

CHAPTER 2

Developing and Shaping Ideas

Once you have assessed your writing situation, or even while you're assessing it, you'll begin answering the question you posed about your subject (pp. 7–8). As you generate ideas and information, they in turn may cause you to rephrase your lead question, which will open up new areas to explore. Throughout this stage, you'll bring order to your thoughts, eventually focusing and organizing them so that readers will respond as you intend.

2a Discovering ideas

For some writing projects, you may have little difficulty finding what you have to say about your subject: possible answers to your starting question will tumble forth as ideas on paper or screen. But when you're stuck for what to say, you'll have to coax answers out. Instead of waiting around for inspiration to strike, use a technique to get your mind working. Anything is appropriate: if you like to make drawings or take pictures, for instance, then try that.

The following pages describe some strategies for discovering ideas. These strategies are to be selected from, not followed in sequence: some may help you during early stages of the writing process, even before you're sure of your topic; others may help you later on; and one or two may not help at all. Experiment to discover which strategies work best for you.

Note Whatever strategy or strategies you use, do your work in writing, not just in your head. Your work will be retrievable, and the act of writing will help you concentrate and lead you to fresh, sometimes surprising, insights. If you participate in online collaboration to develop subjects, your activities will probably be stored electronically so that you can review and use the work. Ask your instructor how to reach the online files.

The discovery process encouraged here rewards rapid writing without a lot of thinking beforehand about what you will write or how. If your first language is not standard American English, you may find it helpful initially to do this exploratory writing in your native language or dialect and then to translate the worthwhile material for use in your drafts. This process can be productive, but it is extra work. You may want to try it at first and gradually move to composing in standard American English.

1 Keeping a journal

A place to record thoughts and observations, a **journal** can be a good source of ideas for writing. It is a kind of diary, but one more concerned with ideas than with day-to-day events. *Journal* comes from the Latin for “daily,” and many journal keepers do write faithfully every day; others make entries less regularly, when the mood strikes or an insight occurs or they have a problem to work out.

v Advantages of a journal

Writing in a journal, you are writing to yourself. That means you don't have to worry about main ideas, organization, correct grammar and spelling, or any of the other requirements of writing for others. You can work out your ideas and feelings without the pressure of an audience “out there” who will evaluate your thinking and expression. The freedom and flexibility of a journal can

be liberating. Like many others, you may find writing easier, more fun, and more rewarding than you thought possible.

You can keep a journal either on paper (such as a notebook) or on a computer. If you write in the journal every day, or almost, even just for a few minutes, the routine will loosen up your writing muscles and improve your confidence. Indeed, journal keepers often become dependent on the process for the writing practice it gives them, the concentrated thought it encourages, and the connection it fosters between personal, private experience and public information and events.

Usually for the same reasons, teachers of writing and other subjects sometimes require students to keep journals. The teachers may even collect students' journals to monitor progress, but they read the journals with an understanding of purpose (in other words, they do not evaluate work that was not written to be evaluated), and they usually just credit rather than grade the work.

A journal can be especially helpful if your first language is not standard American English. You can practice writing to improve your fluency, try out sentence patterns, and experiment with vocabulary words. Equally important, you can experiment with applying what you know from experience to what you read and observe.

▼ **Uses of a journal**

Two uses of a journal are discussed elsewhere in this book: a reading journal, in which you think critically (in writing) about what you read (pp. 152–53, 736–37); and a research journal, in which you record your activities and ideas while you pursue a research project (pp. 559–60). But you can use a journal for other purposes as well. Here are just a few:

- ▼ **Prepare for or respond to a course you're taking** by puzzling over a reading or a class discussion.
- ▼ **Build ideas for specific writing assignments.**
- ▼ **Sketch possible designs for a Web composition.**
- ▼ **Explore your reactions to events, trends, or the media.**
- ▼ **Confide your hopes.**
- ▼ **Write about your own history:** an event in your family's past, a troubling incident in your life, a change you've seen.
- ▼ **Analyze a relationship that disturbs you.**
- ▼ **Practice various forms or styles of writing**—for instance, poems or songs, reviews of movies, or reports for TV news.

The writing you produce in your journal will help you learn and grow, and even the personal and seemingly nonacademic entries can supply ideas when you are seeking a subject to write about or are developing an essay. A thought you recorded months ago about a chemistry lab may provide direction for a research paper on the history of science. Two entries about arguments with your brother may suggest what you need to anchor a psychology paper on sibling relations. If you keep your journal on a computer, you can even copy passages from it directly into your drafts.

The following student samples give a taste of journal writing for different purposes. In the first, Charlie Gabnes tries to work out a personal problem with his child:

Will's tantrums are getting worse—more often, more intense. Beginning to realize it's affecting my feelings for him. I feel resentment sometimes, and it's not as easy for me to cool off afterward as for him. Also I'm afraid of him sometimes for fear a tantrum will start, so treat him with kid gloves. How do we break this cycle?

In the next example Megan Polanyis ponders something she learned from her biology textbook:

Ecology and economics have the same root—Greek word for house. Economy = managing the house. Ecology = studying the house. In ecology the house is all of nature, ourselves, the other animals, the plants, the earth, the air, the whole environment. Ecology has a lot to do with economy: study the house in order to manage it.

In the next example Sara Ling responds to an experience. (We'll follow Ling's writing process in this chapter and the next.)

Had an exchange today on the snowboarding forum with a woman who joined the forum a while ago. She says she signed on at first with a screen name that didn't give away her gender, and she didn't tell anyone

she was a woman. She was afraid the guys on the forum might shout her down. She waited until she'd established herself as an experienced snowboarder. Then she revealed her gender, and no one reacted badly. She asked me about my experiences, since my screen name says Sara. Had to admit I'd had problems of the what-does-a-girl-know sort. Wish I'd taken her approach.

2 Observing your surroundings

Sometimes you can find a good subject or good ideas by looking around you, not in the half-conscious way most of us move from place to place in our daily lives but deliberately, all senses alert. On a bus, for instance, are there certain types of passengers? What seems to be on the driver's mind? On campus, which buildings stand out? Are bicyclists and pedestrians at peace with each other?

To get the most from observation, you should have a handheld computer or a notepad and pen handy for taking notes and making sketches. If you have a camera, you may find that the lens sees things your unaided eyes do not notice. (When observing or photographing people, though, keep some distance, take photographs quickly, and avoid staring. Otherwise, your subjects will feel uneasy.) Back at your desk, study your notes, sketches, or photographs for oddities or patterns that you'd like to explore further.

In some academic writing, you'll be expected to formalize observation with surveys, interviews, or experiments. See pages 596 and 778.

3 Freewriting

v Writing into a subject

Many writers find subjects or discover ideas by **freewriting**: writing without stopping for a certain amount of time (say, ten minutes) or to a certain length (say, one page). The goal of freewriting is to generate ideas and information from *within* yourself by going around the part of your mind that doesn't want to write or can't think of anything to write. You let words themselves suggest other words. *What* you write is not important; that you *keep* writing is. Don't stop, even if that means repeating the same words until new words come. Don't go back to reread, don't censor ideas that seem dumb or repetitious, and above all don't stop to edit: grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, spelling, and the like are irrelevant at this stage.

The physical act of freewriting may give you access to ideas you were unaware of. For example, the following freewriting by a student, Robert Benday, drew him into the subject of writing as a disguise:

Write to write. Seems pretty obvious, also weird. What to gain by writing? never anything before. Writing seems always—always—Getting corrected for trying too hard to please the teacher, getting corrected for not trying hard enuf. Frustration, nail biting, sometimes getting carried away making sentences to tell stories, not even true stories, esp. not true stories, that feels like creating something. Writing just pulls the story out of me. The story lets me be someone else, gives me a disguise.

(A later phase of Benday's writing appears on p. 23.)

If you write on a computer, try this technique for moving forward while freewriting: turn off your computer's monitor, or turn its brightness control all the way down so that the screen is dark. The computer will record what you type but keep it from you and thus prevent you from tinkering with your prose. This **invisible writing** may feel uncomfortable at first, but it can free the mind for very creative results. When you've finished freewriting, simply turn the monitor on or turn up the brightness control to read what you've written, and then save or revise it as appropriate. Later, you may be able to transfer some of your freewriting directly into your draft.

Invisible writing can be especially helpful if you are uneasy writing in standard American English and you tend to worry about errors while writing. The blank computer screen leaves you no choice but to explore ideas without giving attention to the way you are expressing them. If you choose to write with the monitor on, concentrate on *what* you want to say, not *how* you are saying it.

v Focused freewriting

Focused freewriting is more concentrated: you start with your question about your subject and answer it without stopping for, say, fifteen minutes or one full page. As in all freewriting, you push to by-pass mental blocks and self-consciousness, not debating what to say or editing what

you've written. With focused freewriting, though, you let the physical act of writing take you into and around your subject.

An example of focused freewriting can be found in the work of Sara Ling, whose journal entry appears on page 19. In a composition course, Ling's instructor had distributed "Welcome to Cyberbia," an essay by M. Kadi about communication on the Internet. The instructor then gave the following assignment:

M. Kadi's "Welcome to Cyberbia" holds that the Internet will do little to bridge differences among people because its users gravitate toward other users who are like themselves in most respects. More than a decade later, do Kadi's concerns seem valid? Can the Internet serve as a medium for positive change in the way people of diverse backgrounds relate to each other? If so, how? If not, why not? In an essay of 500-700 words, respond to Kadi's essay with a limited and well-supported opinion of your own. The first draft is due Monday, October 31, for class discussion.

On first reading Kadi's essay, Ling had been impressed with its tight logic but had found unconvincing its pessimistic view of the Internet's potential. She reread the essay and realized that some of Kadi's assertions did not correspond to her own Internet experiences. This discovery led Ling to a question: *How might the Internet help to break down barriers between people?* Her focused freewriting began to develop an answer:

Kadi says we only meet people like ourselves on the Internet, but I've met lots who have very different backgrounds and interests—or "turned out to have" is more like it, since I didn't know anything about them at first. There's the anonymity thing, but Kadi ignores it. You can be anyone or no one. People can get to know me and my ideas without knowing I'm female or Asian American or a student. Then they can find out the facts about me, but the facts will be less likely to get in the way of communication. Communication without set identity, especially physical appearance. This could make for more tolerance of others, of difference.

With this freewriting, Ling moved beyond her initial response to Kadi's essay into her own views of how anonymity on the Internet could improve communication among diverse groups.

4 Making a list

Like focused freewriting, list making requires opening yourself to everything that seems even remotely connected to your topic, without concern for order or repetition or form of expression. You can let your topic percolate for a day or more, recording thoughts on it whenever they occur. (For this approach to work, you need to keep paper or a computer with you at all times.) Or, in a method more akin to free-writing, you can **brainstorm** about the topic—that is, focus intently on the topic for a fixed amount of time (say, fifteen minutes), pushing yourself to list every idea and detail that comes to mind.

Like freewriting, brainstorming requires turning off your internal editor so that you keep moving ahead instead of looping back over what you have already written to correct it. It makes no difference whether the ideas and details are expressed in phrases or complete sentences. It makes no difference if they seem silly or irrelevant. Just keep pushing. If you are working on a computer, the technique of invisible writing, described on page 20, can help you move forward.

Here is an example of brainstorming by a student, Johanna Abrams, answering *What can a summer job teach?*

summer work teaches—

how to look busy while doing nothing
 how to avoid the sun in summer
 seriously: discipline, budgeting money, value of money

which job? Burger King cashier? baby-sitter? mail-room clerk?

mail room: how to sort mail into boxes: this is learning??

how to survive getting fired—humiliation, outrage

Mrs. King! the mail-room queen as learning experience

the shock of getting fired: what to tell parents, friends?

Mrs. K was so rigid—dumb procedures

Mrs. K's anger, resentment: the disadvantages of being smarter than your boss

The odd thing about working in an office: a world with its own rules for how to act

what Mr. D said about the pecking order—big chick (Mrs. K) pecks on little chick (me)

probably lots of Mrs. Ks in offices all over—offices are all barnyards

Mrs. K a sad person, really—just trying to hold on to her job, preserve her self-esteem

a job can beat you down—destroy self-esteem, make you desperate enough to be mean to other people
 how to preserve/gain self-esteem from work??
 if I'd known about the pecking order, I would have been less show-offy, not so arrogant

(A later phase of Abrams's writing appears on pp. 34–35.)

When you think you've exhausted the ideas on your topic, you can edit and shape the list into a preliminary outline of your paper (see pp. 32–35). Working on a computer makes this step fairly easy: you can delete weak ideas, expand strong ones, and rearrange items with a few keystrokes. You can also freewrite from the list if you think some items are especially promising and deserve more exploration.

5 Clustering

Like freewriting and list making, **clustering** draws on free association and rapid, unedited work. But it also emphasizes the *relations* between ideas by combining writing and nonlinear drawing. When clustering, you radiate outward from a center point—your topic. When an idea occurs, you pursue related ideas in a branching structure until they seem exhausted. Then you do the same with other ideas, staying open to connections, continuously branching out or drawing arrows.

The example of clustering below shows how Robert Benday used the technique for ten minutes to expand on the topic of creative writing as a means of disguise, an idea he arrived at through freewriting (see p. 20). Though he ventured into one dead end, Benday also circled into the interesting possibility (at the bottom) that the fiction writer is like a god who forgives himself by creating characters that represent his good and bad qualities.

6 Using the journalist's questions

Asking yourself a set of questions about your subject—and writing out the answers—can help you look at the subject objectively and see fresh possibilities in it. Asking questions can also provide some structure to the development of ideas.

One such set of questions is that posed by a journalist with a story to report:

- v **Who was involved?**
- v **What happened and what were the results?**
- v **When did it happen?**
- v **Where did it happen?**
- v **Why did it happen?**
- v **How did it happen?**

These questions can also be useful in probing an essay subject, especially if you are telling a story or examining causes and effects. (See also the facing page.)

7 Using the patterns of development

The **patterns of development**—such as narration, definition, comparison and contrast, and classification—are ways we think about and understand a vast range of subjects, from our own daily experiences to the most complex scientific theories. They also serve as strategies and patterns for writing about these subjects, as illustrated by the discussions and paragraph-length examples on pages 91–100.

To see your subject from many angles and open up ideas about it, you can ask the following questions based on the patterns of development. Not all these questions will be productive, but at least a few should open up new possibilities. (You can download these questions from ablongman.com/littlebrown. Save the list in a file of its own, duplicate it for each writing project, and insert appropriate answers between the questions. Print your answers so they're handy as you develop your paper. You can also move passages from the answers directly into your draft.)

How did it happen?

In **narration** you develop the subject as a story, with important events usually arranged chronologically (as they occurred in time): for instance, an exciting basketball game or the steps leading to a war.

How does it look, sound, feel, smell, taste?

In **description** you use sensory details to give a clear impression of a person, place, thing, or feeling, such as a species of animal, a machine, a friend, a building, or an experience.

What are examples of it or reasons for it?

The pattern of **illustration** or **support** suggests development with one or more examples of the subject (one couple's efforts to adopt a child, say, or three states that outlaw Internet gambling) or with the reasons for believing or doing something (three reasons for majoring in English, four reasons for increasing federal aid to college students).

What is it? What does it encompass, and what does it exclude?

These questions lead to **definition**: specifying what the subject is and is not to give a precise sense of its meaning. Abstract terms—such as *justice*, *friendship*, and *art*—especially need defining (see p. 183).

What are its parts or characteristics?

Using the pattern of **division** or **analysis**, you separate a subject such as a bicycle or a short story into its elements and examine the relations between elements. The first step in critical thinking, analysis is also discussed on pages 158–59.

What groups or categories can it be sorted into?

Classification involves separating a large group (such as cars) into smaller groups (subcompact, compact, and so on) based on the characteristics of the individual items (the sizes of the cars). Another example: academic, business, personal, literary, and other types of writing.

How is it like, or different from, other things?

With **comparison and contrast** you point out the similarities and differences between ideas, objects, people, places, and so on: the differences between two similar computer systems, for instance, or the similarities between two opposing political candidates.

Is it comparable to something that is in a different class but more familiar to readers?

This question leads to **analogy**, an extended comparison of unlike subjects. Analogy is often used to explain a topic that may be unfamiliar to readers (for instance, the relation of atoms in a molecule) by reference to a familiar topic (two people slow dancing).

Why did it happen, or what results did it have?

With **cause-and-effect analysis**, you explain why something happened or what its consequences were or will be, or both: the causes of cerebral palsy, the effects of a Supreme Court decision, the causes and effects of a gradual change in the climate.

How do you do it, or how does it work?

In **process analysis** you explain how the subject happens (how a plant grows, how a robot works) or how it is accomplished (how to write an essay).

