intellectual development by refining critical thinking and analytical skills, as well as exposing potential biases. Your motivations and personal connection to the subject often influences the direction of the research, the depth of engagement with the topic, and the passion that comes through in the writing. Writing and researching are active, dynamic processes that is integral to your development as an effective, ethical, responsible writer, scholar and professional.

## Context: What Are the Elements of Time, Setting, and Culture That Guide the Writing?

Context in research writing refers to the time, setting, and cultural factors that shape both the writing (analysis, synthesis, research) and how the work might be received by its chosen audience. The time element could involve the historical context in which the research is conducted, influencing what questions are relevant and what data is available. For example, research on climate change may be influenced by the growing global awareness of environmental issues and the urgency surrounding the topic. Similarly, the setting involves the physical or institutional environment in which the writing takes place. In an academic setting, like this one, there will be specific expectations for research and writing style, including the use of citations, peer-reviewed sources, and Academic Written English (AWE). Understanding these contextual elements allows you to navigate institutional norms and expectations.

Cultural context is equally important, as it shapes how ideas are presented and interpreted. Different cultures or academic disciplines may have varying norms regarding the approach to research, what constitutes credible evidence, or how arguments should be structured. Additionally, your own cultural background may influence the framing of your analysis and research, including the types of questions asked and the perspectives considered. Awareness of cultural context also ensures that the writing remains sensitive to diverse viewpoints and avoids unintended biases.

Context shapes the significance and interpretation of the research, and you must be mindful of these elements to ensure that their work resonates meaningfully.

The success of any writing is dependent on how well we understand and engage the rhetorical situation, so let’s practice.

### Suggested Readings

- *Rhetorical Situation, Joseph Moxley, 2023, Writing Commons*
- *Rhetoric - How to Decode Rhetorical Situations and Communicate with Power, Joseph Moxley, 2023, Writing Commons*

# An Exercise: Understanding the Rhetorical Situation

## Step 1: the Writing Genre and Scenario

Consider each of the two scenarios below, individually, and go through the steps that follow for each.

- An e-mail to your professor asking for an extension on a due date
- A text message convincing your roommate to clean the apartment

## Step 2: Analyze the Rhetorical Situation

Answer the following questions about your scenario:

1. Who is your audience? Who are you writing to? What do they care about?
2. What is your purpose? Are you informing, persuading, entertaining, or asking for something?
3. What is the context? What is happening around this situation that makes it timely or relevant?
4. What is the genre? What kind of writing is this? What are the typical rules or expectations for it?
5. Who are you as the writer? What's your role in this situation? How do you relate to the audience or topic?

## Step 3: Write (E-Mail/Text)

Consider your answers above and now compose for each scenario. The deliverable in this step is a fully composed email and a text.

## Step 4: the Reflection

Compare and contrast how you would have composed for each of these scenarios with and without actively utilizing the rhetorical situation. Answer the following three questions honestly in about two to three sentences for each.

1. How did thinking about the rhetorical situation affect your writing?
2. What would you have written differently if you hadn't thought about it first?
3. Which part of the rhetorical situation was the hardest to define? Why?

## Step 5: Now, Let’s Share: in-Class Discussion

Now share your individual experiences with each scenario. Please pay attention to any emerging similarities or differences in class discussions.

As we move through this course, and you move through your days, taking a moment to consider the rhetorical situation BEFORE we speak and BEFORE we write will help tremendously in the quality, intention and professionalism of the words we compose and communicate.

# Chapter Three: Writing Process Matters

When you think about writing, especially when you think about an academic essay genre, you might think of that kind of writing as a product. In other words, you think of the writing as an outcome to satisfy the assignment requirements. In general, be it an e-mail, a text or an eight-page research essay, you likely focus on the writing as a final finished piece. However, just like the creation of any product, writing is developed through and requires an effective, recursive process.

Most importantly, learning, understanding and practicing a writing process is crucial for lifelong success. Regardless of your discipline or profession, you will write throughout your lifetime and the most successful individuals have mastered the writing process in so far as they now instinctively move through each and every step to compose and draft.

## The Writing Process

You might think of writing as a one-step task: sit down, write, submit. However, strong, effective writing rarely happens in a single sitting. Writing is an ongoing process, a recursive cycle that helps you clarify your ideas, refine your language, and craft your message for a specific audience and purpose (the rhetorical situation). Understanding and implementing a writing process is crucial for you to develop as an effective writer. It directly impacts your ability to successfully create content and mold it to the genre conventions and rhetorical situation.

When you break writing down into manageable stages (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and reflecting), you set yourself up for clearer logic, stronger arguments, and less stress.

### 1. Prewriting: Think Before You Write

Prewriting is the stage before composing the first draft. This is where you generate ideas, ask questions, gather sources, and start organizing your thoughts. This stage helps you figure out what you want to say and why.

Your prewriting stage may include the following tasks:

#### *Brainstorming*

When writing, it is critical to understand the requirements of the assignment or the prompt, including the genre and genre conventions required to complete the

writing effectively. After understanding the purpose of the writing, if you are looking to isolate a topic, write down everything that comes to mind of interest. On the other hand, if you already have a topic, write down all that you know about the topic.

Brainstorming for an academic essay is the messy, creative process where you dump all your thoughts about the topic onto paper, or a screen, without worrying about grammar or organization. It's basically thinking out loud by writing your thoughts out. This might take the form of writing lists of ideas, asking yourself questions, or just writing whatever comes to mind. The goal is not to filter your thoughts, but to generate as many ideas as possible and see what connections emerge.

Think of brainstorming as the "thinking phase" before the "organizing phase." You're not trying to write your essay yet. You are just figuring out what you actually want to say and discovering ideas. When you take time to brainstorm, you will have more material to work with and a clearer sense of direction.

This stage is critical in creating a solid foundation for subsequent steps.

### *Freewriting or Journaling*

Freewriting is simply sitting down and writing what you already know. This content will help you to recognize patterns in your thinking, as well as gaps in your own knowledge. Frankly, many think freewriting leads to a rough draft, but it is not an effective stage in the writing process to yield a complete essay.

### *Developing a Working Thesis*

Your thesis is a guiding statement, not a factual statement, that will be proven through the course of your draft. Specifically, thesis statements signal to the reader what is going to be discussed and proven in an essay. It is crucial to articulate a research question whose answer helps you draft your working thesis.

### *Organizing: Outlining*

There are many paths to organize an essay. The reality is you must find one that fits best with your learning style and is most effective in assisting you to draft an essay. You may choose to use a traditional outline, clustering or another format that helps you to organize your ideas into bullet points. Each major bullet point then aligns with the topic sentence of each paragraph, and the details below add details, like evidence and analysis, that is relevant to that topic sentence.

**An Approach to Outlining:**

- Introduction:
    1. Clearly introduce your topic.
    2. State your thesis (your main argument or position).
    3. Provide a roadmap of the main points that will be discussed in the essay.
- Body Paragraphs:
    1. Present clear, logically organized paragraphs that support your argument.
    2. Use evidence from research to support each claim or assertion.
    3. Include and refute counterarguments to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the issue.
- Conclusion:
    1. Summarize the key points made in the essay.
    2. Reinforce the importance of your thesis and why it matters.
    3. Suggest potential solutions or future directions for research on the topic.