8 Reading

Many assignments require reading. To respond to M. Kadi's essay about the Internet, for instance, Sara Ling had to digest Kadi's work. Essays on literary works as well as research writing also demand reading. But even when reading is not required by an assignment, it can help you locate or develop your subject by introducing you to ideas you didn't know or expanding on what you do know.

Say you were writing in favor of amateur athletics, a subject to which you had given a lot of thought. You might be inclined to proceed entirely on your own, drawing on facts, examples, and opinions already in your head. But a little digging in sources might open up more. For instance, an article in *Time* magazine could introduce you to an old rule for amateur status, or a comment on a Web log could suggest a pro-amateurism argument that hadn't occurred to you.

People often read passively, absorbing content like blotters, not interacting with it. To read for ideas, you need to be more active, probing text and illustrations with your mind, nurturing any sparks they set off. Always write while you read, taking notes on content and—just as important—on what the content makes you *think*. (See pp. 138–42 for specific guidelines on the process of active reading.)

Note Whenever you use the information or ideas of others in your writing, you must acknowledge your sources in order to avoid the serious offense of plagiarism. (See Chapter 45.)

9 Thinking critically

Even if you do not read for information and ideas on your subject, you can still think critically about it. Critical thinking (discussed on pp. 157–63) can produce creative ideas by leading you to see what is not obvious. It can also lead you systematically to conclusions about your subject.

Sara Ling, writing about communication on the Internet, used the operations of critical thinking to explore her topic:

- ▼ **Analysis: What are the subject's elements or characteristics?** Ling looked at the ways Internet users can communicate because of their anonymity.
- ▼ **Interpretation: What is the meaning or significance of the elements?** Ling saw that the anonymity of Internet users could help them transcend their physical differences.
- ▼ **Synthesis: How do the elements relate to each other, or how does this subject relate to another one?** Ling perceived important and hopeful differences between anonymous Internet communication and face-to-face interaction.
- ▼ **Evaluation: What is the value or significance of the subject?** Ling concluded that by making people more tolerant of one another, the Internet could help build community out of diversity.

EXERCISE 2.1 Considering your past work:

Developing a topic

In the past how have you generated the ideas for writing? Have you used any of the techniques described on the preceding pages? Have you found the process especially enjoyable or difficult? If some writing tasks were easier than others, what do you think made the difference?

EXERCISE 2.2 Keeping a journal

If you haven't already started a journal on your own or in response to Exercise 1.1 (pp. 3–4), try to do so now. Every day for at least a week, write for at least fifteen minutes about anything on your mind—or consult the list on page 18 for ideas of what to write about. At the end of the week, write about your experience. What did you like about journal writing? What didn't you like? What did you learn about yourself or the world from the writing? How can you use this knowledge?

EXERCISE 2.3 Using freewriting, brainstorming, or clustering

If you haven't tried any of them before, experiment with freewriting, brainstorming, or clustering. Continue with the subject you selected in Exercise 1.5 (p. 9), or begin with a new subject. Write or draw for at least ten minutes without stopping to reread and edit. (Try using invisible writing as described on p. 20 if you're freewriting or brainstorming on a computer.) When you finish your experiment, examine what you have written for ideas and relationships that could help you develop the subject. What do you think of the technique you tried? Did you have any difficulties with it? Did it help you loosen up and generate ideas?

EXERCISE 2.4 Sending an online query

When you have spent some time developing your subject, consider any doubts you may have or any information you still need. Send an online message to your classmates posing your questions and asking for their advice and insights.

EXERCISE 2.5 Developing your subject

Use at least two of the discovery techniques discussed on the preceding pages to develop the subject you selected in Exercise 1.5 (p. 9). (If you completed Exercise 2.3 above, then use one additional technique.) Later exercises for your essay-in-progress will be based on the ideas you generate in this exercise.

2b Developing a thesis

Your readers will expect an essay you write to be focused on a central idea, or **thesis**, to which all the essay's paragraphs, all its general statements and specific information, relate. The thesis is

the controlling idea, the main point, the conclusion you have drawn about the evidence you have accumulated. It is the answer to the question you have been posing about your subject.

A thesis will probably not leap fully formed into your head. You may begin with an idea you want to communicate, but you will need to refine that idea to fit the realities of the paper you write. And often you will have to write and rewrite before you come to a conclusion about what you have. Still, it's wise to try to pin down your thesis when you have a fairly good stock of ideas. Then the thesis can help you start drafting, help keep you focused, and serve as a point of reference when changes inevitably occur.

1 Conceiving a thesis statement

A thesis is an idea. Spelling out the idea in a **thesis statement** gives you something concrete to work with. Eventually you may place your thesis statement or (more likely) a revised version in the introduction of your final essay as a promise to readers of what they can expect.

As an expression of the thesis, the thesis statement serves three crucial functions and one optional one.

Here are some examples of questions and answering thesis statements. As assertions, the thesis statements each consist of a topic (usually naming the general subject) and a claim about the topic.

Question	Thesis statement
1. What are the advantages of direct distribution of music via the Web?	Because artists can now publish their music directly via the Web, consumers have many more choices than traditional distribution allows. [Topic: consumers. Claim: have many more choices.]
2. How did Home Inc. survive the scandal over its hiring practices?	After Home Inc.'s hiring practices were exposed in the media, the company avoided a scandal with policy changes and a well-publicized outreach to employees and consumers. [Topic: the company. Claim: avoided a scandal in two ways.]
3. What steps can prevent juvenile crime?	Juveniles can be diverted from crime by active learning programs, full-time sports, and intervention by mentors and role models. [Topic: juveniles. Claim: can be diverted from crime in three ways.]
4. Why did Abraham Lincoln delay in emancipating the slaves?	Lincoln delayed emancipating any slaves until 1863 because his primary goal was to restore and preserve the Union, with or without slavery. [Topic: Lincoln's delay. Claim: was caused by his goal of preserving the Union.]
5. Which college students should be entitled to federal aid?	As an investment in its own economy, the United States should provide a tuition grant to any college student who qualifies academically. [Topic: United States. Claim: should provide a tuition grant to any college student who qualifies academically.]
6. Why should strip-mining be controlled?	Strip-mining should be tightly controlled in this region to reduce its pollution of water resources, its destruction of the land, and its devastating effects on people's lives. [Topic: strip-mining. Claim: should be tightly controlled for three reasons.]

Notice that statements 3 and 6 clearly predict the organization of the essay that will follow. Notice, too, that every statement conveys the purpose of its writer. Statements 1 to 4 announce that the writers mainly want to explain something to readers: music choices for consumers, a company's success in avoiding a scandal, and so on. Statements 5 and 6 announce that the authors mainly want to convince readers of something: the federal government should aid qualified college students; strip-mining should be controlled.

In some cultures it is considered rude or unnecessary for a writer to state his or her main idea outright or to state it near the beginning. When writing in American schools or workplaces, you can assume that your readers expect a clear and early idea of what you think.

2 Drafting and revising a thesis statement

To draft a thesis statement, begin with your question about your subject. If you have updated the question as you generated ideas and information, answering it can get you started.

- Question Why did Lincoln delay in emancipating the slaves?
 Answer Lincoln's goal was primarily to restore and preserve the Union.
- Question How might the Internet help to break down barriers between people?
 Answer Anonymous Internet communication can bypass physical differences.

The next step is to spell out the answer in a sentence that names the topic and makes a claim about it. Creating this sentence may require several drafts.

Sara Ling went through a common process in writing and revising her thesis statement on Internet communication. She first answered her starting question, as shown in the second pair of examples above. Then she tried a statement derived from her answer:

Internet communication that is anonymous can bypass physical differences.

Ling saw that this statement focused on her starting topic (*Internet communication*) but somewhat buried the crucial quality of anonymity. And the claim lacked significance: So what? Ling first tried to emphasize her intended subject:

The anonymity of Internet communication . . .

Then she worked on her claim:

. . . can bypass physical differences, and it could build diversity into community.

This statement said why the subject was significant (*it could build diversity into community*) but the idea was tacked on with *and*. Ling tried again, emphasizing cause and effect:

Through bypassing physical differences, the unique anonymity of Internet communication could build diversity into community.

For her final revision, Ling responded to a friend's comment that *bypassing physical differences* was too vague. She spelled out her meaning:

By lowering the barriers of physical appearance, the unique anonymity of Internet communication could build diversity into community.

When you are writing and revising your thesis statement, check it against the following questions:

Here are other examples of thesis statements revised to meet these requirements:

Original	Revised
Seat belts can save lives, but now carmakers are installing air bags. [Not unified: how do the two parts of the sentence relate?] This new product brought in over \$300,000 last year. [A statement of fact, not a claim about the product: what is significant about the product's success?]	If drivers had used lifesaving seat belts more often, carmakers might not have needed to install air bags. This new product succeeded because of its innovative marketing campaign, including widespread press coverage, in-store entertainment, and a consumer newsletter.
People should not go on fad diets. [A vague statement that needs limiting with one or more reasons: what's wrong with fad diets?]	Fad diets can be dangerous when they deprive the body of essential nutrients or rely excessively on potentially harmful foods.

Televised sports are different from live sports. [A general statement: how are they different, and why is the difference significant?]

Although television cannot transmit all the excitement of a live game, its close-ups and slow-motion replays reveal much about the players and the strategy of the game.

Note You may sometimes need more than one sentence for your thesis statement, particularly if it requires some buildup:

Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits that interfere with clear thinking. Getting rid of these habits is a first step to political regeneration.—Adapted from George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language”

However, don’t use this leeway to produce a wordy, general, or disunified statement. The two (or more) sentences must build on each other, and the final sentence must present the key assertion of your paper.

EXERCISE 2.6 Evaluating thesis statements

Evaluate the following thesis statements, considering whether each one is sufficiently significant, specific, and unified. Rewrite the statements as necessary to meet these goals.

1. Aggression usually leads to violence, injury, and even death, and we should use it constructively.
2. The religion of Islam is widely misunderstood in the United States.
3. Manners are a kind of social glue.
4. One episode of a radio talk show amply illustrates both the ap-peak of such shows and their silliness.
5. The poem is about motherhood.

EXERCISE 2.7 Considering your past work: Developing a thesis

Have you been aware in the past of focusing your essays on a central idea, or thesis? Have you found it more efficient to try to pin down your idea early or to let it evolve during drafting? To what extent has a thesis helped or hindered you in shaping your draft?

EXERCISE 2.8 Drafting and revising your own thesis statement

Continuing from Exercise 2.5 (p. 27), write a significant, specific, and unified thesis statement for your essay-in-progress.

2c Organizing ideas

An effective essay has a recognizable shape—an arrangement of parts that guides readers, helping them see how ideas and details relate to each other and contribute to the whole. You may sometimes let an effective organization emerge over one or more drafts. But many writers find that organizing ideas to some extent before drafting can provide a helpful sense of direction, as a map can help a driver negotiate a half-familiar system of roads. If you feel uncertain about the course your essay should follow or have a complicated topic with many parts, devising a shape for your material can clarify your options.

Before you begin organizing your material, look over all the writing you’ve done so far—freewriting, notes from reading, whatever. Either on paper or on a computer, pull together a master list of all the ideas and details you think you might want to include. You can add to or subtract from the list as you think about shape.

1 Distinguishing the general and the specific

To organize material for an essay, you need to distinguish general and specific ideas and see the relations between ideas. **General** and **specific** refer to the number of instances or objects included in a group signified by a word. The “ladder” below illustrates a general-to-specific hierarchy.

Most general

life form
 plant
 flowering plant
 rose
 American Beauty rose
 Uncle Dan's prize-winning American Beauty rose

Most specific

Here are some tips for arranging the ideas in your preliminary writing:

- ▼ **Underline, boldface, or circle the most general ideas.** These are the ideas that offer the main support for your thesis statement. They will be more general than the evidence that in turn supports them.
- ▼ **Make connections between each general idea and the more specific details that support it.** On paper, start with a fresh sheet, write each general idea down with space beneath it, and add specific information in the appropriate spaces. On a computer, rearrange supporting information under more general points. Your word processor may include a Comment function that allows you to add notes about connections.
- ▼ **Respect the meanings of ideas.** Think through the implications of ideas as you sort them. Otherwise, your hierarchies could become jumbled, with *rose*, for instance, illogically subordinated to *animal*, or *life form* somehow subordinated to *rose*.
- ▼ **Remove information that doesn't fit.** If you worry about losing deleted information, transfer the notes to a separate sheet of paper or word-processing file.
- ▼ **Fill holes where support seems skimpy.** If you recognize a hole but don't know what to fill it with, try using a discovery technique such as freewriting or clustering, or go back to your research sources.
- ▼ **Experiment with various arrangements of general ideas and supporting information.** Seek an order that presents your material clearly and logically. On paper, you can cut the master list apart and paste or tape each general idea and its support on a separate piece of paper. Then try different orders for the pages. On a computer, first save the master list and duplicate it. To move material around, select a block of text and either copy and then paste it where you want it or (a little quicker) drag the selected text to where you want it.

2 Choosing an organizing tool

Some writers view outlines as chores and straitjackets, but they need not be dull or confining. There are different kinds of outlines, some more flexible than others. All of them can enlarge and clarify your thinking, showing you patterns of general and specific, suggesting proportions, and highlighting gaps or overlaps in coverage.

Many writers use outlines not only before but also after drafting—to check the underlying structure of the draft when revising it (see p. 49). No matter when it's made, though, an outline can change to reflect changes in your thinking. View any outline you make as a tentative sketch, not as a fixed paint-by-numbers diagram.

▼ A scratch or informal outline

For many essays, especially those with a fairly straightforward structure, a simple listing of ideas and perhaps their support may provide adequate direction for your writing.

A **scratch outline** lists the key points of the paper in the order they will be covered. Here is Sara Ling's scratch outline for her essay on Internet communication:

Thesis statement

By lowering the barriers of physical appearance, the unique anonymity of Internet communication could build diversity into community.

Scratch outline

No fear of prejudice

Physical attributes unknown—age, race, gender, etc.

We won't be shut out because of appearance

Inability to prejudge others

Assumptions based on appearance

Meeting of minds only

Finding shared interests and concerns

Ling put more into this outline than its simplicity might imply, not only working out an order for her ideas but also sketching their implications.

An **informal outline** is usually more detailed than a scratch outline, including key general points and the specific evidence for them. A student's informal outline appears below.

Thesis statement

After Home Inc.'s hiring practices were exposed in the media, the company avoided a scandal with policy changes and a well-publicized outreach to employees and consumers.

Informal outline

Background on scandal

Previous hiring practices

Media exposure and public response (brief)

Policy changes

Application forms

Interviewing procedures

Training of personnel

Outreach to employees

Signs and letters

Meetings and workshops

Outreach to consumers

Press conference

Store signs

Advertising—print and radio

v A tree diagram

In a **tree diagram**, ideas and details branch out in increasing specificity. Like any outline, the diagram can warn of gaps, overlaps, and digressions. But unlike more linear outlines, it can be supplemented and extended indefinitely, so it is easy to alter for new ideas and arrangements discovered during drafting and revision.

Below is a tree diagram by Johanna Abrams, based on her earlier brainstorming about a summer job (p. 22) and the following thesis statement:

Thesis statement

Two months working in a large government agency taught me that an office's pecking order should be respected.

Each main part of the four-part diagram represents a different general idea about the summer-job experience. Within each part, information grows more specific as it branches downward.

A tree diagram or other visual map can be especially useful for planning a project for the World Wide Web. The diagram can help you lay out the organization of your project and its links and then later can serve as a site map for your readers. (For more on composing for the Web, see pp. 832–38.)

v A formal outline

For complex topics requiring complex arrangements of ideas and support, you may want or be required to construct a **formal outline**. More rigidly arranged and more detailed than other outlines, a formal outline not only lays out main ideas and their support but also shows the relative importance of all the essay's elements and how they connect with one another.

Note Because of its structure, a formal outline can be an excellent tool for checking the arrangement of a draft before revising it (see p. 49).

On the basis of her scratch outline (p. 34), Sara Ling prepared this formal outline for her essay on the Internet:

Thesis statement

By lowering the barriers of physical appearance, the unique anonymity of Internet communication could build diversity into community.

Formal outline

- I. No fear of being prejudged
 - A. Unknown physical attributes
 - 1. Gender
 - 2. Age
 - 3. Race
 - 4. Style
 - B. Freer communication
 - C. No automatic rejection
- II. Inability to prejudge others
 - A. No assumptions based on appearance
 - 1. Body type
 - 2. Physical disability
 - 3. Race
 - B. Discovery of shared interests and concerns
 - 1. Sports and other activities
 - 2. Family values
 - 3. Political views
 - C. Reduction of physical bias

Ling's outline illustrates several principles of outlining that can help ensure completeness, balance, and clear relationships. (These principles largely depend on distinguishing between the general and the specific. See pp. 32–33.)

- √ **All the outline's parts are systematically indented and labeled.** Roman numerals (I, II) label primary divisions of the essay, indented capital letters (A, B) label secondary divisions, and farther indented Arabic numerals (1, 2) label principal supporting points and examples. A fourth level would be indented farther still and labeled with small letters (a, b). Each succeeding level contains more specific information than the one before it.
- √ **The outline divides the material into several groups.** An uninterrupted listing of ideas like the one following would indicate a need for tighter, more logical relationships among ideas. (Compare this example with part II of Ling's actual outline.)

- II. Inability to prejudge others
 - A. Body type
 - B. Physical disability
 - C. Race
 - D. Sports and other activities
 - E. Family values
 - F. Political views
 - G. Reduction of physical bias

- √ **Within each part of the outline, distinct topics of equal generality appear in parallel headings,** with the same indentation and numbering or lettering. In the following example, points B, C, and D are more specific than point A, not equally general, so they should be subheadings 1, 2, and 3 under it. (See section IIA of Ling's outline.)

- A. No assumptions based on appearance
- B. Body type
- C. Physical disability
- D. Race

- √ **All subdivided headings in the outline break into at least two parts** because a topic cannot logically be divided into only one part. The following example violates this principle:

- B. Discovery of shared views
 - 1. Interests and concerns

Any single subdivision should be combined with the heading above it (as in section IIB of Ling's actual outline), matched with another subdivision, or rechecked for its relevance to the heading above it.

- √ **All headings are expressed in parallel grammatical form** (see pp. 405–09 on parallelism).

Ling's is a **topic outline**, in which the headings consist of a noun (*fear, attributes, gender, and*

the like) with modifiers (*no, unknown physical, no automatic*, and the like). In a **sentence outline** all headings are expressed as full sentences, as in the following rewrite of part II of Ling's outline.

- II. On the Internet, we are unable to prejudge others.
 - A. We cannot make common assumptions based on physical appearance.
 - 1. People with athletic builds must be unintelligent.
 - 2. People in wheelchairs must be unapproachable or pathetic.
 - 3. People of other races must hold views different from our own.
 - B. We discover shared interests and concerns.
 - 1. We find common ground in sports and other activities.
 - 2. We see that we all feel much the same about our families.
 - 3. We learn the similarities in each other's political views.
 - C. The Internet could reduce physical bias in the world.

See pages 692–93 for a complete sentence outline.

- ✓ **The outline covers only the body of the essay, omitting the introduction and the conclusion.** The beginning and the ending are important in the essay itself, but you need not include them in the outline unless you are required to do so or anticipate special problems with their organization.

3 Choosing a structure

✓ Introduction, body, and conclusion

Most essays share a basic shape:

- ✓ **The *introduction*, usually a paragraph or two, draws readers into the world of the essay.** At a minimum, it announces and clarifies the topic. Often, it ends with the thesis statement, making a commitment that the rest of the essay delivers on. (See pp. 102–06 for more on introductions.)
- ✓ **The *body of the essay* develops the thesis and thus fulfills the commitment of the introduction.** The paragraphs in the body develop the general points that support the thesis—the items that would be labeled with Roman numerals and capital letters in a formal outline like the one on page 36. These general points are like the legs of a table supporting the top, the thesis. Each general point may take a paragraph or more, with the bulk of the content providing the details, examples, and reasons (the wood of the table) to support the general point and thus the thesis.
- ✓ **The *conclusion* gives readers something to take away from the essay**—a summary of ideas, for instance, or a suggested course of action. (See pp. 106–09 for more on conclusions.)

This basic shape applies mainly to traditional essays. A composition for the World Wide Web probably will have a more flexible structure and will lack a formal conclusion. See pages 832–38 for more on composing for the Web.

If you are not used to reading and writing American academic prose, its pattern of introduction-body-conclusion and the particular schemes discussed below may seem unfamiliar. For instance, instead of introductions that focus quickly on the topic and thesis, you may be used to openings that establish personal connections with readers or that approach the thesis indirectly. And instead of body paragraphs that first emphasize general points and then support those points with specific evidence, you may be used to general statements without support (because writers can assume that readers will supply the evidence themselves) or to evidence without explanation (because writers can assume that readers will infer the general points themselves). When writing American academic prose, you need to take into account readers' expectations for directness and for the statement and support of general points.

✓ Organizing the body by space or time

Two organizational schemes—spatial and chronological—grow naturally out of the topic. A **spatial organization** is especially appropriate for essays that describe a place, an object, or a person. Following the way people normally survey something, you move through space from a chosen starting point to other features of the subject. Describing a building, for instance, you might

begin with an impression of the whole, then scan exterior details from top to bottom, and then describe interior spaces.

A **chronological organization** reports events as they occurred in time, usually from first to last. This pattern, like spatial organization, corresponds to readers' own experiences and expectations. It suits an essay in which you do one of the following:

- ✓ **Recount a sequence of events**, such as a championship baseball game or the Battle of Gettysburg.
 - ✓ **Explain a process from beginning to end**—for instance, how to run a marathon or how a tree converts carbon dioxide to oxygen.
 - ✓ **Explain the causes that led to an effect**, such as the lobbying that helped to push a bill through the legislature. Alternatively, explain how a cause, such as a flood or a book, had multiple effects.
 - ✓ **Tell a story about yourself or someone else.**
 - ✓ **Provide background**—for instance, the making of a film you are analyzing or the procedure used in an experiment you are reporting.
- ✓ **Organizing the body for emphasis**

Some organizational schemes must be imposed on ideas and information to aid readers' understanding and achieve a desired emphasis.

General to specific

Two ways of organizing essays depend on the distinction between the general and the specific, discussed on pages 32–33. The **general-to-specific scheme** is common in expository and argumentative essays that start with a general discussion of the main points and then proceed to specific examples, facts, or other evidence. The following thesis statement forecasts a general-to-specific organization:

As an investment in its own economy, the United States should provide a tuition grant to any college student who qualifies academically.

The body of the essay might first elaborate on the basic argument and then provide the supporting data.

Specific to general

Sometimes you may anticipate that readers will not appreciate or agree with your general ideas before they see the support for them—for instance, in an expository essay that presents a unique way of looking at common experience, or in an argumentative essay that takes an unpopular view. In these cases a **specific-to-general scheme** can arouse readers' interest in specific examples or other evidence, letting the evidence build to statements of more general ideas. The following thesis statement could be developed in this way:

Although most of us are unaware of the public relations campaigns directed at us, they can significantly affect the way we think and live.

The writer might devote most of the essay to a single specific example of a public relations campaign and then explain more generally how the example typifies public relations campaigns.

Problem-solution

Many arguments use a **problem-solution scheme**: first outline a problem that needs solving; then propose a solution. (If the solution involves steps toward a goal, it may be arranged chronologically.) The following thesis statement announces a problem-solution paper:

To improve workflow and quality, the data-processing department should add one part-time staffer and retrain three others in the new systems.

Climax

A common scheme in both explanations and arguments is the **climactic organization**, in which ideas unfold in order of increasing drama or importance to a climax. For example, the

following thesis statement lists three effects of strip-mining in order of their increasing severity, and the essay would cover them in the same order:

Strip-mining should be tightly controlled in this region to reduce its pollution of water resources, its destruction of the land, and its devastating effects on people's lives.

As this example suggests, the climactic organization works well in arguments because it leaves readers with the most important point freshest in their minds. In exposition such an arrangement can create suspense and thus hold readers' attention.

Familiarity or complexity

Expository essays can also be arranged to take account of reader's knowledge of the subject. An essay on the effects of air pollution might proceed from **most familiar to least familiar**—from effects readers are likely to know to ones they may not know. Similarly, an explanation of animals' nervous systems might proceed from **simplest to most complex**, so that the explanation of each nervous system provides a basis for readers to understand the more difficult one following.

4 Checking for unity and coherence

In conceiving your organization and writing your essay, you should be aware of two qualities of effective writing that relate to organization: unity and coherence. When you perceive that someone's writing "flows well," you are probably appreciating these two qualities. An essay has **unity** if all its parts relate to and support the thesis statement. Check for unity with these questions:

- ▼ **Is each main section relevant to the main idea (thesis) of the essay?**
- ▼ **Within main sections, does each example or detail support the principal idea of that section?**

An essay has **coherence** if readers can see the relations among parts and move easily from one thought to the next. Check for coherence with these questions:

- ▼ **Do the ideas follow in a clear sequence?**
- ▼ **Are the parts of the essay logically connected?**
- ▼ **Are the connections clear and smooth?**

A unified and coherent outline will not necessarily guide you to a unified and coherent essay, because so much can change during drafting. Thus you shouldn't be too hard on your outline, in case a seemingly wayward idea proves useful. But do cut obvious digressions and rearrange material that clearly needs moving.

▼ **Sample essay**

The following essay illustrates some ways of achieving unity and coherence (highlighted in the annotations).

A Picture of Hyperactivity

A hyperactive committee member can contribute to efficiency.

A hyperactive salesperson can contribute to profits. When children are hyperactive, though, people—even parents—may wish they had never been born. A collage of those who must cope with hyperactivity in children is a picture of frustration, anger, and loss.

The first part of the collage is the doctors. In their terminology, the word hyperactivity has been replaced by ADHD, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. They apply the term to children who are abnormally or excessively busy. But doctors do not fully understand the problem and thus differ over how to treat it. Some recommend a special diet, others recommend behavior-modifying drugs, and still others, who do not consider ADHD a medical problem, recommend psychotherapy. The result is a merry-go-round of tests, confusion, and frustration for the children and their parents.

As the mother of an ADHD child, I can say what the disorder means to the parents who form the second part of the collage. It means worry that is deep and enduring. It means despair that is a constant companion. It means a mixture of frustration, guilt, and anger. And finally, since there are times when parents' anger goes out of control and threatens the children, it means self-loathing.

The weight of ADHD, however, does not rest on the doctors and parents. The darkest part of the collage belongs to the children. From early childhood they may be dragged from doctor to doctor, attached to machines, medicated until they feel numb, and tested or discussed by physicians, teachers, neighbors, and strangers on the street. They may be highly intelligent, but they'll still do poorly in school because of their short attention spans. Their playmates dislike them because of their temper and their unwillingness to follow rules.

Even their pets mistrust them because of their erratic behavior. As time goes on, the children see their parents more and more in tears and anger, and they know they are the cause.

The collage is complete, and it is dark and somber. ADHD, as applied to children, is a term with uncertain, unattractive, and bitter associations. The picture does have one bright spot, however, for inside every ADHD child is a lovely, trusting, calm person waiting to be recognized.

—Linda Devereaux

(student)

v **Unity and coherence within paragraphs**

The unity and coherence of writing begin in its paragraphs, so the two concepts are treated in greater detail in Chapter 4. You may want to consult several sections in particular before you begin drafting:

- v **The topic sentence and unity** (pp. 72–75)
- v **Transitions and coherence** (pp. 77–88, 108)
- v **Linking paragraphs in the essay** (pp. 109–110)

v **Unity and coherence on the Web**

Unity and coherence may seem unimportant in compositions for the World Wide Web, in which entire documents are linked to each other so that it's easy to move among them. However, precisely because the Web is such a fluid medium, you risk losing or confusing your readers if you don't consider unity and coherence. Your project should have a clear purpose and clear ideas relating to that purpose, and the connections between ideas should be spelled out to orient readers. (For more on composing for the Web, see pp. 832–38.)

EXERCISE 2.9 ORGANIZING IDEAS

The following list of ideas was extracted by a student from freewriting he did for a brief paper on soccer in the United States. Using his thesis statement as a guide, pick out the general ideas and arrange the relevant specific points under them. In some cases you may have to infer general ideas to cover specific points in the list. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

Thesis statement

Despite increasing interest within the United States, soccer may never be the sport here that it is elsewhere because both the potential fans and the potential backers resist it.

List of ideas

Sports seasons are already too crowded for fans.
 Soccer rules are confusing to Americans.
 A lot of kids play soccer in school, but the game is still “foreign.”
 Sports money goes where the money is.
 Backers are wary of losing money on new ventures.
 Fans have limited time to watch.
 Fans have limited money to pay for sports.
 Backers are concerned with TV contracts.
 Previous attempts to start a pro soccer league failed.
 TV contracts almost matter more than live audiences.
 Failure of the US Football League was costly.
 Baseball, football, hockey, and basketball seasons already overlap.
 Soccer fans couldn't fill huge stadiums.
 American soccer fans are too few for TV interest.

EXERCISE 2.10 Creating a formal outline

Use your arrangement of general ideas and specific points from Exercise 2.9 as the basis for a formal topic or sentence outline. Follow the principles given on pages 36–38. (If you completed Exercise 2.9 online, you can use that file to create this outline.)

EXERCISE 2.11 Considering your past work: Organizing ideas

What has been your experience with organizing your writing? Many writers find it difficult. If you do, too, can you say why? What kinds of outlines or other organizing tools have you used? Which have been helpful and which have not?

EXERCISE 2.12 Organizing your own essay

Continuing from Exercise 2.8 (p. 32), choose an appropriate organization for your essay-in-progress. Then experiment with organizing tools by preparing a tree diagram or other visual map or a scratch, informal, or formal outline.

CHAPTER 3

Drafting and Revising

The separation of drafting and revising from the planning and development discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 is somewhat artificial because the stages almost always overlap during the writing process. Indeed, if you compose on a computer, you may not experience any boundaries between stages at all. Still, your primary goal during the writing process will usually shift from gathering and shaping information to forming connected sentences and paragraphs in a draft and then restructuring and rewriting the draft.

3a Writing the first draft

The only correct drafting style is the one that works for you. Generally, though, the freer and more fluid you are, the better. Some writers draft and revise at the same time, but most let themselves go during drafting and *especially* do not worry about errors. Drafting is the occasion to find and convey meaning through the act of writing. If you fear making mistakes while drafting, that fear will choke your ideas. You draft only for yourself, so errors do not matter. Write freely until you have worked out what you want to say; *then* focus on any mistakes you may have made.

Starting to draft sometimes takes courage, even for seasoned professionals. Students and pros alike find elaborate ways to procrastinate—rearranging shelves, napping, lunching with friends. Such procrastination may actually help you if you let ideas for writing simmer at the same time. At some point, though, enough is enough: the deadline looms; you've got to get started. If the blankness still stares back at you, then try one of the following techniques for unblocking.

You should find some momentum once you've started writing. If not, however, or if your energy flags, try one or more of the following techniques to keep moving ahead.

If you write on a computer, frequently save the text you're drafting—at least every five or ten minutes and every time you leave the computer. See pages 52–53 for tips on saving documents.

Whether you compose on paper or on a computer, you may find it difficult to tell whether a first draft is finished. The distinction between drafts can be significant because creating text is different from rethinking it and because your instructor may ask you and your classmates to submit your drafts, either on paper or over a computer network, so that others can give you feedback on them. For your own revision or others' feedback, you might consider a draft finished for any number of reasons: perhaps you've reached the assigned length and have run out of ideas; perhaps you find yourself writing the conclusion; perhaps you've stopped adding content and are just tinkering with words.

v Sample first draft

Sara Ling's first draft on Internet communication appears below. As you read the draft, mark the thesis statement and each key idea developing the thesis. Note places where you think the ideas could be clearer or better supported.

Title?

In “Welcome to Cyberbia,” written in 1995, M. Kadi predicts that the Internet will lead to more fragmentation in society because people just seek out others like themselves. But Kadi fails to foresee how the unique anonymity of Internet communication could actually build diversity into community by lowering the barriers of physical appearance.

Anonymity on the Internet. It’s one of the best things about technology. Most people who communicate online use an invented screen name to avoid revealing personal details such as age, gender, and ethnic background. No one knows whether you’re fat or thin or neat or sloppy. What kind of clothes you wear. (Maybe you’re not wearing clothes at all). People who know you personally don’t even know who you are with an invented screen name.

We can make ourselves known without first being prejudged because of our physical attributes. For example, I participate in a snowboarding forum that has mostly men. I didn’t realize what I was getting into when I used my full name as my screen name. Before long, I had received unfriendly responses such as “What does a girl know?” and “Why don’t you go back to knitting?” I guess I had run into a male prejudice against female snowboarders. However, another woman on the forum had no such problems. At first she signed on with a screen name that did not reveal her gender, and no one responded negatively to her messages. When she had contributed for a while, she earned respect from the other snowboarders. When she revealed that she was a woman at that point, no one responded negatively in the way I had experienced. She posed at first as someone different from who she really was and could make herself heard.

We also cannot prejudge others because of their appearance. Often in face-to-face interaction we assume we know things about people just because of the way they look. Assumptions prevent people from discovering their shared interests and concerns, and this is particularly true where race is concerned. The anonymity of the Internet makes physical barriers irrelevant, and only people’s minds meet. Because of this, the Internet could create a world free of physical bias.

Logged on to the Internet we can become more tolerant of others. We can become a community.