Developing your organization in this systemic manner will allow you to compose your writing with intention and details without straying to add random, unrelated thoughts and comments.

***Research and Source Collection***

In the world of information overload, information and digital literacy is critical. Be sure to always do an audit of the sources you are accessing online. Are they credible, timely, evidence-based? Better yet, use the library resources to cut down on the volume or irrelevant sources.

Our West Chester University library sources are bountiful, and our reference librarians are extremely helpful. When online, remember, using the *Ask the Librarian* chat box actually takes you to one of our librarians who is ready to help in real time! Take advantage of all of the resources available to you to identify the best sources for your writing projects.

As you isolate each source, create the full citation, in APA, MLA, CMS, or another citation format, so you don't have to do this later or forget the source details. Remember, the databases will give you the option to automate the citation and you should use it for ease, but do not trust that what it generates is correct. You are responsible for doublechecking that the citation format and detail is accurate. Be sure to do this before you submit any final drafts.

Don't skip the Prewriting Stage! Spending time here saves you time later in the writing process.

## 2. Drafting: Getting It Down

In the drafting stage, you begin turning your ideas, evidence, analysis, and synthesis, guided by your bullet points, into sentences and paragraphs. Don't worry about making your writing perfect at this stage. The goal is to draft by using your outline, and notes contained within it, to simply focus on getting your thoughts written out.

The goals of drafting should include:

- Translating your outline into a roughly drafted essay.
- Developing your overall content into cohesive and organized writing.
- Incorporating evidence or examples, as dictated by the selected writing genre.

Your first draft is the initial pass at developing content. It will likely have seeds of thought that need to still grow alongside an underdeveloped argument with an organizational plan that needs polishing: what some might call messy. Let it be and embrace the mess! Correcting this wonderful messiness belongs in the revision stage.

***Suggested Readings***

- Lamott, Anne. "Shitty First Drafts." Language Awareness: Readings for College Writers. Ed. by Paul Eschholz, Alfred Rosa, and Virginia Clark. 9th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005: 93-96.

## 3. Revising: Review, Rethink and Rewrite

Revision is about reviewing, rethinking and rewriting what you wrote in your initial draft. This is the stage that focuses on higher-order writing concerns. You must take a critical look to determine if you need to restructure your essay,

strengthen your thesis, add more persuasive content, cut unnecessary sections, or add more evidence. In other words, this step in the writing process helps you to fortify your rough draft to include more details and refines the overall content. A common misnomer is that the revision stage is about fixing grammar; however, this is a task that belongs in the editing stage, which addresses lower order writing concerns. To begin the revision process, starts with these four basic questions:

- Does my thesis clearly express my main idea?
- Are my ideas organized logically?
- Have I supported my claims with strong evidence?
- Does each paragraph connect to the overall purpose?

*Helpful Tip*: Before the revision stage, take some time away from your draft. This separation in time gives you a fresh perspective and distance to better critique your own writing.

**Go to* Appendix B *for a Self-Editing Checklist and Guide to help you review your own writing.*

## 4. Editing and Proofreading: Polishing the Final Draft

Now it's time to fine tune your draft. In this stage, you check for sentence clarity, word choice, grammar, punctuation, and formatting. Editing and proofreading are considered lower-order writing concerns that focus on sentence level corrections. Some common editing tasks include:

- Fixing run-ons, fragments, or awkward phrasing
- Correcting spelling and punctuation
- Making sure citations follow a style guide (APA, MLA or what is required by the prompt)

Read your draft out loud. Your ear often catches what your eyes miss!

## 5. Reflection: Learning From the Process

Good writers reflect on what worked, what didn’t, and how to improve. Reflection questions such as these help you grow and carry your writing skills into future writing tasks:

- What did I find challenging about this assignment? Why?
- How did my writing change through the process? What caused this change?
- What will I do differently next time? Why?

Reflection and metacognitive thinking involve taking the time to notice growth and identify your goals for the future.

## Why Writing Process Matters

The writing process isn’t just a set of steps; it’s a mindset. It teaches you that writing is developed, not just delivered in one sitting. Much is gained by engaging fully in the process and:

- You build confidence in your writerly voice.
- You improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- You produce writing that is clearer, stronger, and more persuasive.
- Over time, you develop instinctive recall of the writing process to make you more effective in all writing situations and in solving writing problems.

Every writer, no matter how experienced, relies on the writing process. It’s not about getting it right the first time; it’s about improving over time.

## A Note on the Use of AI Writing Tools

While AI writing tools may be valuable for brainstorming, organizing ideas, and overcoming writer's block, relying on them to generate content for your courses that require academic writing undermines the learning expected in each course. The goal is not just to produce a paper for a class. Instead, it is to develop your critical thinking skills, research abilities and scholarly voice through an intentional process of developing your thoughts.

Using AI to write your entire paper, or even sections of your paper, eliminates the intellectual struggle that builds the essential, lifelong skills needed for future success. More importantly, submitting AI-generated content as your own leads to to academic dishonesty which may lead to failing the assignment, failing the course and/or being required to attend an academic integrity judiciary session at the institution level. Always, always check your course policy in every class for guidelines before using any AI assistance. If you cannot locate such guidelines in

your syllabus, direct your questions immediately to your faculty member to clearly understand what they expect in their course.

If you choose to use pre-approved AI tools in a class, be transparent, cite your usage and use them within the noted requirements of the assignment and the expectations of the faculty member teaching the course, as these vary drastically based on class, faculty and discipline.

The most valuable learning happens when you wrestle with ideas yourself! Solving thinking and writing problems leads to significant developmental and intellectual growth which is the overall goal of your collegiate journey.

## Suggested Readings

- Antlitz, S. E. (2010). Taking flight: Connecting inner and outer realities during invention. In C. Lowe & P. Zemliansky (Eds.), *Writing spaces: Readings on writing* (Vol. 1, pp. 18-32). Parlor Press.

- DasBender, G. (2011). Critical thinking in college writing: From the personal to the academic. In C. Lowe & P. Zemliansky (Eds.), *Writing spaces: Readings on writing* (Vol. 2, pp. 37-52). Parlor Press.

## Assignment: Using the Writing Process

### *Objective:*

Experience the full writing process by completing a short essay step-by-step.

### Prompt:

Choose a topic you care about (a campus issue, a social trend, a personal experience). Write a 500-word persuasive essay aimed at a college audience that includes at least two credible, preferably scholarly sources. All steps of the process must be developed individually as further instructed in class. Tone and format must follow formal academic standards, as well as conform to chosen citation style, i.e., APA or MLA.

### *Part 1: Prewriting*

1. Brainstorm for five minutes.

2. Free-write for ten minutes.

3. Develop a research question.

4. Compose a working thesis.

5. Create a short outline of your thesis and main points.

***Part 2: Drafting***

Write a rough draft (approximately 400 words) based on your outline. Don’t worry about grammar or sentence-level corrections yet.

***Part 3: Revising***

1. Use guided revision questions and review the draft on your own and compose feedback (See Appendix B for Self-Editing Guide).