EXERCISE 3.1 Analyzing a first draft

Compare Ling’s draft with the previous step in her planning (her formal outline) on page 36. List the places in the draft where the act of drafting led Ling to rearrange her information, add or delete material, or explore new ideas. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

EXERCISE 3.2 CONSIDERING YOUR PAST WORK:

DRAFTING

Think back over a recent writing experience. At what point in the writing process did you begin drafting? How did drafting go—smoothly, haltingly, painfully, painlessly? If you had difficulties, what were they? If you didn’t, why do you think not?

EXERCISE 3.3 Drafting your essay

Prepare a draft of the essay you began in Chapters 1 and 2. Use your thesis statement and your outline as guides, but don’t be unduly constrained by them. Concentrate on opening up options, not on closing them down. Do not, above all, worry about mistakes.

3b Revising the first draft

Revision literally means “re-seeing”—looking anew at ideas and details, their relationships and arrangement, the degree to which they work or don’t work for the thesis. While drafting, you focus inwardly, concentrating on pulling your topic out of yourself. In revising, you look out to your readers, trying to anticipate how they will see your work. You adopt a critical perspective toward your work (see Chapter 8), examining your draft as a pole-vaulter or dancer would examine a videotape of his or her performance. (Writing teachers often ask students to read each other’s drafts partly to train the students in using and benefiting from this critical perspective. See p. 66 for more on such collaboration.)

1 Gaining distance from your work

Reading your own work critically requires that you create some distance between it and yourself—not always an easy task. The following techniques may help.

2 Revising, then editing

Strictly speaking, revision includes editing—refining the manner of expression to improve clarity or style or to correct errors. In this chapter, though, revision and editing are treated separately to stress their differences: in revision you deal with the underlying meaning and structure of your essay; in editing you deal with its surface. By making separate drafts beyond the first—a revised one and then an edited one—you’ll be less likely to waste time tinkering with sentences that you end up cutting, and you’ll avoid the temptation to substitute editing for more substantial revision.

The temptation to edit while revising can be especially attractive on a word processor because it’s easy to alter copy. Indeed, writers sometimes find themselves editing compulsively, spinning their wheels with changes that cease to have any marked effect on meaning or clarity and that may in fact sap the writing of energy. Planning to revise and then to edit encourages you to look beyond the confines of the screen so that deeper issues of meaning and structure aren’t lost to surface matters such as word choice and sentence arrangement.

3 Titling your essay

The revision stage is a good time to consider a title. After drafting, you have a clearer sense of your direction, and the attempt to sum up your essay in a title phrase can help you focus sharply on your topic, purpose, and audience.

Here are suggestions for titling an essay:

- ▼ **A descriptive title is almost always appropriate and is often expected for academic writing.** It announces the topic clearly, accurately, and as briefly as possible. The final title of Sara Ling’s essay—“The Internet: Fragmentation or Community?”—is an example, as are “Images of Lost Identity in *North by Northwest*,” “An Experiment in Small-Group Dynamics,” “Why Lincoln Delayed Emancipating the Slaves,” and “Food Poisoning Involving *E. coli* Bacteria: A Review of the Literature.”
- ▼ **A suggestive title—the kind often found in popular magazines—may be appropriate for more informal writing.** Examples include “Making Peace” (for an essay on the Peace Corps) and “Anyone for Soup?” (for an essay on working in a soup kitchen). For a more suggestive title, Ling might have chosen “What We Don’t Know Can Help Us” or “Secrets of the Internet.” Such a title conveys the writer’s attitude and main concerns but not the precise topic, thereby pulling readers into the essay to learn more. A source for such a title may be a familiar phrase, a fresh image, or a significant expression from the essay itself.
- ▼ **A title tells readers how big the topic is.** For Ling’s essay, the title “The Internet” or “Anonymity” would have been too broad, whereas “Lose Your Body” or “Discovering Common Ground” would have been too narrow because each deals with only part of the paper’s content.
- ▼ **A title should not restate the assignment or the thesis statement,** as in “The Trouble with M. Kadi’s Picture of the Internet” or “What I Think About Diversity on the Internet.”

For more information on essay titles, see page 354 (avoiding reference to the title in the opening of the paper), 491 (capitalizing words in a title), and 687–88 (the format of a title in the final paper).

4 Using a revision checklist

Set aside at least as much time to revise your essay as you took to draft it. Plan on going through the draft several times to answer the questions in the checklist opposite and to resolve any problems. (If you need additional information on any of the topics in the checklist, refer to the page numbers given in parentheses.) Note that the checklist can also help you if you have been asked to comment on another writer’s draft (see p. 67).

5 Revising on a word processor

Word processors have removed the mechanical drudgery of revising by hand or on a typewriter, but they have also complicated the process: you must conscientiously save your changes

and manage the files you create, both discussed below. At the same time, like the more cumbersome revision methods, word processors allow you to display changes as you make them.

v **Saving changes**

Computers malfunction frequently. You can avoid losing your work by taking two precautions:

- v **Save your work every five to ten minutes.** Most word processors have an Auto Save function that will save your work automatically as you type, at the interval you specify. Still, get in the habit of saving manually whenever you make major changes.
- v **After doing any major work on a project, create a backup version of the file.** Use a second hard drive, a removable disk, or a removable “flash” drive. If you need to share files but have difficulty e-mailing them, or if you need to save large multimedia files, you can also store backups on a drive accessed through the Internet. XDrive, for example, offers storage space for a reasonable price (*xdrive.com*).

The following screen shot illustrates the essentials of a word processor’s File menu, the key to saving and organizing drafts.

v **Managing files**

With the Save As option in the File menu, you can organize your work for a course or the drafts of a paper by giving each file a name that indicates the content, the date, and (if you’re sharing work with others) the author. The following screen shot shows Sara Ling saving a document she named *Sara.NetcomD1.10-28-05.doc* in a new folder titled *English 120*. In addition to her name and the date, the file name includes an identifier for the paper (*Netcom*) and the draft number (*D1*).

v **Displaying changes**

You can keep track of the revisions you make in a document with an option often called Track Changes and usually found under the Tools or File menu. The function highlights additions and deletions so they’re easy to spot (see the screen shot on the next page). Tracking changes may encourage you to revise more freely because you can always revert to your original text. You can weigh the original and revised versions as you view them side by side. You can also evaluate the kinds of changes you are making. For instance, if during revision you see only minor surface alterations (word substitutions, added punctuation, and the like), then you might consider whether and where to read more deeply for more fundamental changes.

3c Examining a sample revision

In revising her first draft, Sara Ling had the help of her instructor and several of her classmates, to whom she showed the draft as part of her assignment. Based on the revision checklist, she thought that she wanted to stick with her initial purpose and thesis statement and that they had held up well in the draft. But she also knew without being told that her introduction and conclusion were too hurried, that the movement between paragraphs was too abrupt, that the example of the snowboarding forum went on too long, and that the fourth paragraph was thin: she hadn’t supplied enough details to support her ideas and convince her readers.

Ling’s readers confirmed her self-evaluation. Several, however, raised points that she had not considered, reflected in these comments by classmates:

Comment 1

Why do you say (par. 2) that most people use invented screen names? I don't, and I know other people who don't either. Do you have evidence of how many people use invented names or why they do?

Comment 2

I would have an easier time agreeing with you about the Internet if you weren't quite so gung-ho. For instance, what about the dangers of the Internet, as when adults prey on children or men prey on women? In par. 3, you don't acknowledge that such things can and do happen. Also, is a bias-free world (par. 4) really such a sure thing? People will still meet in person, after all.

At first Ling was tempted to resist these comments because the writers seemed to object to her ideas. But eventually she understood that the comments showed ways she could make the ideas convincing to more readers. The changes took some time, partly because Ling decided to conduct a survey of students in order to test her assumption about people's use of invented screen names.

The following revised draft shows the survey results and Ling's other changes. Ling used the Track Changes function on her word processor, so that deletions are crossed out and additions are in blue. Marginal annotations highlight the main revisions.

The Internet: Fragmentation or Community?

Title?

We hear all sorts of predictions about how the Internet will enrich our lives and promote equality, tolerance, and thus community in our society. But are these promises realistic? In her 1995 essay "Welcome to Cyberbia," M. Kadi argues that they are not. Instead, sheIn "Welcome to Cyberbia," written in 1995, M. Kadi predicts that the Internet will lead to more fragmentation, not community, in society because users merely people just seek out others like themselves with the same biases, needs, and concerns as their own. The point is an interesting one, Bbut Kadi fails to foresee that how the unique anonymity of Internet communication could actually build diversity into community by lowering the barriers of physical appearance.

Internet communication can be anonymous on at least two levels. Anonymity on the Internet. It's one of the best things about technology. Most people who communicate online use an invented screen name to avoid revealing personal details such as age, gender, and ethnic background. No one knows The people who communicate with you do not know your age. wWhether you're fat or thin or neat or sloppy. What kind of clothes you wear. (Maybe you're not wearing clothes at all). Or anything else about physical appearance. People who know you personally don't even know who you are with an invented screen name. If you use an invented screen name instead of your real name, readers don't even know whatever your name says about you, such as gender or ethnic background.

Internet anonymity seems a popular option, judging by the numbers of invented user names seen in online forums. But I thought it would be a good idea to determine the extent of invented user names as well as the reasons for them, so I surveyed seventy-eight students with two questions: (1) Do you ever write with an invented user name when contributing to chat rooms, newsgroups, blogs, and so on? (2) If yes, why do you use an invented name: to protect your privacy, to avoid revealing personal information, or for some other reason? Fig. 1 shows that most of the students do use invented names online. And most do so to protect their privacy or to avoid revealing personal details.

Users of the Internet clearly value the anonymity it can give them. Twenty students said that they use invented names to mask personal details because they think the details might work against them. One said she is able to participate in a physics discussion list without fear of being ignored by the group's professional physicists. Another said he thinks he can contribute more freely to a political forum because no one knows he's African American. I learned the benefits of anonymity myself when I joined a snowboarding forum using my full name and received hostile

With invented screen names, we can make ourselves known without first being prejudged because of our physical attributes. For example, I participate in a snow-boarding forum that has mostly men. I didn't realize what I was getting into when I used my full name as my screen name. Before long, I had received unfriendly responses such as "What does a girl know?" and "Why don't you go back to knitting?" I guess I had run into a male prejudice against female snowboarders. However, another woman on the forum had no such problems. At first she signed on with a screen name that did not reveal her gender, and no one responded negatively to her messages. When when she had contributed for a while, before revealing her gender. she earned respect from the other snowboarders. When she revealed that she was a woman at that point, no one responded negatively in the way I had experienced. She posed at first as someone different from who she really was and could make herself heard.

Granted, concealing or altering identities on the Internet can be a problem, as when adults pose as children to seduce or harm them. These well-publicized occurrences say a great deal about the need to monitor the use of the Internet by children and to be cautious about getting together with Internet correspondents. However, they do not undermine the value of people being able to make themselves heard in situations where normally (in the real world) they would be shut out.

The Internet's anonymity has a flip side too. We cannot be prejudged and

We also cannot prejudge others because of their appearance. Often in face-to-face interaction we assume we know things about people just because of the way they look. Someone with an athletic build must be dumb. Someone who is heavy must be uninteresting. Perhaps most significant, someone of another race must have fixed or contrary views about family values, crime, affirmative action, and all sorts of other issues as well. Assumptions like these prevent people from discovering their shared interests and concerns. But with and this is particularly true where race is concerned. The anonymity of the Internet, makes such physical barriers to understanding are irrelevant, and only people's minds meet. Because of this, the Internet could create a world free of physical bias.

Logged on to the Internet we can become more tolerant of others. We can become a community.

A world free of physical bias is a long way off, but the more we communicate with just our minds the more likely it is that our minds will find common ground. Logged on, we can become more accepted and accepting, more tolerated and tolerant. We can become a community.

Work Cited

Kadi, M. "Welcome to Cyberbia." Utne Reader Mar.-Apr. 1995: 57-59.

EXERCISE 3.4 Analyzing a revised draft

Compare Ling's revised draft with her first draft on pages 47–48. Can you see the reasons for most of her changes? Where would you suggest further revisions, and why? (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

EXERCISE 3.5 Considering your past work: Revising

In the past, have you usually revised your drafts extensively? Do you think your writing would benefit from more revision of the sort described in this chapter? Why or why not? Many students who don't revise much explain that they lack the time. Is time a problem for you? Can you think of ways to resolve the problem?

EXERCISE 3.6 Revising your own draft

Revise your own first draft from Exercise 3.3 (p. 48). Use the checklist for revision on page 51 as a guide. Concentrate on purpose, content, and organization, leaving smaller problems for the next draft.

3d Editing the revised draft

Editing for style, clarity, and correctness may come second to more fundamental revision, but it is still very important. A carefully developed essay will fall flat with readers if you overlook awkwardness and errors.

1 Discovering what needs editing

Try these approaches to spot possible flaws in your work:

In your editing, work first for clarity and a smooth movement among sentences and then for correctness. Use the questions in the following checklist to guide your editing, referring to the page numbers in parentheses as needed.

The second paragraph of Sara Ling's edited draft appears below. One change Ling made throughout the essay shows up here: she resolved an inconsistency in references to *you*, *people*, and *we*, settling on a consistent *we*. In addition, Ling corrected several sentence fragments in the middle of the paragraph.

Internet communication can be anonymous on at least two levels. The people ~~we~~you communicate with do not know ~~our~~your age. ~~W~~whether ~~we~~you're fat or thin or neat or sloppy. ~~W~~what kind of clothes ~~we~~you wear. (Maybe you're not ~~if we~~re wearing clothes at all). ~~O~~or anything else about physical appearance. If ~~we~~you use an invented screen names instead of ~~our~~your real names, readers don't even know whatever ~~our~~your names may ~~reveal~~ or ~~suggest~~ says about ~~us~~you, such as gender or ethnic background.

2 Editing on a word processor

When you work on a word processor, consider these additional approaches to editing:

- v **Don't rely on your word processor's spelling or grammar and style checker to find what needs editing.** See the discussion of these checkers below.
- √ **If possible, work on a double-spaced paper copy.** Most people find it much harder to spot errors on a computer screen than on paper.
- v **Use the Find command to locate and correct your common problems**—certain misspellings, overuse of *there is*, wordy phrases such as *the fact that*, and so on.
- v **Resist overediting.** The ease of editing on a computer can lead to rewriting sentences over and over, stealing the life from your prose. If your grammar and style checker contributes to the temptation, consider turning it off.
- v **Take special care with additions and omissions.** Make sure you haven't omitted needed words or left in unneeded words.

3 Working with spelling and grammar/style checkers

The spelling checker and grammar and style checker that may come with your word processor can be helpful *if* you work within their limitations. The programs miss many problems and may even flag items that are actually correct. Further, they know nothing of your purpose and your audience, so they cannot make important decisions about your writing. Always use these tools critically:

- v **Read your work yourself to ensure that it's clear and error-free.**
- v **Consider a checker's suggestions carefully, weighing each one against your intentions.** If you aren't sure whether to accept a checker's suggestion, consult a dictionary, writing handbook, or other source. Your version may be fine.

v Using a spelling checker

Your word processor's spelling checker can be a great ally: it will flag words that are spelled incorrectly and usually suggest alternative spellings that resemble what you've typed. However, this ally also has the potential to undermine you because of its limitations:

- v **The checker may flag a word that you've spelled correctly,** just because the word does not appear in its dictionary.
- v **The checker may suggest incorrect alternatives.** In providing a list of alternative spellings for your word, the checker may highlight the one it considers most likely to be correct. You need to verify that this alternative is actually what you intend before selecting it. Consult an online or printed dictionary when you aren't sure of the checker's recommendations.
- v **Most important, a spelling checker will not flag words that appear in its dictionary but you have misused.** The jingle in the following screen shot has circulated widely as a warning about spelling checkers (we found it in the *Bulletin of the Mis-souri Council of Teachers of Mathematics*).

v Using a grammar and style checker

Word processors' grammar and style checkers can flag incorrect grammar or punctuation and wordy or awkward sentences. However, these programs can call your attention only to passages that *may* be faulty. They miss many errors because they are not yet capable of analyzing language in all its complexity (for instance, they can't accurately distinguish a word's part of speech when there are different possibilities, as *light* can be a noun, a verb, or an adjective). And they often question passages that don't need editing, such as an appropriate passive verb or a deliberate and emphatic use of repetition. The screen shot on the next page illustrates the limitations.

You can customize a grammar and style checker to suit your needs and habits as a writer. (Select Options under the Tools menu.) Most checkers allow you to specify whether to check grammar only or grammar and style. Some style checkers can be set to the level of writing you intend, such as formal, standard, and informal. (For academic writing choose formal.) You can also instruct the checker to flag specific grammar and style problems that tend to occur in your writing, such as mismatched subjects and verbs, apostrophes in plural nouns, overused passive voice, or a confusion between *its* and *it's*.

EXERCISE 3.7 Considering your past work: Editing

How do you find what needs editing in your drafts? What kinds of changes do you make most often? Have you tried focusing on particular kinds of changes, such as correcting mistakes you made in previous writing? If your readers often comment on editing concerns in your work, what can you do to reduce such comments?

EXERCISE 3.8 Editing your own draft

Use the checklist for editing and your own sense of your essay's needs to edit the revised draft of your essay-in-progress.

3e **Preparing and proofreading the final draft**

After editing your essay, retype or print it once more for submission to your instructor. You may be required to use one of the following formats: MLA (pp. 687–89), Chicago (pp. 775–77), APA (pp. 800–03), or CSE (p. 820). If no format is specified, consult the document-design guidelines in Chapter 5. If you've composed on a word processor, use the Print Preview function under the File menu to check for formatting problems that may not otherwise show up on your screen.

Be sure to proofread the final essay several times to spot and correct errors. To increase the accuracy of your proofreading, you may need to experiment with ways to keep yourself from relaxing into the rhythm and the content of your prose. The box below gives a few tricks, including some used by professional proofreaders.

3f **Examining a final draft**

Sara Ling's final essay begins below, typed in MLA format except for page breaks. Comments in the margins point out key features of the essay's content.

Sara Ling
 Professor Nelson
 English 120A
 4 November 2005

The Internet:
 Fragmentation or Community?

We hear all sorts of predictions about how the Internet will enrich our individual lives and promote communication, tolerance, and thus community in our society. But are these promises realistic? In her 1995 essay "Welcome to Cyberbia," M. Kadi argues that they are not. Instead, she predicts that the Internet will lead to more fragmentation, not community, because users merely seek out others with the same biases, concerns, and needs as their own. The point is an interesting one, but Kadi fails to foresee that the unique anonymity of Internet communication could actually build diversity into community by lowering the barriers of physical appearance.

Internet communication can be anonymous on at least two levels. The people we communicate with do not know our age, whether we're fat or thin or neat or sloppy, what kind of clothes we wear (if we're wearing clothes at all), or anything else about physical appearance. If we use invented screen names instead of our real names, readers don't even know whatever our names may reveal or suggest about us, such as gender or ethnic background.

Internet anonymity seems a popular option, judging by the numbers of invented user names seen in online forums. To determine the extent of invented user names as well as the reasons for them, I surveyed seventy-eight students. I asked two questions: (1) Do you ever write with an invented user name when contributing to chat rooms, newsgroups, Web logs, and so on? (2) If yes, why do you use an invented name: to protect your privacy, to avoid revealing personal information, or for some other reason? The results are shown in fig. 1. A large majority of the students (seventy-eight percent) do use invented names online. And most of them do so to protect their privacy (thirty-seven percent) or to avoid revealing personal details (thirty percent). Users of the Internet clearly value the anonymity it can give them. This anonymity allows users to communicate freely without being prejudged because of physical attributes. In follow-up interviews, twenty students said that they use invented names to mask personal details because they think the details might work against them in online communication. One said she is able to participate in a physics discussion list without fear of being ignored by the group's professional physicists. Another said he thinks he can contribute more freely to a political forum because no one knows he's African American. I learned the benefits of anonymity myself when I joined a snowboarding forum using my full name and received hostile responses such as "What does a girl know?" and "Why don't you go back to knitting?" I assumed I had run into a male prejudice against female snow-boarders. However, another woman on the forum had no such problems when she contributed for a while before revealing her gender.

Granted, concealing or altering identities on the Internet can be a problem, as when adults pose as children to seduce or harm them. These well-publicized occurrences say much about the need to monitor children's use of the Internet and to be cautious about meeting Internet correspondents. However, they do not undermine the value of being able to make ourselves heard in situations where normally (in the real world) we would be shut out.

The Internet's anonymity has a flip side, too: just as we cannot be prejudged, so we cannot prejudice others because of their appearance. Often in face-to-face interaction, we assume we know things about people just because of the way they look. Someone with an athletic build must be unintelligent. Someone who is heavy must be uninteresting. Perhaps most significant, someone of another race must have fixed and contrary views about all kinds of issues, from family values to crime to affirmative action. Assumptions like these prevent us from discovering the interests and concerns we share with people who merely look different. But with the anonymity of the Internet, such physical barriers to understanding are irrelevant.

A world without physical bias may be an unreachable ideal. However, the more we communicate with just our minds, the more likely it is that our minds will find common ground and put less emphasis on physical characteristics. Logged on, we can begin to become more accepted and more accepting, more tolerated and more tolerant. We can begin to become a community.

Work Cited

Kadi, M. "Welcome to Cyberbia." *Utne Reader* Mar.-Apr. 1995: 57-59.

EXERCISE 3.9 Proofreading

Proofread the following passage, using any of the techniques listed on page 63 to bring errors into the foreground. There are thirteen errors in the passage: missing and misspelled words, typographical errors, and the like. If you are in doubt about any spellings, consult a dictionary. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

An environmental group, Natural Resources Defense Council, has estimated that 5500 to 6200 children who are preschool today may contract cancer during their lives because of the pesticides they consume in their food. In addition, these children will be at greater risk for kidney damage, problems with immunity, and other serious impairments. The government bases its pesticide-safety standards on adults, but children consume many more of the fruits and fruit products likely to contain pesticides.

EXERCISE 3.10 Preparing your final draft

Prepare the final draft of the essay you have been working on throughout Chapters 1–3. Proofread carefully and correct all errors before submitting your essay for review.

3g Giving and receiving comments**1 Working collaboratively**

Almost all the writing you do in college will generate responses from an instructor. In courses that stress writing, you may submit early drafts as well as your final paper, and your readers may include your classmates as well as your instructor. Like Sara Ling's, such courses may feature **collaborative learning**, in which students work together on writing, from completing exercises to commenting on each other's work to producing whole papers. (At more and more schools this group work occurs over a computer network. See pp. 829–32.)

Whether you participate as a writer or as a writing "coach," collaboration can give you experience in reading written work and in reaching readers through writing. You may at first be anxious about criticizing others' work or sharing your own rough drafts, but you'll soon grow to appreciate the interaction and the confidence it gives you in your own reading and writing.

In some cultures writers do not expect criticism from readers, or readers do not expect to think critically about what they read. If critical responses are uncommon in your native culture, collaboration may at first be uncomfortable for you. As a writer, consider that readers are responding to your draft or even your final paper more as an exploration of ideas than as the last word on your subject; then you may be more receptive to readers' suggestions. As a reader, allow yourself to approach a text skeptically, and know that your tactful questions and suggestions will usually be considered appropriate.

2 Responding to the writing of others

If you are the reader of someone else's writing, keep the following principles in mind:

If you are reviewing others' drafts on a word processor, its Comment function will allow you to add comments without inserting words into the document's text. Usually found on the Insert menu, the function creates something like a sticky Post-it note that pops up when readers move their cursors across words you have highlighted. The following screen shot shows one such comment.

3 Responding to comments on your own writing

When you *receive* comments from others, whether your classmates or your instructor, you will get more out of the process if you follow the guidelines below.

As the last item in the preceding box indicates, you'll gain the most from collaboration if you carry your learning from one assignment into the next. To keep track of things to work on, try a chart like the one below, with a vertical column for each assignment (or draft) and a horizontal row for each weakness. Check marks indicate how often the problem occurs in each essay. The chart also provides a convenient place to keep track of words you misspell so that you can master their spellings.

3h Preparing a writing portfolio

Your writing teacher may ask you to assemble samples of your writing into a portfolio, or folder, once or more during the course. Such a portfolio gives you a chance to consider all your writing over a period and to showcase your best work.

Teachers' requirements for portfolios vary. For instance, some teachers ask students to choose their five or so best papers and to submit final drafts only. Others ask for final papers illustrating certain kinds of writing—say, one narrative, one critique, one argument, one research paper, and so on. Still others ask for notes and drafts along with selected papers. If your class is using online writing tools, your work may be archived as part of the course site and you may be asked to submit your portfolio electronically.

Just as teachers' requirements differ, so do their purposes. But most are looking for a range of writing that demonstrates your progress and strengths as a writer. You, in turn, see how you have advanced from one assignment to the next, as you've had time for new knowledge to sink in and time for practice. Teachers often allow students to revise papers before placing them in the portfolio, even if the papers were submitted earlier. In that case, every paper in the portfolio can benefit from all your learning.

An assignment to assemble a writing portfolio will probably also provide guidelines for what to include, how the portfolio will be evaluated, and how (or whether) it will be weighted for a grade. Be sure you understand the purpose of the portfolio and who will read it. For instance, if your composition teacher will be the only reader and her guidelines urge you to show evidence of progress, you might include a paper that took big risks but never entirely succeeded. In contrast, if a committee of teachers will read your work and the guidelines urge you to demonstrate your competence as a writer, you might include only papers that did succeed.

Unless the guidelines specify otherwise, provide error-free copies of your final drafts, label all your samples with your name, and assemble them all in a folder. Add a cover letter or memo that lists the samples, explains why you've included each one, and evaluates your progress as a writer. The self-evaluation involved should be a learning experience for you and will help your teacher assess your development as a writer.

CHAPTER 4

Writing and Revising Paragraphs

A **paragraph** is a group of related sentences set off by a beginning indention or, sometimes, by extra space. For you and your readers, paragraphs provide breathers from long stretches of text and indicate key changes in the development of your thesis. They help to organize and clarify ideas.

In the body of an essay, you may use paragraphs for any of these purposes:

- ▼ **To introduce and give evidence for a main point supporting your essay's central idea (its thesis).** See pages 27–31 for a discussion of an essay's thesis.
- ▼ **Within a group of paragraphs centering on one main point, to develop a key example or other important evidence.**
- ▼ **To shift approach**—for instance, from pros to cons, from problem to solution, from questions to answers.
- ▼ **To mark movement in a sequence**, such as from one reason or step to another.

In addition, you will use paragraphs for special purposes:

- ✓ **To introduce or to conclude an essay.** See pages 102 and 106.
- ✓ **To emphasize an important point or to mark a significant transition between points.** See page 108.
- ✓ **In dialog, to indicate that a new person has begun speaking.** See pages 108–09.

The following paragraph illustrates simply how an effective body paragraph works to help both writer and reader. The thesis of the essay in which this paragraph appears is that a Texas chili championship gives undue attention to an unpleasant food.

Some people really like chili, apparently, but nobody can agree how the stuff should be made. C. V. Wood, twice winner at Terlingua, uses flank steak, pork chops, chicken, and green chilis. My friend Hughes Rudd of CBS News, who imported five hundred pounds of chili powder into Russia as a condition of accepting employment as Moscow correspondent, favors coarse-ground beef. Isadore Bleckman, the cameraman I must live with on the road, insists upon one-inch cubes of stew beef and puts garlic in his chili, an Illinois affectation. An Indian of my acquaintance, Mr. Fulton Batisse, who eats chili for breakfast when he can, uses buffalo meat and plays an Indian drum while it's cooking. I ask you.

—Charles Kuralt, *Dateline America*

While you are drafting, conscious attention to the requirements of the paragraph may sometimes help pull ideas out of you or help you forge relationships. But don't expect effective paragraphs like Kuralt's to flow from your fingertips while you are grappling with what you want to say. Instead, use the checklist on the next page to guide your revision of paragraphs so that they work to your and your readers' advantage.

Note On the Web the paragraphing conventions described here do not always apply. Web readers sometimes skim text instead of reading word for word, and they are accustomed to embedded links that may take them from the paragraph to another page. Writing for the Web, you may want to write shorter paragraphs than you would in printed documents, and save embedded links for the ends of paragraphs lest readers miss important information. (For more on composing for the Web, see pp. 832–38.)

Not all cultures share the paragraphing conventions of American academic writing. The conventions are not universal even among users of standard American English: for instance, US newspaper writers compose very short paragraphs that will break up text in narrow columns. In some other languages, writing moves differently from English—not from left to right, but from right to left or down rows from top to bottom. Even in languages that move as English does, writers may not use paragraphs at all. Or they may use paragraphs but not state the central ideas or provide transitional expressions to show readers how sentences relate. If your native language is not English and you have difficulty with paragraphs, don't worry about paragraphing during drafting. Instead, during a separate step of revision, divide your text into parts that develop your main points. Mark those parts with indentions.

4a Maintaining paragraph unity

Readers generally expect a paragraph to explore a single idea. They will be alert for that idea and will patiently follow its development. In other words, they will seek and appreciate paragraph **unity**: clear identification and clear elaboration of one idea and of that idea only.

In an essay the thesis statement often asserts the main idea as a commitment to readers (see p. 27). In a paragraph a **topic sentence** often alerts readers to the essence of the paragraph by asserting the central idea and expressing the writer's attitude toward it. In a brief essay each body paragraph will likely treat one main point supporting the essay's thesis statement; the topic sentences simply elaborate on parts of the thesis. In longer essays paragraphs tend to work in groups, each group treating one main point. Then the topic sentences will tie into that main point, and all the points together will support the thesis.

1 Focusing on the central idea

Like the thesis sentence, the topic sentence is a commitment to readers, and the rest of the paragraph delivers on that commitment. Look again at Kuralt's paragraph on chili on page 71: the opening statement conveys the author's promise that he will describe various ways to make chili, and the following sentences keep the promise. But what if Kuralt had written this paragraph instead?

Some people really like chili, apparently, but nobody can agree how the stuff should be made. C. V. Wood, twice winner at Terlingua, uses flank steak, pork chops, chicken, and green chilis. My friend Hughes Rudd, who imported five hundred pounds of chili powder into Russia as a condition of accepting employment as Moscow correspondent, favors coarse-ground beef. He had some trouble finding the beef in Moscow, though. He sometimes had to scour all the markets and wait in long lines. For any American used to overstocked supermarkets and department stores, Russia can be quite a shock.

By wandering off from chili ingredients to consumer deprivation in Russia, the paragraph fails to deliver on the commitment of its topic sentence.

You should expect digressions while you are drafting: if you allow yourself to explore ideas, as you should, then of course every paragraph will not be tightly woven, perfectly unified. But spare your readers the challenge and frustration of repeatedly shifting focus to follow your rough explorations: revise each paragraph so that it develops a single idea.

While revising your paragraphs for unity, you may want to highlight the central idea of each paragraph to be sure it's stated and then focus on it. On paper you can bracket or circle the idea. On a computer you can format the idea in color or highlight it with a color background. Just be sure to remove the color or highlighting before printing the final draft.

2 Placing the topic sentence

The topic sentence of a paragraph and its supporting details may be arranged variously, depending on how you want to direct readers' attention and how complex your central idea is. In the most common arrangements, the topic sentence comes at the beginning of the paragraph, comes at the end, or is not stated at all but is nonetheless apparent. The advantages of each approach are described on these two pages. If you write on a computer, you can easily experiment with the position of the topic sentence by moving the sentence around (or deleting it) to see the effect. (The sentence will probably take some editing to work smoothly into various positions.)

v Topic sentence at the beginning

When the topic sentence appears first in a paragraph, it can help you select the details that follow. For readers, the topic-first model establishes an initial context in which all the supporting details can be understood. Reading Kuralt's paragraph on page 71, we easily relate each detail or example back to the point made in the first sentence.

The topic-first model is common not only in expository paragraphs, such as Kuralt's, but also in argument paragraphs, such as the one following:

It is a misunderstanding of the American retail store to think we go there necessarily to buy. Some of us shop. There's a difference. Shopping has many purposes, the least interesting of which is to acquire new articles. We shop to cheer ourselves up. We shop to practice decision-making. We shop to be useful and productive members of our class and society. We shop to remind ourselves how much is available to us. We shop to remind ourselves how much is to be striven for. We shop to assert our superiority to the material objects that spread themselves before us.

—Phyllis Rose, "Shopping and Other Spiritual Adventures"

v Topic sentence at the end

In some paragraphs the central idea may be stated at the end, after supporting sentences have made a case for the general statement. Since this model leads the reader to a conclusion by presenting all the evidence first, it can prove effective in argument. And because the point of the

paragraph is withheld until the end, this model can be dramatic in exposition, too, as illustrated by the following example from an essay about William Tecumseh Sherman, a Union general during the US Civil War:

Sherman is considered by some to be the inventor of “total war”: the first general in human history to carry the logic of war to its ultimate extreme, the first to scorch the earth, the first to consciously demoralize the hostile civilian population in order to subdue its army, the first to wreck an economy in order to starve its soldiers. He has been called our first “merchant of terror” and seen as the spiritual father of our Vietnam War concepts of “search and destroy,” “pacification,” “strategic hamlets,” and “free-fire zones.” As such, he remains a cardboard figure of our history: a monstrous arch-villain to unreconstructed Southerners, and an embarrassment to Northerners.