2. Exchange drafts with a peer and use guided questions to develop feedback.

3. Make structural changes and add or remove content as needed.

***Part 4: Editing***

- Proofread your revised draft.

- Check for sentence clarity, grammar, punctuation, and formatting.

- Be sure you have followed the proper citation format, MLA or APA, and included a works cited or references page, as appropriate.

- Make an appointment at the Writing Center to review any concerns and discuss any questions.

***Part 5: Take Time for Reflection***

Write a brief (150-word) reflection, answering each of these questions. Include this at the end of your essay, after your references or works cited page.

- What was different about composing this assignment (in comparison to composing academic writing in the past)?

- What part of the process was most helpful?

- What will you carry forward into your next assignment?

***Part 6: Before Submitting the Assignment…***

- Edit/proofread your work for clarity, coherence, and conciseness.

- Ensure correct format based on your choice of MLA or APA.
- Submit the assignment, which includes all of your notes to the steps and your final reflection, to the appropriate D2L Folder.

# Chapter Four: Genre and Genre Conventions

## What Is a Writing Genre?

You have likely used and heard the word genre when talking about books, movies, or music. In writing, genre works the same way. It's just a name for a kind of writing that follows a set of patterns people recognize.

In academic and professional writing, genre helps both writers and readers know what to expect. When thinking about an academic essay, a lab report, an email, each of these is a writing genre that has its own rules or *conventions*. These guidelines are not rigid, but they are standards that help a writer shape their own writing depending on the rhetorical situation (audience, writer, purpose, context and topic).

What exactly are genre conventions? These are the features that are present in a certain type of writing or genre. Think of these conventions as expectations people have when they read a particular kind or genre of text.

Genre conventions govern certain elements of the writing like structure/ organization, tone, language, formatting and purpose. For example, when writing a lab report you have learned that the organization is straightforward, the content factual, and the writing in past tense. If you think about a research essay, you include a clear thesis, follow a formal structure, incorporate evidence with analysis, and include proper documentation for sources. Conversely, if you were writing a text message, you would not follow any of the rules or conventions expected of an academic essay.

Just like how you wouldn't wear a tuxedo to a beach party (unless it was a special requirement of the invite), choosing the wrong style for a genre confuses your reader and does not achieve the intended writing goal. Understanding the conventions helps you to dress your writing appropriately.

## Why Does Genre Matter?

When you understand the genre, you already have the map to your final goal. You don't have to invent the format or guess how to present your ideas, because there is an established structure to help you. Further, using the right style and format shows your audience that you understand the genre which builds your credibility as a writer, making your writing more persuasive and trustworthy.

Remember, every field, whether it's science, business, education, or the humanities, has its own ways of writing and thinking. When you write according to the right genre conventions (the rules of the chosen type of writing), you're joining in that conversation using the language and style your readers expect.

When you start to see writing through the lens of genre, you're better equipped to:

- Adjust your tone and style to different audiences.
- Organize your ideas in ways readers expect.
- Recognize patterns in writing, which makes reading and writing easier.
- Transfer your skills to new settings (like going from school writing to workplace writing).

Learning about genre (and its guiding conventions) is essential for effective writing in every rhetorical situation, because it helps you to read more critically, and also write more successfully. Further, understanding the way genres are tied to certain specific conventions gives you the confidence to write for any given situation, even if it is a genre that you have yet to practice.

### Suggested Readings


- Devitt, A. J. (2004). Genre as Nexus of Situation, Culture, and Other Genres. In *Writing genres* (pp. 25-32). Southern Illinois University Press.
- Genre Analysis, Writing Commons
- Swales, J. M. (1990). The concept of discourse community. *In Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings* (pp. 21-32). Cambridge University Press.


## In Class Activity

Gather with 3-4 students and pick two texts that talk about the same topic but come from different genres (consider using academic article versus a news report). Then, compare them using these questions:

- How are they structured? Is there a noticeable, specific organization?
- What's the tone like? What kind of language is used and why?

- What kind of evidence do they use? Why is it appropriate?
- Who are they written for? How do you know?
- What is the purpose of each?

After each of you have read and taken some time to answer the above questions. Now let’s collectively discuss, what these differences tell you about each genre. What are the genre conventions of each? Which conventions are similar and which are different? Why?

# Chapter Five: Synthesis and Analysis in Research Writing

When you write a research essay, you are making sense of the information you know and knowledge you have recently acquired. In other words, you show how different ideas connect by offering your own insights. This heavy lifting in the thinking process is significantly supported by the act of synthesis and analysis.

## Analysis

When you engage in the act of analysis, you break ideas, concepts, research down into simpler parts to understand them better. When you analyze, you ask questions like:

- What are the implications of the research? Do results impact all or some subjects?
- How does the experiment or solution work? What are the data points and variables?
- Why does this research or perspective matter? Are there limitations?
- What are the general strengths or weaknesses of the argument or research?
- Is the information timely or centric to a location, culture, socioeconomic situation?

Think of analysis like a dissection or deconstruction of a larger concept or idea. You learn more about the big idea or concept by digging further into the meaning, structure, and significance.

## Synthesis

Unlike analysis, synthesis is the act of putting ideas together in meaningful ways. For example, it might involve looking at multiple sources and figuring out how they relate to each other. While analysis helps you understand each part, synthesis helps you connect those parts to make something new.

By utilizing and engaging in synthesis and analysis in your research and research writing, you are not only practicing how to write, but also how to think critically.

Your collegiate experience across disciplines will require you to understand large concepts as well as break down those concepts into their basic principal parts to demonstrate acquisition of knowledge. For example, in a psychology course, you may be required to analyze different studies and then synthesize them in a literature review and a research essay. On the other hand, in a history class, you will be required to compare the different perspectives of a historical event and then build your own argument and conclusions from all of the documentation of that single event. And then your education course may ask you to synthesize teaching methods using research to recommend new classroom management practices. In each of these cases you are required to demonstrate your synthesis and analysis skills.

These skills are not only required for success in college, but also in every single profession. If you choose to pursue a career in marketing, you will analyze consumer data and then synthesize those trends to build targeted strategies to promote products or services. As a lawyer, analyzing case law along with the details of the situation leads to synthesizing an argument to develop a legal position for a client. Also, healthcare workers must analyze individual patient symptoms alongside synthesizing their medical knowledge to make a diagnosis and develop a treatment plan.

Notice that your familiarity with the subject is not critical to your success. Instead, it is about recognizing the core skills and practices you need to approach each situation. From professional athletes and construction workers to teachers and software developers, being able to think critically and communicate clearly will help distinguish your abilities and provide a path to success.

## Analysis: An Example

Let’s say you have found a significant a quote from a scholarly article that aids your research. Writing analytically will require you, first, to engage in a three-phased translation of this quote to show your deeper understanding of how it relates to the research you have gathered. Here’s how you might move in translating quote to summary to analysis:

- **Phase I - Direct Quote:** “Students who write regularly in their discipline show stronger retention of course content” (Smith, 2022).
- **Phase II - Summary (just repeating):** Smith (2022) says that students who write often retain more course material.