—Adapted from James Reston, Jr.,
“You Cannot Refine It”

Expressing the central idea at the end of the paragraph does not eliminate the need to unify the paragraph. The idea in the topic sentence must still govern the selection of all the preceding details.

v Central idea not stated

Occasionally, a paragraph’s central idea will be stated in the previous paragraph or will be so obvious that it need not be stated at all. The following is from an essay on the actor Humphrey Bogart:

Usually he wore the trench coat unbuttoned, just tied with the belt, and a slouch hat, rarely tilted. Sometimes it was a captain’s cap and a yachting jacket. Almost always his trousers were held up by a cowboy belt. You know the kind: one an Easterner waiting for a plane out of Phoenix buys just as a joke and then takes a liking to. Occasionally, he’d hitch up his slacks with it, and he often jabbed his thumbs behind it, his hands ready for a fight or a dame.

—Peter Bogdanovich, “Bogie in Excelsis”

Paragraphs in descriptive writing (like the one above) and in narrative writing (relating a sequence of events) often lack stated topic sentences. But a paragraph without a topic sentence still should have a central idea, and its details should develop that idea.

EXERCISE 4.1 Finding the central idea

What is the central idea of each of the following paragraphs? In what sentence or sentences is it expressed? (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

1. Today many black Americans enjoy a measure of economic security beyond any we have known in the history of black America. But if they remain in a nasty blue funk, it’s because their very existence seems an affront to the swelling ranks of the poor. Nor have black intellectuals ever quite made peace with the concept of the black bourgeoisie, a group that is typically seen as devoid of cultural authenticity, doomed to mimicry and pallid assimilation. I once gave a talk before an audience of black academics and educators, in the course of which I referred to black middle-class culture. Afterward, one of the academics in the audience, deeply affronted, had a question for me. “Professor Gates,” he asked rhetorically, his voice dripping with sarcasm, “what *is* black middle-class culture?” I suggested that if he really wanted to know, he need only look around the room. But perhaps I should just have handed him a mirror: for just as nothing is more American than anti-Americanism, nothing is more characteristic of the black bourgeoisie than the sense of shame and denial that the identity inspires.

—Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “Two Nations . . . Both Black”

2. Though they do not know why the humpback whale sings, scientists do know something about the song itself. They have measured the length of a whale’s song: from a few minutes to over half an hour. They have recorded and studied the variety and complex arrangements of low moans, high squeaks, and sliding squeals that make up the song. And they have learned that each whale sings in its own unique pattern.

—Janet Lieber (student), “Whales’ Songs”

EXERCISE 4.2 Revising a paragraph for unity

The following paragraph contains ideas or details that do not support its central idea. Identify the topic sentence in the paragraph and

delete the unrelated material. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

In the southern part of the state, some people still live much as they did a century ago. They use coal- or wood-burning stoves for heating and cooking. Their homes do not have electricity or indoor bathrooms or running water. The towns they live in don't receive adequate funding from the state and federal governments, so the schools are poor and in bad shape. Beside most homes there is a garden where fresh vegetables are gathered for canning. Small pastures nearby support livestock, including cattle, pigs, horses, and chickens. Most of the people have cars or trucks, but the vehicles are old and beat-up from traveling on unpaved roads.

EXERCISE 4.3 Considering your past work: Paragraph unity

For a continuing exercise in this chapter, choose a paper you've written in the past year. Examine the body paragraphs for unity. Do they have clear topic sentences? If not, are the paragraphs' central ideas still clear? Are the paragraphs unified around their central ideas? Should any details be deleted for unity? Should other, more relevant details be added in their stead?

EXERCISE 4.4 Writing a unified paragraph

Develop the following topic sentence into a unified paragraph by using the relevant information in the supporting statements. Delete each statement that does not relate directly to the topic, and then rewrite and combine sentences as appropriate. Place the topic sentence in the position that seems most effective to you. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

Topic sentence

Mozart's accomplishments in music seem remarkable even today.

Supporting information

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in 1756 in Salzburg, Austria.
 He began composing music at the age of five.
 He lived most of his life in Salzburg and Vienna.
 His first concert tour of Europe was at the age of six.
 On his first tour he played harpsichord, organ, and violin.
 He published numerous compositions before reaching adolescence.
 He married in 1782.
 Mozart and his wife were both poor managers of money.
 They were plagued by debts.
 Mozart composed over six hundred musical compositions.
 His most notable works are his operas, symphonies, quartets, and piano concertos.
 He died at the age of thirty-five.

EXERCISE 4.5 Turning topic sentences into unified paragraphs

Develop three of the following topic sentences into detailed and unified paragraphs. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

1. Men and women are different in at least one important respect.
2. The best Web search engine is [*name*].
3. Fans of music [*country, classical, rock, rap, jazz, or an-other kind*] come in [*number*] varieties.
4. Professional sports have [*or have not*] been helped by extending the regular season with championship play-offs.
5. Working for good grades can interfere with learning.

4b Achieving paragraph coherence

A paragraph is unified if it holds together—if all its details and examples support the central idea. A paragraph is **coherent** if readers can see *how* the paragraph holds together—how the sentences relate to each other—without having to stop and reread.

Incoherence gives readers the feeling of being yanked around, as the following example shows.

The ancient Egyptians were masters of preserving dead people's bodies by making mummies of them. Mummies several thousand years old have been discovered nearly intact. The skin, hair, teeth, finger- and toenails, and facial features of the mummies were evident. One can diagnose the diseases they suffered in life, such as smallpox, arthritis, and nutritional deficiencies. The process was remarkably effective. Sometimes apparent were the fatal afflictions of the dead people: a middle-aged king died from a blow on the head, and polio killed a child king. Mummification consisted of removing the internal organs, applying natural preservatives inside and out, and then wrapping the body in layers of bandages.

The paragraph as it was actually written appears below. It is much clearer because the writer arranged information differently and also built links into his sentences so that they would flow smoothly:

- ✓ After stating the central idea in a topic sentence, the writer moves to two more specific explanations and illustrates the second with four sentences of examples.
- ✓ Circled words repeat or restate key terms or concepts.
- ✓ Boxed words link sentences and clarify relationships.
- ✓ Underlined phrases are in parallel grammatical form to reflect their parallel content.

The ancient Egyptians were masters of preserving dead people's bodies by making mummies of them. Basically, mummification consisted of removing the internal organs, applying natural preservatives inside and out, and then wrapping the body in layers of bandages. And the process was remarkably effective. Indeed, mummies several thousand years old have been discovered nearly intact. Their skin, hair, teeth, finger- and toenails, and facial features are still evident. Their diseases in life, such as smallpox, arthritis, and nutritional deficiencies, are still diagnosable. Even their fatal afflictions are still apparent: a middle-aged king died from a blow on the head; a child king died from polio.
—Mitchell Rosenbaum (student),
“Lost Arts of the Egyptians”

Though some of the connections in this paragraph were added in revision, the writer attended to them while drafting as well. Not only superficial coherence but also an underlying clarity of relationships can be achieved by tying each sentence to the one before—generalizing from it, clarifying it, qualifying it, adding to it, illustrating it. Each sentence in a paragraph creates an expectation of some sort in the mind of the reader, a question such as “How was a mummy made?” or “How intact are the mummies?” or “What’s another example?” When you recognize these expectations and try to fulfill them, readers are likely to understand relationships without struggle.

1 Organizing the paragraph

The paragraphs on mummies illustrate an essential element of coherence: information must be arranged in an order that readers can follow easily and that corresponds to their expectations. The common organizations for paragraphs correspond to those for entire essays: by space, by time, and for emphasis. (In addition, the patterns of development also suggest certain arrangements. See pp. 91–100.)

Note On a computer you can experiment with different paragraph organizations and emphases. Copy a paragraph, paste the copy into your document, and then try moving sentences around. To evaluate the versions, you’ll need to edit each one so that sentences flow smoothly, attending to repetition, parallelism, transitions, and the other techniques discussed in this section.

✓ Organizing by space or time

A paragraph organized **spatially** focuses readers’ attention on one point and scans a person, object, or scene from that point. The movement usually parallels the way people actually look at

things, from top to bottom, from side to side, from near to far. Virginia Woolf follows the last pattern in the following paragraph:

Spatial organization

The sun struck straight upon the house, making the white walls glare between the dark windows. Their panes, woven thickly with green branches, held circles of impenetrable darkness. Sharp-edged wedges of light lay upon the window-sill and showed inside the room plates with blue rings, cups with curved handles, the bulge of a great bowl, the criss-cross pattern in the rug, and the formidable corners and lines of cabinets and bookcases. Behind their conglomeration hung a zone of shadow in which might be a further shape to be disencumbered of shadow or still denser depths of darkness.

—Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

Another familiar way of organizing the elements of a paragraph is **chronologically**—that is, in order of their occurrence in time. In a chronological paragraph, as in experience, the earliest events come first, followed by more recent ones.

Chronological organization

Nor can a tree live without soil. A hurricane-born mangrove island may bring its own soil to the sea. But other mangrove trees make their own soil—and their own islands—from scratch. These are the ones which interest me. The seeds germinate in the fruit on the tree. The germinated embryo can drop anywhere—say, onto a dab of floating muck. The heavy root end sinks; a leafy plumule unfurls. The tiny seedling, afloat, is on its way. Soon aerial roots shooting out in all directions trap debris. The sapling's networks twine, the interstices narrow, and water calms in the lee. Bacteria thrive on organic broth; amphipods swarm. These creatures grow and die at the tree's wet feet. The soil thickens, accumulating rainwater, leaf rot, seashells, and guano; the island spreads.

—Annie Dillard, “Sojourner”

v Organizing for emphasis

Some organizational schemes are imposed on paragraphs to achieve a certain emphasis. The most common is the **general-to-specific** scheme, in which the topic sentence often comes first and then the following sentences become increasingly specific. The paragraph on mummies (pp. 78–79) illustrates this organization: each sentence is either more specific than the one before it or at the same level of generality. Here is another illustration:

General-to-specific organization

Perhaps the simplest fact about sleep is that individual needs for it vary widely. Most adults sleep between seven and nine hours, but occasionally people turn up who need twelve hours or so, while some rare types can get by on three or four. Rarest of all are those legendary types who require almost no sleep at all; respected researchers have recently studied three such people. One of them—a healthy, happy woman in her seventies—sleeps about an hour every two or three days. The other two are men in early middle age, who get by on a few minutes a night. One of them complains about the daily fifteen minutes or so he's forced to “waste” in sleeping.

—Lawrence A. Mayer,
“The Confounding Enemy of Sleep”

In the less common **specific-to-general** organization, the elements of the paragraph build to a general conclusion:

Specific-to-general organization

It's disconcerting that so many college women, when asked how their children will be cared for if they themselves work, refer with vague confidence to “the day care center” as though there were some great amorphous kiddie watcher out there that the state provides. But such places, adequately funded, well run, and available to all, are still scarce in this country, particularly for middle-class women. And figures show that when she takes time off for family-connected reasons (births, child care), a woman's chances for career advancement plum-met. In a job market that's steadily tighten-

ing and getting more competitive, these obstacles bode the kind of danger ahead that can shatter not only professions, but egos. A hard reality is that there's not much more support for our daughters who have family-plus-career goals than there was for us; there's simply a great deal more self and societal pressure.

—Judith Wax,
Starting in the Middle

As its name implies, the **problem-solution** arrangement introduces a problem and then proposes or explains a solution. The next paragraph explains how to gain from Internet newsgroups despite their limitations:

Problem-solution organization

Even when you do find a newsgroup with apparently useful material, you have no assurance of a correspondent's authority because of e-mail's inherent anonymity. Many people don't cite their credentials. Besides, anyone can pose as an expert. The best information you can get initially is apt to be a reference to something of which you were not aware but can then investigate for yourself. Internet newsgroups can be valuable for that alone. I have been directed to software-problem solutions, owners of out-of-print books, and important people who know nothing about communicating through electronic communities. It is best to start with the assumption that you are conversing with peers, people who know things that you don't, while you probably know things that they don't. Gradually, by trading information, you develop some virtual relationships and can assess the relative validity of your sources. Meanwhile, you will probably have learned a few things along the way.

—Adapted from John A. Butler,
Cybersearch

When your details vary in significance, you can arrange them in a **climactic** order, from least to most important or dramatic:

Climactic organization

Nature has put many strange tongues into the heads of her creatures. There is the frog's tongue, rooted at the front of the mouth so it can be protruded an extra distance for nabbing prey. There is the gecko lizard's tongue, so long and agile that the lizard uses it to wash its eyes. But the ultimate lingual whopper has been achieved in the anteater. The anteater's head, long as it is, is not long enough to contain the tremendous tongue which licks deep into ant-hills. Its tongue is not rooted in the mouth or throat: it is fastened to the breastbone.

—Alan Devoe, "Nature's Utmost"

In other organizations, you can arrange details according to how you think readers are likely to understand them. In discussing the virtues of public television, for instance, you might proceed from **most familiar to least familiar**, from a well-known program your readers have probably seen to less well-known programs they may not have seen. Or in defending the right of government employees to strike, you might arrange your reasons from **simplest to most complex**, from the employees' need to be able to redress grievances to more subtle consequences for relations between employers and employees.

2 Repeating or restating key words

Repeating or restating the important words in a paragraph binds the sentences together and keeps the paragraph's topic uppermost in readers' minds. In the next example, notice how the circled words relate the sentences and stress the important ideas of the paragraph:

Having listened to both Chinese and English, I also tend to be suspicious of any comparisons between the two languages. Typically, one language—that of the person doing the comparing—is often used as the standard, the benchmark for a logical form of expression. And so the language being compared is always in danger of being judged deficient or superfluous, simplistic or unnecessarily complex, melodious or cacophonous. English speakers point out that Chinese is extremely difficult because it relies on variations in tone barely discernible to the human ear. By the same token, Chinese speakers tell me English is extremely difficult because it is inconsistent, a language of too many broken rules, of Mickey Mice and Donald Ducks.

—Amy Tan, "The Language of Discretion"

This paragraph links sentences through their structure, too, because the subject of each one picks up on key words used earlier:

- Sentence 1:* Having listened to both Chinese and English, I tend to be suspicious of any comparisons between the two languages.
Sentence 2: Typically, one language . . .
Sentence 3: And so the language . . .
Sentence 4: English speakers . . .
Sentence 5: Chinese speakers . . .

In many incoherent paragraphs, such as the one on mummification on page 78, each sentence subject introduces a topic new to the paragraph so that readers have trouble following the thread. (See pp. 386–87 for more on linking sentences through their subjects.)

3 Using parallel structures

Another way to achieve coherence is through **parallelism**—the use of similar grammatical structures for similar elements of meaning within a sentence or among sentences. (See Chapter 25 for a detailed discussion of parallelism.) Parallel structures help tie together the last three sentences in the paragraph on mummies (p. 79). In the following paragraph, underlining highlights the parallel structures linking sentences. Aphra Behn (lived 1640–89) was the first Englishwoman to write professionally.

In addition to her busy career as a writer, Aphra Behn also found time to briefly marry and spend a little while in debtor’s prison. She found time to take up a career as a spy for the English in their war against the Dutch. She made the long and difficult voyage to Suriname [in South America] and became involved in a slave rebellion there. She plunged into political debate at Will’s Coffee House and defended her position from the stage of the Drury Lane Theater. She actively argued for women’s rights to be educated and to marry whom they pleased, or not at all. She defied the seventeenth-century dictum that ladies must be “modest” and wrote freely about sex.

—Angeline Goreau, “Aphra Behn”

Note Though planned repetition can be effective, careless or excessive repetition weakens prose (see pp. 532–33).

4 Using pronouns

Pronouns such as *she*, *he*, *it*, *they*, and *who* refer to and function as nouns (see p. 237). Thus pronouns naturally help relate sentences to one another. In the following paragraph the pronouns and the nouns they refer to are circled:

After dark, on the warrenlike streets of Brooklyn where I live, I often see women who fear the worst from me. They seem to have set their faces on neutral, and with their purse straps strung across their chests bandolier-style, they forge ahead as though bracing themselves against being tackled. I understand, of course, that the danger they perceive is not a hallucination. Women are particularly vulnerable to street violence, and young black males are drastically overrepresented among the perpetrators of that violence. Yet these truths are no solace against the kind of alienation that comes of being ever the suspect, a fearsome entity with whom pedestrians avoid making eye contact.

—Brent Staples, “Black Men and Public Space”

5 Being consistent

Being consistent is the most subtle way to achieve paragraph coherence because readers are aware of consistency only when it is absent. Consistency (or the lack of it) occurs primarily in the tense of verbs and in the number and person of nouns and pronouns (see Chapter 20). Although some shifts will be necessary to reflect your meaning, inappropriate shifts, as in the following passages, will interfere with a reader’s ability to follow the development of ideas:

Shifts in tense

In the Hopi religion, water is the driving force. Since the Hopi lived in the Arizona desert, they needed water urgently for drinking, cooking, and irrigating crops. Their complex beliefs are focused in part on

gaining the assistance of supernatural forces in obtaining water. Many of the Hopi kachinas, or spirit essences, were directly concerned with clouds, rain, and snow.

Shifts in number

Kachinas represent the things and events of the real world, such as clouds, mischief, cornmeal, and even death. A kachina is not worshiped as a god but regarded as an interested friend. They visit the Hopi from December through July in the form of men who dress in kachina costumes and perform dances and other rituals.

Shifts in person

Unlike the man, the Hopi woman does not keep contact with kachinas through costumes and dancing. Instead, one receives a small likeness of a kachina, called a *tihu*, from the man impersonating the kachina. You are more likely to receive a tihu as a girl approaching marriage, though a child or older woman sometimes receives one, too.

Note The grammar checker on a word processor cannot help you locate shifts in tense, number, or person among sentences. Shifts are sometimes necessary (as when tenses change to reflect actual differences in time). Furthermore, a passage with needless shifts may still consist of sentences that are grammatically correct, as all the sentences are in the preceding examples. The only way to achieve consistency in your writing is to review it yourself.

6 Using transitional expressions

Specific words and word groups, called **transitional expressions**, can connect sentences whose relationships may not be instantly clear to readers. Notice the difference in the following two versions of the same paragraph:

Medical science has succeeded in identifying the hundreds of viruses that can cause the common cold. It has discovered the most effective means of prevention. One person transmits the cold viruses to another most often by hand. An infected person covers his mouth to cough. He picks up the telephone. His daughter picks up the telephone. She rubs her eyes. She has a cold. It spreads. To avoid colds, people should wash their hands often and keep their hands away from their faces.

Medical science has thus succeeded in identifying the hundreds of viruses that can cause the common cold. It has also discovered the most effective means of prevention. One person transmits the cold viruses to another most often by hand. For instance, an infected person covers his mouth to cough. Then he picks up the telephone. Half an hour later, his daughter picks up the same telephone. Immediately afterward, she rubs her eyes. Within a few days, she, too, has a cold. And thus it spreads. To avoid colds, therefore, people should wash their hands often and keep their hands away from their faces.

—Kathleen LaFrank (student),
“Colds: Myth and Science”

There are scores of transitional expressions on which to draw. The box below shows many common ones, arranged according to the relationships they convey.

To see where transitional expressions might be needed in your paragraphs, examine the movement from each sentence to the next. (On a computer or on paper, you can highlight the transitional expressions already present and then review the sentences that lack them.) Abrupt changes are most likely to need a transition: a shift from cause to effect, a contradiction, a contrast. You can smooth and clarify transitions *between* paragraphs, too. See pages 108 and 109–10.

If transitional expressions are not common in your native language, you may be tempted to compensate when writing in English by adding them to the beginnings of most sentences. But such explicit transitions aren't needed everywhere, and in fact too many can be intrusive and awkward. When inserting transitional expressions, consider the reader's need for a signal: often the connection from sentence to sentence is already clear from the context, or it can be made clear by relating the content of sentences more closely (see pp. 83–84). When you do need transitional expressions, try varying their positions in your sentences, as shown in the sample paragraph on the facing page.

Punctuating transitional expressions

A transitional expression is usually set off by a comma or commas from the rest of the sentence:

Immediately afterward^λ, she rubs her eyes. Within a few days^λ, she^λ, too^λ, has a cold.

See page 438 for more on this convention and its exceptions.

7 Combining devices to achieve coherence

The devices for achieving coherence rarely appear in isolation in effective paragraphs. As any example in this chapter shows, writers usually combine sensible organization, parallelism, repetition, pronouns, consistency, and transitional expressions to help readers follow the development of ideas.

EXERCISE 4.6 Analyzing paragraphs for coherence

Study the paragraphs by Janet Lieber (p. 79), Hillary Begas (p. 91), and Freeman Dyson (p. 93) for the authors' use of various devices to achieve coherence. Look especially for organization, parallel structures and ideas, repetition and restatement, pronouns, and transitional expressions.

EXERCISE 4.7 Arranging sentences coherently

After the topic sentence (sentence 1), the sentences in the student paragraph below have been deliberately scrambled to make the paragraph incoherent. Using the topic sentence and other clues as guides, rearrange the sentences in the paragraph to form a well-organized, coherent unit. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

We hear complaints about the Postal Service all the time, but we should not forget what it does right. The total volume of mail delivered by the Postal Service each year makes up almost half the total delivered in all the world. Its 70,000 employees handle 140,000,000,000 pieces of mail each year. And when was the last time they failed to deliver yours? In fact, on any given day the Postal Service delivers almost as much mail as the rest of the world combined. That huge number means over 2,000,000 pieces per employee and over 560 pieces per man, woman, and child in the country.

EXERCISE 4.8 Eliminating inconsistencies

The following paragraph is incoherent because of inconsistencies in person, number, or tense. Identify the inconsistencies and revise the paragraph to give it coherence. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.) For further exercises in eliminating inconsistencies, see pages 359, 360–61, and 363.

The Hopi tihu, or kachina likeness, is often called a “doll,” but its owner, usually a girl or woman, does not regard them as a plaything. Instead, you treated them as a valued possession and hung them out of the way on a wall. For its owner the tihu represents a connection with the kachina's spirit. They are considered part of the kachina, carrying a portion of the kachina's power.

EXERCISE 4.9 Using transitional expressions

Transitional expressions have been removed from the following paragraph at the numbered blanks. Fill in each blank with an appropriate transitional expression (1) to contrast, (2) to intensify, and (3) to show effect. Consult the list on pages 86–87 if necessary. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

All over the country, people are swimming, jogging, weightlifting, dancing, walking, playing tennis—doing anything to keep fit. (1) this school has consistently refused to construct and equip a fitness center. The school has (2) refused to open existing athletic facilities to all students, not just those playing organized sports. (3) students have no place to exercise except in their rooms and on dangerous public roads.

**EXERCISE 4.10 Considering your past work:
Paragraph coherence**

Continuing from Exercise 4.3 (p. 76), examine the body paragraphs of your essay to see how coherent they are and how their coherence could be improved. Do the paragraphs have a clear organization? Do you use repetition and restatement, parallelism, pronouns, and transitional expressions to signal relationships? Are the paragraphs consistent in person, number, and tense? Revise two or three paragraphs in ways you think will improve their coherence.

EXERCISE 4.11 Writing a coherent paragraph

Write a coherent paragraph from the following information, combining and rewriting sentences as necessary. First, begin the paragraph with the topic sentence given and arrange the supporting sentences in a climactic order. Then combine and rewrite the supporting sentences, helping the reader see connections by introducing repetition and restatement, parallelism, pronouns, consistency, and transitional expressions. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

Topic sentence

Hypnosis is far superior to drugs for relieving tension.

Supporting information

Hypnosis has none of the dangerous side effects of the drugs that relieve tension.

Tension-relieving drugs can cause weight loss or gain, illness, or even death.

Hypnosis is nonaddicting.

Most of the drugs that relieve tension do foster addiction.

Tension-relieving drugs are expensive.

Hypnosis is inexpensive even for people who have not mastered self-hypnosis.

**EXERCISE 4.12 Turning topic sentences
into coherent paragraphs**

Develop three of the following topic sentences into coherent paragraphs. Organize your information by space, by time, or for emphasis, as seems most appropriate. Use repetition and restatement, parallelism, pronouns, consistency, and transitional expressions to link sentences. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

1. The most interesting character in the book [or movie] was .
2. Of all my courses, is the one that I think will serve me best throughout life.
3. Although we in the United States face many problems, the one we should concentrate on solving first is .
4. The most dramatic building in town is the .
5. Children should not have to worry about the future.

4c Developing the paragraph

In an essay that's understandable and interesting to readers, you will provide plenty of solid information to support your general statements. You work that information into the essay through the paragraph, as you build up each point relating to the thesis.

A paragraph may be unified and coherent but still be inadequate if you skimp on details. Take this example:

Untruths can serve as a kind of social oil when they smooth connections between people. In preventing confrontation and injured feelings, they allow everyone to go on as before.

This paragraph lacks **development**, completeness. It does not provide enough information for us to evaluate or even care about the writer's assertions.

1 Using specific information

If they are sound, the general statements you make in any writing will be based on what you have experienced, observed, read, and thought. Readers will assume as much and will expect you to provide the evidence for your statements—sensory details, facts, statistics, examples, quotations, reasons. Whatever helps you form your views you need, in turn, to share with readers.

Here is the actual version of the preceding sample paragraph. With examples, the paragraph is more interesting and convincing.

Untruths can serve as a kind of social oil when they smooth connections between people. Assuring a worried friend that his haircut is flattering, claiming an appointment to avoid an aunt's dinner invitation, pretending interest in an acquaintance's children—these lies may protect the liar, but they also protect the person lied to. In preventing confrontation and injured feelings, the lies allow everyone to go on as before.

—Joan Lar (student), “The Truth of Lies”

If your readers often comment that your writing needs more specifics, you should focus on that improvement in your revisions. Try listing the general statements of each paragraph on lines by themselves with space underneath. Then use one of the discovery techniques discussed on pages 16–26 (freewriting, brainstorming, and so on) to find the details to support each sentence. Write these into your draft. If you write on a computer, you can do this revision directly on your draft. First create a duplicate of your draft, and then, working on the copy, separate the sentences and explore their support. Rewrite the supporting details into sentences, reassemble the paragraph, and edit it for coherence.

2 Using a pattern of development

If you have difficulty developing an idea or shaping your information, then try asking yourself questions derived from the patterns of development. (The same patterns can help with essay development, too. See pp. 24–25.)

You can download the following questions from *ablongman.com/littlebrown*. When you're having difficulty with a paragraph, you can duplicate the list and explore answers. You may be able to import what you write directly into your draft.

v How did it happen? (Narration)

Narration retells a significant sequence of events, usually in the order of their occurrence (that is, chronologically):

Jill's story is typical for “recruits” to religious cults. She was very lonely in college and appreciated the attention of the nice young men and women who lived in a house near campus. They persuaded her to share their meals and then to move in with them. Between intense bombardments of “love,” they deprived her of sleep and sometimes threatened to throw her out. Jill became increasingly confused and dependent, losing touch with any reality besides the one in the group. She dropped out of school and refused to see or communicate with her family. Before long she, too, was preying on lonely college students.

—Hillary Begas (student),
“The Love Bombers”

As this paragraph illustrates, a narrator is concerned not just with the sequence of events but also with their consequence, their importance to the whole. Thus a narrative rarely corresponds to real time; instead, it collapses transitional or background events and focuses on events of particular interest. In addition, writers some-times rearrange events, as when they simulate the workings of memory by flashing back to an earlier time.

v How does it look, sound, feel, smell, taste? (Description)

Description details the sensory qualities of a person, place, thing, or feeling. You use concrete and specific words to convey a dominant mood, to illustrate an idea, or to achieve some other purpose. Some description is **subjective**: the writer filters the subject through his or her biases and emotions. In the subjective description by Virginia Woolf on page 80, the *glare* of the walls, the

impenetrable darkness, the *bulge of a great bowl*, and the *formidable corners and lines* all indicate the author's feelings about what she describes.

In contrast to subjective description, journalists and scientists often favor description that is **objective**, conveying the subject without bias or emotion:

The two toddlers, both boys, sat together for half an hour in a ten-foot-square room with yellow walls (one with a two-way mirror for observation) and a brown carpet. The room was unfurnished except for two small chairs and about two dozen toys. The boys' interaction was generally tense. They often struggled physically and verbally over several toys, especially a large red beach ball and a small wooden fire engine. The larger of the two boys often pushed the smaller away or pried his hands from the desired object. This larger boy never spoke, but he did make grunting sounds when he was engaging the other. In turn, the smaller boy twice uttered piercing screams of "No!" and once shouted "Stop that!" When he was left alone, he hummed and muttered to himself.

—Ray Mattison (student),
"Case Study: Play Patterns of Toddlers"

v **What are examples of it or reasons for it? (Illustration or support)**

Some ideas can be developed simply by **illustration or support**—supplying detailed examples or reasons. The writer of the paragraph on lying (pp. 90–91) developed her idea with several specific examples of her general statements. You can also supply a single extended example:

The language problem that I was attacking loomed larger and larger as I began to learn more. When I would describe in English certain concepts and objects enmeshed in Korean emotion and imagination, I became slowly aware of nuances, of differences between two languages even in simple expression. The remark "Kim entered the house" seems to be simple enough, yet, unless a reader has a clear visual image of a Korean house, his understanding of the sentence is not complete. When a Korean says he is "in the house," he may be in his courtyard, or on his porch, or in his small room! If I wanted to give a specific picture of entering the house in the Western sense, I had to say "room" instead of house—sometimes. I say "sometimes" because many Koreans entertain their guests on their porches and still are considered to be hospitable, and in the Korean sense, going into the "room" may be a more intimate act than it would be in the English sense. Such problems!

—Kim Yong Ik, "A Book-Writing Venture"

Sometimes you can develop a paragraph by providing your reasons for stating a general idea:

There are three reasons, quite apart from scientific considerations, that mankind needs to travel in space. The first reason is the need for garbage disposal: we need to transfer industrial processes into space, so that the earth may remain a green and pleasant place for our grandchildren to live in. The second reason is the need to escape material impoverishment: the resources of this planet are finite, and we shall not forgo forever the abundant solar energy and minerals and living space that are spread out all around us. The third reason is our spiritual need for an open frontier: the ultimate purpose of space travel is to bring to humanity not only scientific discoveries and an occasional spectacular show on television but a real expansion of our spirit.

—Freeman Dyson, "Disturbing the Universe"

v **What is it? What does it encompass, and what does it exclude? (Definition)**

A **definition** says what something is and is not, specifying the characteristics that distinguish the subject from the other members of its class. You can easily define concrete, noncontroversial terms in a single sentence: *A knife is a cutting instrument (its class) with a sharp blade set in a handle* (the characteristics that set it off from, say, scissors or a razor blade). But defining a complicated or controversial topic often requires extended explanation, and you may need to devote a whole paragraph or even an essay to it. Such a definition may provide examples to identify

the subject's characteristics. It may also involve other methods of development discussed here, such as classification or comparison and contrast.

The following definition of the word *quality* comes from an essay asserting that “quality in product and effort has become a vanishing element of current civilization”:

In the hope of possibly reducing the hail of censure which is certain to greet this essay (I am thinking of going to Alaska or possibly Patagonia in the week it is published), let me say that quality, as I understand it, means investment of the best skill and effort possible to produce the finest and most admirable result possible. Its presence or absence in some degree characterizes every man-made object, service, skilled or unskilled labor—laying bricks, painting a picture, ironing shirts, practicing medicine, shoemaking, scholarship, writing a book. You do it well or you do it half-well. Materials are sound and durable or they are sleazy; method is painstaking or whatever is easiest. Quality is achieving or reaching for the highest standard as against being satisfied with the sloppy or fraudulent. It is honesty of purpose as against catering to cheap or sensational sentiment. It does not allow compromise with the second-rate.

—Barbara Tuchman,
“The Decline of Quality”

v What are its parts or characteristics? (Division or analysis)

Division and analysis both involve separating something into its elements, the better to understand it. Here is a simple example:

A typical daily newspaper compresses considerable information into the top of the first page, above the headlines. The most prominent feature of this space, the newspaper's name, is called the *logo* or *nameplate*. Under the logo and set off by rules is a line of small type called the *folio line*, which contains the date of the issue, the volume and issue numbers, copyright information, and the price. To the right of the logo is a block of small type called a *weather ear*, a summary of the day's forecast. And above the logo is a *skyline*, a kind of advertisement in which the paper's editors highlight a special feature of the issue.

—Kansha Stone (student),
“Anatomy of a Paper”

Generally, analysis goes beyond simply identifying elements. Often used as a synonym for *critical thinking*, analysis also involves interpreting the elements' meaning, significance, and relationships. You identify and interpret elements according to your particular interest in the subject. (See pp. 157–63 for more on critical thinking and analysis.)

The following paragraph comes from an essay about soap operas. The analytical focus of the whole essay is the way soap operas provide viewers with a sense of community missing from their own lives. The paragraph itself has a narrower focus related to the broader one.

The surface realism of the soap opera conjures up an illusion of “liveness.” The domestic settings and easygoing rhythms encourage the viewer to believe that the drama, however ridiculous, is simply an extension of daily life. The conversation is so slow that some have called it “radio with pictures.” (Advertisers have always assumed that busy housewives would listen, rather than watch.) Conversation is casual and colloquial, as though one were eavesdropping on neighbors. There is plenty of time to “read” the character's face; close-ups establish intimacy. The sets are comfortably familiar: well-lit interiors of living rooms, restaurants, offices, and hospitals. Daytime soaps have little of the glamour of their prime-time relations. The viewer easily imagines that the conversation is taking place in real time.