- **Phase III - Analyzing (going deeper):** Smith's (2022) point suggests that writing may reinforce learning by encouraging students to actively reflect on and apply new material. This could be especially useful in courses that rely heavily on memorization or theoretical concepts.

In the above example, the analysis clearly demonstrates the importance of the quote and explains how it connects to the larger picture. Most emerging writers, however, will simply stop at Phase I and simply insert the quote word-for-word from the original source into their writing without situating the rationale of why the quote is significant. Remember, while the quote may align with your content matter, it is not the job of the reader to decipher how the quote impacts your argument. Rather, it is the responsibility of the writer to offer a clear analysis of the evidence with details on how it relates to the topic.

Enacting each of these three phases will help you to clearly engage with the evidence, making meaning of it, and then add your voice, the analysis, to demonstrate the impact of the source.

(Note: Example is not from an actual article and created as a demonstration of analytical thinking and writing.)

## Synthesis: An Example

Simply put, synthesis shows the relationships between ideas by building a bigger picture from different pieces or variables. Consider the following two sources that are focused on the topic of social media and politics.

- **Source A:** Reports that social media increases political engagement in young adults.
- **Source B:** Claims that excessive social media use can lead to political burnout.

A potential synthesis might read:

While both sources discuss the impact of social media on political behavior, they offer contrasting outcomes. Source A emphasizes increased engagement, whereas Source B highlights the risks of burnout. Together, these studies suggest that while social media can be a powerful tool for political awareness, its effects depend heavily on how it's used and for how long.

Synthesis is not about listing facts, but rather about connecting them and drawing out a new insight.

***Tips for Using Synthesis and Analysis in Research Writing***

- **Don't just list sources, connect them**: Show how they relate, contrast, or build on each other.
- **Balance your voice with your sources:** Use quotes and research, but also explain and comment in your own words.
- **Ask "so what?":** Every time you bring in a piece of evidence, ask yourself: Why is this important?
- **Use clear topic sentences:** Each paragraph should reflect one idea and help build your overall argument.
- **Use transitions:** Phrases like "in contrast," "similarly," "building on this," or "this suggests" help guide the reader through your connections.

In this course you will find that synthesis and analysis are at the heart of strong research writing, because they help you move beyond summarizing what others have said and start contributing our own voice to the conversation. You will practice these skills often which will help you become more agile and effective at performing them. The truth is that you must utilize both analysis and synthesis exceptionally well to navigate daily life, academics, professional pursuits, and personal life, all of which require deep thinking and clear communication.

## Suggested Readings

- Writing Commons, Academic Writing - How to Write for the Academic Community, Joseph M. Moxley
- Bunn, M. (2011). How to read like a writer. In C. Lowe & P. Zemliansky (Eds.), *Writing spaces: Readings on writing* (Vol. 2, pp. 71-86). Parlor Press.

# Chapter Six: Academic Research Writing

## Acts of Translation

Regardless of one’s native language, writing for any given situation requires translation. In research writing, you're not just stating your opinion or summarizing what others have said. Instead, you are joining a conversation. One way to understand this process is by thinking of academic writing as translating complex, sometimes technical information from research sources and your own thoughts into a cohesive, academic argument for a chosen audience.

Like a skilled translator, you must maintain the original meaning of the content and concepts, but adapt the form, tone, and structure to fit a new context: the academic essay.

Let’s begin thinking about how you translate all of the time on a daily basis. For example, think about when you write a grocery list for yourself versus for someone else to buy the same items for you. Likely, you must translate your list into content that the other person can understand and successfully use to purchase the exact items you want.

Consider the following chart and review the details in each column. Can you add how you would translate the items the remaining rows? Or, can you think of items not on this list that you have your own shorthand for?

**Translation in Writing Example**

| Item Needed | Your List | For Someone Buying For You |
|---|---|---|
| Tomatoes | Tom | Organic Campari Tomatoes |
| Spaghetti Sauce | Sauce | Basil and Roasted Garlic Marinara |
| Popcorn | Pop | Salted, no butter, Popcorn |
| Eggs | Yolks | Organic, Cage-Free Brown Eggs |
| Potato Chips | | |
| Apples | | |
| Laundry Detergent | | |

You instinctively engage in simple and complex acts of translation daily. You will use these very same skills and apply them to researching and writing.

# Academic Research and Writing as Translation

Research writing includes four varied types of language which require you to actively understand and then translate. These include:

- Source material to aid understanding of the evidence and perspective offered.
- Interests and ideas into researchable questions.
- Acquired knowledge and position on a topic for a chosen audience.
- Multiple perspectives and positions into a cohesive argument.

Remember, you are not just repeating what others have said. Instead, you are reshaping what you have learned to serve your writing purpose by weaving in sources with your own analysis and synthesis of a given subject. Another way to think about this: your writing engages in a conversation with knowledge drawn from reputable sources.

Also significant, thinking of academic writing as translation can help you avoid unintentional plagiarism because this practices leads to effectively paraphrasing and synthesizing evidence with proper source attribution. As a result, you will build more thoughtful arguments by clearly conveying both your ideas and those of your sources which leads to drawing relevant, thought-provoking conclusions. Of course, taking this perspective also leads to improvements in developing audience awareness, as well as becoming more intentional in translating your thoughts to match the expected written tone, structure, and format.

## Suggested Readings

- Why Don’t Students Use Plain Language? By John Harbord on Writing Commons, 2024.
- Irvin, L. L. (2010). What is "academic" writing? In C. Lowe & P. Zemliansky (Eds.), *Writing spaces: Readings on writing* (Vol. 1, pp. 3-17). Parlor Press.

# A Closer Look: Translations in Academic Research and Writing.

## 1. Translating Source Material

When reading academic texts, you are often dealing with dense, specialized language. Why? Because the intended audience for that text are experts in the discipline. You may then ask yourself why are students required to read these dense texts? Just like solving a math problem, dissecting the main meaning of a scholarly text is a writing problem that needs to be solved. When reviewing peer-reviewed articles, the goal is to understand and situate relevant ideas clearly and ethically for your reader in the context of your own argument or writing.

Let's say you chose to write a research paper on why college students might cheat or plagiarize. If so, then reading articles, like Blachnio et al's (linked below) text on academic dishonesty will be expected for your research.

Go to Blachnio et al's Research Article, read and review it now (note full citation found at the end of this section).

As you are reading, it is likely that the language and structure of the article makes comprehension challenging. If you find it hard to understand, remember, you are not alone. Most students, and most people in general, will find this text too dense and difficult to read. One of the reasons for this is that the target audience for this article is other scholars and researchers who are interested in or experts in this field. While you may not share the same expertise, this simply means that you will need to take more time and work more diligently to understand the content to make sense of it for yourself. And then, you must translate it, into your own words, to make it appropriate for your essay and for your reader.

While this sounds complicated, it's not. So, let's look at a quick example of what this translation process might look like.

### *Finding a Relevant Original Source*

Let's say you chose academic dishonesty as the topic for an upcoming research paper and came across Blachnio et al's article that discusses this very subject. After reading the article, you highlighted the following sentences from the original source as highly relevant to your topic:

> "The main aim of the present study was to explore the model of relations between personal and cultural variables and academic dishonesty. In our study, we investigated self-control, perfectionism, distress, and self-construal as possible correlates of academic dishonesty" (Blachnio et al., p. 45, 2022).

***Translating a Direct Quote Into a Paraphrased Statement***

For this essay, you've chosen other college students as your audience and absolutely know that if you were to quote the above sentences, your audience will likely not fully comprehend it. So, what now? Well, you translate it into a paraphrased statement that your audience will not only comprehend, but also understand why you chose it as a vital element of your argument. As a result, this direct quote now becomes:

The authors wanted to better understand how personal traits and cultural factors might be connected to academic dishonesty. They studied how self-control, perfectionism, stress, and the way people see themselves in relation to others to see if those traits were linked to dishonest behavior in college (Blachnio et al., 2022).

This is not just summarizing. Instead, this is interpreting and rephrasing for a new purpose, tone, and audience, which helps to create a dialogue with the research, the researcher, and the audience regarding a given topic.

Błachnio, A., Cudo, A., Kot, P., Torój, M., Oppong Asante, K., Enea, V., Ben-Ezra, M., Caci, B.,Dominguez-Lara, S. A., Kugbey, N., Malik, S., Servidio, R., Tipandjan, A., & Wright, M. F. (2022). Cultural and psychological variables predicting academic dishonesty: A cross-sectional study in nine countries. Ethics & Behavior, 32(1), 44–89. https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2021.1910826

## 2. Translating Personal Ideas Into Research Questions

In your academic journey, and specifically in a WRT 200 course, you will be asked to choose topics for your research projects. This decision is often difficult, because many of us find it challenging to identify a topic that is appropriate. However, the easiest thing to do is just list your ideas without filtering them. It's simple. Begin with a personal curiosity or an informal opinion. The next step in the research writing process is to reframe these initial thoughts into structured, researchable questions. Let's give it a try!

For example, the following translation makes the idea testable, neutral in tone, and open to academic investigation.

**Informal Idea:** “Social media is ruining people's attention spans.”

**Research question:** “How does frequent social media use affect attention and information retention in college students?”

Remember, it may take you multiple tries with likely different word choices to go from your informal idea to a research question you are happy with, but this process is integral in helping you better understand the topic you’ve chosen as well as the perspective you will argue.

Don’t forget! This all begins with identifying multiple informal ideas and topics that compel you, because the more interest you have in the topic, the more readily you will work through the research and writing process to compose a formidable, well-researched academic essay.

## 3. Translating Across Disciplines and Audiences

Good research writing makes complex ideas accessible without oversimplifying. If you’re writing about neuroscience for an english class, or using philosophy in a sociology paper, you have to translate disciplinary knowledge for readers outside ofthat field. Always, remember to:

- Clearly define key terms associated with your topic.
- Avoid jargon or explain your rationale for use when necessary.
- Explain acronyms and their relevance.
- Show why this information matters within the context of your essay.

## 4. Translating Sources: Synthesis

Research writing isn’t just directly quoting different sources. Instead, source information is carefully woven together into a position that is uniquely formed by you as the writer. This synthesis is a high-level form of translation.

When researching cultural trends in academic integrity, you may find that one source claims that:

1. the pressure to achieve individual academic success is very high in the United States, leading students to plagiarize (Stiles et al. 2019),

**Comparing Scholarly and Non-Scholarly Sources**

| Criteria | Scholarly | Non-Scholarly |
|---|---|---|
| **Audience** | Academics, Researchers & Students | General Public |
| **Language & Structure** | Formal Language & Structure, Technical Vocabulary, Detailed Content & Research, Citations | General, Informal & Less Rigorous Research |
| **Review Process** | Peer-Reviewed and Scrutinized by Experts in the Field; High reliability of content and results reported due to diligent process | Fact-Checked; Quick Delivery of Content May Result in Lower Reliability of Information |
| **Publication Type** | Established, Reputable Academic Journals | Daily News Sites and Monthly Media Reports |

2. while another source maintains that students cheat or plagiarize to be academically competitive (Heckler & Forde, 2015).

In your essay, you might offer this evidence as an intentionally composed, synthesis of both sources. The combination of the evidence, the external voices, and your perspective, your writerly voice, might offer the following:

> In the United States, where values like individualism and academic entitlement are emphasized, students might rationalize misconduct as a means to achieve personal success or to stay competitive (Heckler & Forde, 2015; Stiles et al., 2019).

In this example, we are combining and interpreting multiple viewpoints to advance the argument which adds depth and reasoning to the persuasive position.

Heckler, N. C., & Forde, D. R. (2015). The Role of Cultural Values in Plagiarism in Higher Education. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, *13*(1), 61–75. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-014-9221-3

Stiles, B. L., Pan, M., LaBeff, E. E., & Wong, N. The role of academic entitlement in college cheating: A comparison between China and the United States. *Research in Higher Education Journal,* 33, 1-15.

## Assignment: Translation in Action – From Informal to Academic

Taking into consideration the content of this chapter and what you have learned from reading it, let's practice capturing your knowledge and evidence from a scholarly source into academic writing.

### *1. Isolate Your Personal Knowledge*

Write a 250-375 word informal response to a topic you care or have some knowledge about, but be sure to choose an issue on which you have a clear position. Then write about that topic as if you are explaining your thoughts to a friend. Remember to choose a clear position on the topic you choose, and isolate your own personal evidence that supports that position.

### *2. Locate Credible, Scholarly Evidence*

Now find a credible, scholarly source that also focuses on your chosen topic and position. If you were to simply stop at isolating your personal knowledge, then the content you develop would not include evidence, which means it would simply be opinion. For this step:

- Find one academic, peer-reviewed source related to your topic. Use WCU's library database.
- Identify one or two short excerpts (1–2 phrases or sentences) from the source that supports or complicates your view on your chosen topic.
- Be sure to provide a citation in proper MLA or APA format.

### *3. The Translation: Academic Writing*

Now compose a 375-500 word academic response that:

- Restates your position in a formal tone (consider language choices and sentence structure).
- Integrates the source using paraphrasing and/or direct quotation. Be sure to include proper in-text APA or MLA citation.
- Connects your voice and the source in a clear, synthesized argument.

### *4. Reflection*

In 150-200 words, reflect on what changed in tone, vocabulary, or structure as you moved from informal to academic writing. How did this "translation" process change your thinking and action in drafting?

### *Before Submitting the Assignment:*

- Edit/proofread your work for clarity, coherence, and conciseness.
- Ensure all citations are formatted correctly, based on your choice of MLA or APA.
- Submit the assignment, which includes all your notes to the steps and your final response, to the appropriate D2L Folder.

# Chapter Seven: Understanding Scholarly Articles

In college, you are often directed to feed our curiosities and conduct research to make sense of the world you inhabit. The scholarly article is the writing genre that ensures that there are ethics and standards to both the research you consult and use in your own academic writing. This applies to the research you use and the research you write. Simply, the scholarly article is a type of formal, academic writing. It shows new research, considers past research, or presents ideas, new views along with developments in a subject. This writing is composed by experts in a given field, along with emerging professionals and students.

To publish, scholarly articles are subjected to a multi-person, peer review process. Remember, an article is only considered to be scholarly if it has persisted through a jury of its peers on its journey to publication in a credible, academic journal.

## The Scholarly Article: Seven Main Features

The following list isolates seven main features of a typical scholarly article. Of course there may be some variation, but most of the research writing you consult will exhibit the of the following:

1. **Written by Experts or Emerging Experts:** Authors are typically scholars, researchers, students, or professionals with expertise in the subject matter.

2. **Peer Review Process:** Articles are peer-reviewed through a blind process where the authors' names are removed from the text and evaluated based on specific criteria. Reviewers diligently assess the methodology, findings, and conclusions. Only articles that meet rigorous academic standards are published. Articles can be declined for publication or feedback is provided to the author to utilize in the resubmission process.

3. **Research-Based Content:** Scholarly articles report on research, experiments, or studies that contribute to knowledge in each field. They may also provide in-depth reviews of existing research or offer theoretical analyses. Most research utilizes qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods study by including research instruments like surveys, interviews, case studies, literature reviews and more.

4. **Formal, Objective Tone:** In general, articles exhibit writing that is formal, impersonal, and objective, and avoid emotional language or opinions. The focus is on evidence-based analysis and the logical presentation of ideas.

5. **Organization:** Scholarly articles include an abstract, introduction, methodology, results, discussion, conclusion section. This structure helps the reader understand the article clearly as well as aids the easy skimming of each article to quickly locate relevant content.

6. **Citations and References:** Scholarly articles always include in-text citations and references to provide proper attribution to ideas, concepts and research that was used to create the article. APA, MLA, or Chicago are the styles most often used.

7. **Publication:** Scholarly articles are published in reputable academic journals that focus on specific disciplines.

## WRT 200 and Scholarly Articles

Scholarly articles are required in your WRT 200 course, because they are produced through a methodical process of inquiry, research, revision, reflection, and critique. In this course, you will consider the scholarly article as a trusted source of information that is essential for academic research, because it provides reliable, well-supported evidence and insights to help advance your own knowledge about a given topic.

However, it is likely that you have had limited to no experience with this academic genre. Remember, you are not alone in this. Just like when you were introduced to your first algebraic equation, a mathematical problem to solve, we will work together to analyze the scholarly article to better understand it and translate it through analysis and synthesis.

This chart below gives you a quick look at the features of scholarly and non-scholarly articles:

# Why Scholarly Articles Matter?

Scholarly articles build research skills while supporting your critical thinking and analytical skills. Let’s look a deeper into why they are critical in academic research and your academic journey.

## Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills

Understanding how to decipher scholarly articles teaches you to think critically about the content as well as unpack dense content and complex arguments. Through critically analyzing each source and synthesizing its potential relevance to your chosen topic, we are elevating your ability to be an effective, methodical problem-solver.

## Building Research Skills

Understanding the anatomy and methodology of a scholarly article is essential for conducting successful research projects. Developing your research skills enable you to locate relevant articles as well as integrate them to be in conversation with your own research.

## Credibility and Accuracy

Peer-reviewed articles go through rigorous scrutiny by experts in the field before they are even published. While this ensures the quality of information, you must still take the responsibility to further evaluate the source to identify whether the research and/or data is appropriately used and if any potential biases are present.

## Academic Integrity

Properly engaging with scholarly articles helps us avoid plagiarism by ensuring we understand how to cite and integrate ideas and data (direct quotes or paraphrases) into your own work while giving proper attribution to the sources consulted.

## Knowledge Creation

As you engage with peer-reviewed articles, you become a participant in the broader academic conversation. Understanding how to read and critique these articles empower you to meaningfully contribute to your own knowledge and to the communities you belong to or serve.

## The Scholarly Article and its General Anatomy

A typical scholarly article follows a standard structure, or genre conventions, to present research. This structure usually includes the following sections:

- **Title**: The title is informative and sets the tone for the article.
- **Abstract:** The abstract provides a quick summary of the article's main points and helps readers quickly determine the relevance of the article.
- **Introduction:** The introduction outlines the research problem, provides background information, and explains the purpose of the study.
- **Literature Review (if applicable):** The literature review surveys existing research to establish the foundation for the current research.
- **Methods/Methodology:** This section explains the research design, methods, and procedures used to gather data. It includes information about participants and data analysis methods, which allows the reader to assess the validity and reliability of the research.
- **Results:** The results section presents the data and findings of the study, often through tables, charts, and graphs. This section is objective, presenting the data without interpretation or analysis.
- **Discussion:** In the discussion section, the researchers interpret their findings in the context of the original research question and compare them with prior research. They explain the implications of their findings, limitations of the study, and potential for future research.
- **Conclusion:** The conclusion summarizes the main findings and their implications, often suggesting applications, potential solutions or further investigations.
- **References/Bibliography**: This section lists all the sources cited throughout the article. A standard citation style, like, APA or MLA, is used.
- **Appendix (if applicable):** Some articles may include an appendix with additional materials such as raw data, extended tables, or supplementary information that supports the research.

## Assignment: Scholarly Article Analysis Assignment

For this assignment, you will work on a given set of scholarly, peer-reviewed articles as a class, and drop into small groups to analyze each. Through this exercise, you will evaluate the article's trustworthiness, understand its structure, and assess its contribution to the field of study.

Follow these instructions in the order they appear:

### *1. Read*

Every member of your group must read the entire article and annotate it carefully. Don't just skim; pay attention to every single section. As you are reading, highlight key terms and phrases as well questions you might have about the content or the language used. Now annotate, which means add notes, including your questions, in the margins about each section and do your best to identify what is important, what is confusing, what data is relevant.

### *2. Analyze*

Come back together with your group. Now, for each of the categories below, choose a group member as your notetaker and answer the following questions. Your answers should be detailed, but they do not need to be in sentence form. Use GoogleDocs to capture your team notes and be sure everyone has access to the content and editing privileges.

- **Title:** Does the title clearly reflect the main research topic or findings? Is it specific? Does it indicate the focus of the research?
- **Abstract:** Does the abstract provide a clear summary of the article's key components, like the research question, methods, results, and conclusions?
- **Introduction and Literature Review:** Does the introduction establish the context and importance of the study? Does the literature review identify key studies and explain the gap the research aims to fill? Anything missing, or seemingly out of place?
- **Methods:** How appropriate are the research methods to the topic? Do they align with the study's objectives? Were ethical considerations addressed? Can you identify any potential bias or credibility issues?

- **Results:** Are the findings presented clearly and objectively? Are they supported by data (charts, tables, graphs)? Can you identify any potential bias or credibility issues?

- **Discussion and Conclusion:** Does the discussion interpret the results effectively? Are the implications of the findings well explained? Does the conclusion suggest avenues for future research?

- **References:** Is the article well-cited? Are the references current and relevant? Does it engage with key sources in the field?

### *3. Assess Credibility*

This is another group effort, so you can delegate responsibilities for this section. For the following steps, you will need to do some additional research, like Googling the authors and sources, based on the question being asked.

- **Authorship:** Who are the authors? Are they recognized experts in the field? Check their academic credentials and affiliations. Go online and research the authors and see what you find out about who they are.

- **Publication Source:** Is the article published in a reputable, peer-reviewed journal? How do you know?

- **Methodological Rigor:** Does the article use sound and appropriate research methods? Are the methods clearly explained and reproducible? Is there any data missing or are the collections methods logical?

- **Peer Review:** Confirm that the article underwent peer review. Most reputable journals will indicate this. You will need to go to the actual publication and look at the submission and review guidelines to find this answer.

- **Conflicts of Interest:** Does the article disclose any funding sources or potential conflicts of interest? Check for any biases in the research or publication.

- **Impact:** If applicable, check whether the article has been cited by other scholars. This can provide insight into its influence and credibility in the field. You can usually find this information by searching the article on Google Scholar which shows if the article has been cited and, if so, how many times it has been cited.

### *4. Report out in Class*

We will review all your discoveries (answers to the steps above) about both the genre, the genre conventions and the content of the article. Also, think deeply about what this process was like for you, and how it relates to translating language.

### *5. Write Individual Analysis*

Your analysis should include your experience and the group notes taken in the previous steps and yield a final writing of 375-500 words. Please follow your chosen citation format for structure and references.

- **Introduction:** Briefly introduce the article. Explain the topical focus of the article, and offer a clear thesis that acts as an evaluative statement of the article.
- **Anatomy Breakdown:** Provide a section-by-section analysis of the article's anatomy. Address how each section contributes to the overall structure and clarity of the article.
- **Credibility Evaluation:** Evaluate the credibility of the article, focusing on authorship, publication source, methodology, and potential biases. Discuss whether you consider the article trustworthy and reliable, and why?
- **Conclusion:** Summarize the main points of your analysis. Reflect on the importance of understanding scholarly articles and how this analysis helps develop critical thinking and research skills.

### *6. Before You Submit*

- Edit/proofread your analysis for clarity, coherence, and conciseness.
- Ensure your response, in-text citations and references are formatted correctly, based on your choice of MLA or APA.
- Submit the assignment, which includes your annotated article (pdf), all your notes to the steps and your final analysis, to the appropriate D2L Folder.

# Chapter Eight: The Elements of Persuasion

## Aristotle’s Rhetorical Appeals

Whether you are writing a research paper, pitching an idea in a business meeting, or convincing your roommate to pick up their clothes off the floor, you are using rhetoric, which is the art of persuasion. When it comes to persuasion, we still use the basic principles that Aristotle identified back in ancient Greece. Aristotle said that effective arguments are built on three concepts: ethos, pathos, and logos, which are also called rhetorical appeals.

### Ethos: Building Credibility

Ethos is about building trust with your audience by using credible research and demonstrating your own knowledge. Also, including opposing viewpoints in your writing demonstrates that you have acknowledged other viewpoints, and not just your own.

### Pathos: Evoking Emotions

Pathos helps to connect the writer with the emotions of the reader. To build pathos, one might share an anecdote and focus on the humanity of a particular issue. You want your audience to care about the topic, so that they are interested in the content and position you offer.

### Logos: Using Logic

Where ethos builds credibility and pathos makes emotional appeals, logos specifically appeals to logic, where your facts, data, stats, and clear reasoning come in as you present evidence and demonstrate how that evidence supports your claim in a clear, argumentative structure.

Remember, every research paper is must offer some level of persuasion, because you are making a claim, a thesis statement, and trying to support that claim through the use of the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos and logos.

### Suggested Readings and Videos


- Purdue Online Writing Lab. (n.d.). Rhetorical appeals: Ethos, pathos, and logos. Purdue University.
- Rapp, C. (2010). Aristotle’s rhetoric. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2010 Edition).

- TEDEd. (2015, October 21). Ethos, pathos, and logos – Modes of persuasion [Video]. YouTube.
- The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (n.d.). Rhetorical strategies.

## Beware of Logical Fallacies

Even the seemingly strongest arguments fall apart if they are built on bad reasoning and logic. These are called logical fallacies. Unfortunately, oftentimes logical fallacies can sound very persuasive, but they are products of flawed reasoning that are general fueled by a passion for the topic and argument. Frankly, it is easy for any one of us to unconsciously develop a logical fallacy, so it is important to review your evidence and the conclusions you have drawn from them. You must be able to trace the logical reasoning and evidence that led you to the conclusions you've drawn.

Here's a list of common logical fallacies to avoid:

- **Straw Man:** Misrepresenting someone's argument so it's easier for you to find fault with it.
- **Ad Hominem:** Attacking the person, like the writer of an article, instead of focusing on the content and evidence of the article itself.
- **False Dilemma:** Pretending that there are only two choices to a given dilemma when many other solutions might also work.
- **Slippery Slope:** Arguing that one thing will lead to a chain of negative events when in reality either this is an exaggeration, or even an impossibility of the circumstances.
- **Circular Reasoning:** Using the claim itself as its own evidence.
- **Hasty Generalization:** Making broad claim based on limited evidence.
- **Appeal to Emotion:** Manipulating emotions instead of using logic.
- **Bandwagon:** Saying something is right just because it's popular.

## Suggested Readings

- Purdue Online Writing Lab. (n.d.). Logical fallacies. Purdue University.
- The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (n.d.). Fallacies.

# Closing: Just Keep Writing...

Writing is not a destination; it is a practice that helps you document a lifelong journey. This is one truth you can take from this text: If you want to grow as a thinker and professional capable of navigating a complex world, you must *think about writing, think with writing and compose writing*.

Reading and writing sharpens your thinking and builds your knowledge. These practices help you clarify what you know, challenge what you believe, and connect with others across distance and difference. Whether you're drafting a research paper, composing a persuasive email, or journaling to process your day, every act of writing strengthens your voice and deepens your understanding. The more you write, the more confident and precise your communication becomes and with that comes power, influence, and opportunity.

Remember, success in life is built on your ability to understand and express your ideas clearly and persuasively. That success doesn’t arrive overnight, nor does it come from talent alone. It comes from consistent effort and practice, from showing up and performing each skill, again and again, which is exactly why writing is a recursive practice. It requires you to learn to sit with imperfection in the drafting process, because you know your next iteration will be better.

So, write often. Write bravely. Create your own inspiration through the act of writing itself and let every assignment, journal entry, email, and note be part of your training. Don’t forget that writing is a lifelong practice, and the more you embrace it, the more equipped you will be to meet the challenges and opportunities that life puts in front of you.

Writing is your craft. Own it. Practice it.

Read. Think. Write. Rewrite. Reread. Rethink. Revise.

# Appendix A

## Theory of Writing Prompts

*(Updated Summer 2024 by WCU's First-Year Writing Committee)*

### *Phase I: Opening Prompt (50-75 Words):*

What is your definition of good, effective research writing?

### *Phase II: Mid-Point Prompt (About 250-375 Words):*

What is your definition of good, effective research writing? Important points to consider:

- Name and explain the top 3 most important concepts you've learned to compose research writing and address "writing problems"— for this class, for other courses at the university, and for your future life as a professional, citizen, and human.

- How do research writing and rhetoric shape, perpetuate, or change unjust power relationships in society? Consider your course's readings, discussions, and writing assignments.

- What writing challenges (tasks, situations, genres, etc.) have you encountered thus far this semester? Describe what you have done to address these writing challenges.

- How did this process change and/or confirm your initial thoughts about what good research writers know and do? How has your writing thus far this semester changed and/or confirmed your original definition of "good, effective research writing"?

### *Phase III: Closing Prompt (500-750 Words):*

In this final Theory of Writing, you will compose an updated definition of good, effective research writing as part of a longer essay.

Write an updated definition of good, effective research writing that reflects what you have learned in this course. This definition will serve as your **thesis** for the essay described below. *(Note: you may wish to revise this thesis after you compose your essay!)*

Compose an essay that explains how two examples of research writing you've produced this semester fit the definition of "good research writing" you composed above. At least one of the examples of good research writing should be something you composed *for this course.* You *must* directly quote your pieces of research writing as evidence.

In your essay, be sure to explain the following:

- *How you know these examples were good*: How do they demonstrate what "good research writers" know and do?
- What you did to produce/write/compose those examples of good, effective research writing: What was the specific process you followed for each example?
- *How these examples reflect what have you learned about how writing and rhetoric shape, perpetuate, or change unjust power relationships in society:* How have you connected what you learned to your writing? If your writing doesn't reflect that in an obvious way, how could you do that in the future?

Close your essay by describing how will you carry what you learned in this class forward to other writing situations and/or other writing challenges you will encounter, whether as a student, a professional, a citizen.

# Appendix B - WRT200 Keywords

**WRT 200-level "KEYWORDS" Initiative Program Goals and Assessment**

| Keywords/ Concepts | GEN ED & FYW Program Goals | ePortfolio Rubric |
|---|---|---|
| **Information literacy:** inquiry, databases, credibility, documentation; primary and secondary sources | • think with writing<br>• think about writing<br>• communicate effectively | • Locate, interpret and evaluate research materials |
| **Research-based genres** | • think with writing<br>• think about writing<br>• compose writing<br>• communicate effectively | • Create successful texts in research-based genres<br>• Recognize and critically negotiate research genre "conventions" |
| **Writing processes:** invention, planning, drafting, peer review, revising, editing, polishing, publishing, reflection | • think about writing<br>• compose writing<br>• communicate effectively<br>• think critically and analytically | • Theory of Writing—Transfer<br>• Theory of Writing—Process<br>• Theory of Writing—Vocabulary |
| **Critical thinking:** questioning, responding, analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, synthesizing | • think with writing<br>• compose writing<br>• communicate effectively<br>• think critically and analytically<br>• respond thoughtfully to diversity | • Comprehend and critically analyze a diverse range of written and multi-media texts, including scholarly research<br>• Integrate ideas: Use strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign—to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from multiple other sources |
| **Academic discourse:** academic discourse conventions, disciplinary discourse, disciplinary conventions | • think with writing<br>• think about writing<br>• communicate effectively<br>• think critically and analytically<br>• respond thoughtfully to diversity | • Comprehend and critically analyze a diverse range of written and multi-media texts, including scholarly research<br>• Theory of Writing—Vocabulary |

| Keywords/ Concepts | GEN ED & FYW Program Goals | ePortfolio Rubric |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ideology:** social/structural inequality, bias, privilege | • respond thoughtfully to diversity | • Diversity goal |

# Appendix C

## WRT200 Self-Editing Checklist

Researching, brainstorming, and drafting are critical for writing an effective paper; however, the difference between an acceptable paper and an excellent, academic essay is taking the time to revise, proofread and edit. By cultivating proper editing techniques, students can learn from their own mistakes, refine their writing abilities, as well as enhance their argumentation skills.

For all of the sections below, please thoroughly review your draft and complete each action. Take note: There are some sections that require you to answer in detail (pay attention to bolded content), not just check the box. Please take the time to develop a complete answer for each of these noted questions.

*Before you begin to actively edit your essay, you MUST:*

Read through your paper out-loud (slowly) to verbalize the words on the page and listen to how the essay reveals necessary details to support your thesis and to catch errors that you would miss otherwise.

### *I. Higher Order Writing Concerns*

**Introduction**

☐ Does your introduction begin with an interesting, engaging lead-in (anecdote, interrogatory questions, etc.) that grabs the reader's attention? **In a sentence or two, explain why your lead-in is interesting:**

☐ Does your introduction set a cohesive tone for the following argument?

☐ Does the essay contain an arguable thesis statement that the collective content helps to prove? **Why or Why not?**

**Body Paragraphs**

☐ Does the topic sentence of each body paragraph summarize the entirety of the points that paragraph covers? ***Underline every topic sentence in every body paragraph.*** If you have more than one sub-topic in a given paragraph, create a new paragraph to ensure your focus is not diluted.

☐ Does each topic sentence correspond with your thesis statement? Give an example of at least one topic sentence here (**copy/paste from your essay**) and explain how this topic supports your thesis statement.

- ☐ Does all of the information in your paragraph support your topic sentence? **How do you know?**

- ☐ Is every piece of evidence from a credible, noteworthy source and have you clearly cited, quoted and paraphrased materials diligently?

- ☐ Is each piece of evidence introduced with a clear frame or context explaining why the information is significant to your argument? Quotes should not be offered without proper context.

- ☐ Does the essay offer at least one opposing viewpoint (with validation/ rebuttal)?

- ☐ Does the essay offer clear points of analysis of the various perspectives or criteria that impacts the argumentative topic? **Give an example of at least one here (copy/paste from your essay) and explain how this topic supports your thesis statement.**

- ☐ Does the essay offer clear points of synthesis, where the writer has drawn together and made significant meaning of the analyses offered?

- ☐ Is the final sentence in each body paragraph a sentence that creates a natural transition to the next point?

**Conclusion**

- ☐ Does your conclusion provide insight as to the significance of each of these identity factors? **Explain why or why not in specific detail.**

- ☐ Does your conclusion identify any patterns about what your chosen identity factors say about you, or define you?

- ☐ The argumentative essay should offer a conclusion that is cohesive and works to "glue" together the preceding content. This is not a summary, or a repetition of your thesis; rather, compose a closing that challenges the reader, calls to action, and looks to the future.

***II. Lower Order Writing Concerns***

Sentence Structures and Grammar/Mechanics:

- ☐ Have you removed weak word choices that weaken your arguments such as *probably*, *might be*, *somewhat*, or *kind of*?

- ☐ Have you removed phrases like I think, in my opinion, I believe, and the like?
- ☐ Remove any unnecessary use of the personal pronouns like I, me, we, us, our, and the like.
- ☐ Have you removed unnecessary words that do not add to the sentence such as *really* or *a lot*?
- ☐ Have you varied your vocabulary by utilizing a thesaurus and dictionary in order to avoid repetition, weak or incorrect word choices?
- ☐ Are your sentences of varied lengths and complexities? A paper is stronger when it has a mixture of sentences versus all short sentences or all long sentences.
- ☐ Did you notice any run-on or wordy sentences? Comma spliced sentences?
- ☐ Are all of the words spelled accurately?
- ☐ Have you used proper citation format and provided clear, consistent source information in text and at the end?