—Ruth Rosen,
“Search for Yesterday”

v What groups or categories can it be sorted into? (Classification)

Classification involves sorting many things into groups based on their similarities. Using the pattern, we scan a large group composed of many members that share at least one characteristic—office workers, say—and we assign the members to smaller groups on the basis of some principle—salary, perhaps, or dependence on computers. Here is an example:

In my experience, the parents who hire daytime sitters for their school-age children tend to fall into one of three groups. The first group includes parents who work and want someone to be at home when the children return from school. These parents are looking for an extension of themselves, someone who will give the care they would give if they were at home. The second group includes parents who may be home all day themselves but are too disorganized or too frazzled by their children's demands to handle child care alone. They are looking for an organizer and helpmate. The third and final group includes parents who do not want to be bothered by their children, whether they are home all day or not. Unlike the parents in the first two groups, who care for their children whenever and however they can, these parents are looking for a permanent substitute for themselves.

—Nancy Whittle (student),
“Modern Parenting”

v **How is it like, or different from, other things?**
(Comparison and contrast)

Asking about similarities and differences leads to **comparison and contrast**: comparison focuses on similarities, whereas contrast focuses on differences. The two may be used separately or together to develop an idea or to relate two or more things. Commonly, comparisons are organized in one of two ways. In the first, **subject by subject**, the two subjects are discussed separately, one at a time:

Consider the differences also in the behavior of rock and classical music audiences. At a rock concert, the audience members yell, whistle, sing along, and stamp their feet. They may even stand during the entire performance. The better the music, the more active they'll be. At a classical concert, in contrast, the better the performance, the more *still* the audience is. Members of the classical audience are so highly disciplined that they refrain from even clearing their throats or coughing. No matter what effect the powerful music has on their intellects and feelings, they sit on their hands.

—Tony Nahm (student),
“Rock and Roll Is Here to Stay”

In the second comparative organization, **point by point**, the two subjects are discussed side by side and matched feature for feature:

The first electronic computer, ENIAC, went into operation just over fifty years ago, yet the differences between it and today's personal computer are enormous. ENIAC was enormous itself, consisting of forty panels, each two feet wide and four feet deep. Today's notebook PC or Macintosh, by contrast, can fit easily on one's lap. ENIAC had to be configured by hand, with its programmers taking up to two days to reset switches and cables. Today, the average user can change programs in an instant. And for all its size and inconvenience, ENIAC was also slow. In its time, its operating speed of 100,000 pulses per second seemed amazingly fast. However, today's notebook can operate at more than 1 billion pulses per second.

—Shirley Kajiwara (student),
“The Computers We Deserve”

The following examples show the two organizing schemes in outline form. The one on the left corresponds to the point-by-point paragraph about computers. The one on the right uses the same information but reorganizes it to cover the two subjects separately: first one, then the other.

Point by point

- III. Size
 - A. ENIAC
 - B. Personal computer
- III. Ease of programming
 - A. ENIAC
 - B. Personal computer
- III. Speed
 - A. ENIAC
 - B. Personal computer

Subject by subject

- II. ENIAC
 - A. Size
 - B. Ease of programming
 - C. Speed
- II. Personal computer
 - A. Size
 - B. Ease of programming
 - C. Speed

v **Is it comparable to something that is in a different class but more familiar to readers? (Analogy)**

Whereas we draw comparisons and contrasts between elements in the same general class (audiences, computers), we link elements in different classes with a special kind of comparison called **analogy**. Most often in analogy we illuminate or explain an unfamiliar, abstract class of things with a familiar and concrete class of things:

We might eventually obtain some sort of bedrock understanding of cosmic structure, but we will never understand the universe in detail; it is just too big and varied for that. If we possessed an atlas of our galaxy that devoted but a single page to each star system in the Milky Way (so that the sun and all its planets were crammed on one page), that atlas would run to more than ten million volumes of ten thousand pages each. It would take a library the size of Harvard's to house the atlas, and merely to flip through it, at the rate of a page per second, would require over ten thousand years.

—Timothy Ferris,
Coming of Age in the Milky Way

v **Why did it happen, or what results did it have? (Cause-and-effect analysis)**

When you use analysis to explain why something happened or what is likely to happen, then you are determining causes and effects. **Cause-and-effect analysis** is especially useful in writing about social, economic, or political events or problems. In the next paragraph the author looks at the causes of Japanese collectivism, which he elsewhere contrasts with American individualism:

The *shinkansen* or “bullet train” speeds across the rural areas of Japan giving a quick view of cluster after cluster of farmhouses surrounded by rice paddies. This particular pattern did not develop purely by chance, but as a consequence of the technology peculiar to the growing of rice, the staple of the Japanese diet. The growing of rice requires the construction and maintenance of an irrigation system, something that takes many hands to build. More importantly, the planting and the harvesting of rice can only be done efficiently with the co-operation of twenty or more people. The “bottom line” is that a single family working alone cannot produce enough rice to survive, but a dozen families working together can produce a surplus. Thus the Japanese have had to develop the capacity to work together in harmony, no matter what the forces of disagreement or social disintegration, in order to survive.

—William Ouchi, *Theory Z*

Cause-and-effect paragraphs tend to focus either on causes, as Ouchi's does, or on effects, as this paragraph does:

At each step, with every graduation from one level of education to the next, the refrain from bystanders was strangely the same: “Your parents must be so proud of you.” I suppose that my parents were proud, although I suspect, too, that they felt more than pride alone as they watched me advance through my education. They seemed to know that my education was separating us from one another, making it difficult to resume familiar intimacies. Mixed with the instincts of parental pride, a certain hurt also communicated itself—too private ever to be adequately expressed in words, but real nonetheless.

—Richard Rodriguez, “Going Home Again”

v **How does one do it, or how does it work? (Process analysis)**

When you analyze how to do something or how something works, you explain the steps in a **process**. Paragraphs developed by process analysis are usually organized chronologically, as the steps in the process occur. Some process analyses tell the reader how to do a task:

As a car owner, you waste money when you pay a mechanic to change the engine oil. The job is not difficult, even if you know little about cars. All you need is a wrench to remove the drain plug, a large, flat pan to collect the draining oil, plastic bottles to dispose of the used oil, and fresh oil. First, warm

up the car's engine so that the oil will flow more easily. When the engine is warm, shut it off and remove its oil-filler cap (the owner's manual shows where this cap is). Then locate the drain plug under the engine (again consulting the owner's manual for its location) and place the flat pan under the plug. Remove the plug with the wrench, letting the oil flow into the pan. When the oil stops flowing, replace the plug and, at the engine's filler hole, add the amount and kind of fresh oil specified by the owner's manual. Pour the used oil into the plastic bottles and take it to a waste-oil collector, which any garage mechanic can recommend.

—Anthony Andreas (student),
“Do-It-Yourself Car Care”

Other process analyses explain how processes are done or how they work in nature. Annie Dillard's paragraph on mangrove islands (p. 80) is one example. Here is another:

What used to be called “laying on of hands” is now practiced seriously by nurses and doctors. Studies have shown that therapeutic touch, as it is now known, can aid relaxation and ease pain, two effects that may in turn cause healing. A “healer” must first concentrate on helping the patient. Then, hands held a few inches from the patient's body, the healer moves from head to foot. Healers claim that they can detect energy disturbances in the patient that indicate tension, pain, or sickness. With further hand movements, the healer tries to redirect the energy. Patients report feeling heat from the healer's hands, perhaps indicating an energy transfer between healer and patient.

—Lisa Kuklinski (student),
“Old Ways to Noninvasive Medicine”

Diagrams, photographs, and other figures can do much to clarify process analyses. See pages 120–25 for guidelines on creating and clearly labeling figures.

v Combining patterns of development

Whatever pattern you choose as the basis for developing a paragraph, other patterns may also prove helpful. Combined patterns have appeared often in this section: Dyson analyzes causes and effects in presenting reasons (p. 93); Tuchman uses contrast to define *quality* (p. 94); Nahm uses description to compare (p. 96); Ouchi uses process analysis to explain causes (p. 98).

3 Checking length

The average paragraph contains between 100 and 150 words, or between four and eight sentences. The actual length of a paragraph depends on the complexity of its topic, the role it plays in developing the thesis of the essay, and its position in the essay. Nevertheless, very short paragraphs are often inadequately developed; they may leave readers with a sense of incompleteness. And very long paragraphs often contain irrelevant details or develop two or more topics; readers may have difficulty following, sorting out, or remembering ideas.

When you are revising your essay, reread the paragraphs that seem very long or very short, checking them especially for unity and adequate development. If the paragraph wanders, cut everything from it that does not support your main idea (such as sentences that you might begin with *By the way*). If it is underdeveloped, supply the specific details, examples, or reasons needed, or try one of the methods of development we have discussed here.

EXERCISE 4.13 Analyzing paragraph development

Examine the paragraphs by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (p. 76), and Judith Wax (p. 81) to discover how the authors achieve paragraph development. What pattern or patterns of development does each author use? Where does each author support general statements with specific evidence?

EXERCISE 4.14 Analyzing and revising skimpy paragraphs

The following paragraphs are not well developed. Analyze them, looking especially for general statements that lack support or leave questions in your mind. Then rewrite one into a well-developed paragraph, supplying your own concrete details or examples. (You can do this exercise online at ablongman.com/littlebrown.)

1. One big difference between successful and unsuccessful teachers is the quality of communication. A successful teacher is sensitive to students' needs and excited by the course subject. In contrast, an unsuccessful teacher seems uninterested in students and bored by the subject.
2. Gestures are one of our most important means of communication. We use them instead of speech. We use them to supplement the words we speak. And we use them to communicate some feelings or meanings that words cannot adequately express.
3. I've discovered that a word processor can do much—but not everything—to help me improve my writing. I can easily make changes and try out different versions of a paper. But I still must do the hard work of revising.

**EXERCISE 4.15 Considering your past work:
Paragraph development**

Continuing from Exercises 4.3 (p. 76) and 4.10 (p. 89), examine the development of the body paragraphs in your writing. Where does specific information seem adequate to support your general statements? Where does support seem skimpy? Revise the paragraphs as necessary to make your ideas clearer and more interesting. It may help you to pose the questions on pages 91–99.

EXERCISE 4.16 Writing with the patterns of development

Write at least three unified, coherent, and well-developed paragraphs, each one developed with a different pattern. Draw on the topics provided here, or choose your own topics.

1. **Narration**

An experience of public speaking
A disappointment
Leaving home
Waking up

2. **Description (objective or**

subjective)

Your room
A crowded or deserted place
A food
An intimidating person

3. **Illustration or support**

WHY STUDY

Having a headache
The best sports event
Usefulness or uselessness of a self-help book

4. **Definition**

Humor
An adult
Fear
Authority

5. **Division or analysis**

A television news show
A barn
A Web site
A piece of music

6. **Classification**

Factions in a dispute
Styles of playing poker
Types of Web sites
Kinds of teachers

7. **Comparison and contrast**

Surfing the Web and watching TV

AM and FM radio DJs
 High school and college
 football
 Movies on TV and in a
 theater

8. **Analogy**

Paying taxes and giving
 blood
 The US Constitution and
 a building's foundation
 Graduating from high school
 and being released from
 prison

9. **Cause-and-effect analysis**

Connection between
 tension and anger
 Causes of failing or acing a course
 Connection between credit cards and debt
 Causes of a serious accident

10. **Process analysis**

Preparing for a job
 interview
 Setting up a Web log
 Protecting your home from burglars
 Making a jump shot

4d **Writing special kinds of paragraphs**

Several kinds of paragraphs do not always follow the guidelines for unity, coherence, development, and length because they serve special functions. These are the essay introduction, the essay conclusion, the transitional or emphatic paragraph, and the paragraph of spoken dialog.

1 **Opening an essay**

Most of your essays will open with a paragraph that draws readers from their world into your world. A good opening paragraph usually satisfies several requirements:

- ✓ **It focuses readers' attention on your subject and arouses their curiosity about what you have to say.**
- ✓ **It specifies what your topic is and implies your attitude.**
- ✓ **Often it provides your thesis statement.**
- ✓ **It is concise and sincere.**

The box on the facing page provides a range of options for achieving these goals.

Note If you are composing on the World Wide Web, you'll want to consider the expectations of Web readers. Your opening page may take the place of a conventional introduction, providing concise text indicating your site's subject and purpose, a menu of its contents, and links to other pages. (See pp. 832–38 for more on composing for the Web.)

The requirements and options for essay introductions may not be what you are used to if your native language is not English. In other cultures, readers may seek familiarity or reassurance from an author's introduction, or they may prefer an indirect approach to the subject. In academic and business English, however, writers and readers prefer concise, direct expression.

✓ **The funnel introduction**

One reliably effective introduction forms a kind of funnel:
 Here are two examples of the funnel introduction:

Can your home or office computer make you sterile? Can it strike you blind or dumb? The answer is: probably not. Nevertheless, reports of side effects relating to computer use should be examined, especially in the area of birth de-fects, eye complaints, and postural difficulties. Although little conclusive evidence exists to establish a causal link between computer use and problems of this sort, the circumstantial evidence can be disturbing.

—Thomas Hartmann, “How Dangerous Is Your Computer?”

The Declaration of Independence is so widely regarded as a statement of American ideals that its origins in practical politics tend to be forgotten. Thomas Jefferson’s draft was intensely debated and then revised in the Continental Congress. Jefferson was disappointed with the result. However, a close reading of both the historical context and the revisions themselves indicates that the Congress improved the document for its intended purpose.

—Ann Weiss (student), “The Editing of the Declaration of Independence”

v Other effective introductions

Several other types of introduction can be equally effective, though they are sometimes harder to invent and control.

Quotation leading into the thesis statement

“It is difficult to speak adequately or justly of London,” wrote Henry James in 1881. “It is not a pleasant place; it is not agreeable, or cheerful, or easy, or exempt from reproach. It is only magnificent.” Were he alive today, James, a connoisseur of cities, might easily say the same thing about New York or Paris or Tokyo, for the great city is one of the paradoxes of history. In countless different ways, it has almost always been an unpleasant, disagreeable, cheerless, uneasy and reproachful place; in the end, it can only be described as magnificent.

—*Time*

Incident or image setting up the thesis statement

Canada is pink. I knew that from the map I owned when I was six. On it, New York was green and brown, which was true as far as I could see, so there was no reason to distrust the map maker’s portrayal of Canada. When my parents took me across the border and we entered the immigration booth, I looked excitedly for the pink earth. Slowly it dawned on me: this foreign, “different” place was not so different. I discovered that the world in my head and the world at my feet were not the same.

—Robert Ornstein, *Human Nature*

Startling opinion or question

Caesar was right. Thin people need watching. I’ve been watching them for most of my adult life, and I don’t like what I see. When these narrow fellows spring at me, I quiver to my toes. Thin people come in all personalities, most of them menacing. You’ve got your “together” thin person, your mechanical thin person, your condescending thin person, your tsk-tsk thin per-son. All of them are dangerous.

—Suzanne Britt,
“That Lean and Hungry Look”

Background, such as a historical comparison

Throughout the first half of this century, the American Medical Association, the largest and most powerful medical organization in the world, battled relentlessly to rid the country of quack potions and cure-alls; and it is the AMA that is generally credited with being the single most powerful force behind the enactment of the early pure food and drug laws. Today, however, medicine’s guardian seems to have done a complete about-face and become one of the pharmaceutical industry’s staunchest allies—often at the public’s peril and expense.

—Mac Jeffery, “Does Rx Spell Rip-off?”

An effective introductory paragraph need not be long, as the following opener shows:

I've often wondered what goes into a hot dog. Now I know and I wish I didn't.—William Zinsser,
The Lunacy Boom

v **Ineffective introductions**

When writing and revising an introductory paragraph, avoid the following approaches that are likely to bore readers or make them question your sincerity or control:

2 Closing an essay

Most of your compositions will end with a closing statement or conclusion, a signal to readers that you have not simply stopped writing but have actually finished. The conclusion completes an essay, bringing it to a climax while assuring readers that they have understood your intention.

Note Compositions for the Web usually do not provide the kind of closure featured in essays. In fact, you'll need to ensure that your Web pages don't dead-end, leaving the reader stranded without options for moving backward or forward through your material. (For more on Web composition, see pp. 832–38.)

v **Effective conclusions**

An essay conclusion may consist of a single sentence or a group of sentences, usually set off in a separate paragraph. The conclusion may take one or more of the following approaches:

The following paragraph concludes the essay on the Declaration of Independence (the introduction appears on p. 104):

The Declaration of Independence has come to be a statement of this nation's political philosophy, but that was not its purpose in 1776. Jefferson's passionate expression had to bow to the goals of the Congress as a whole to forge unity among the colonies and to win the support of foreign nations.

—Ann Weiss (student), "The Editing
of the Declaration of Independence"

Maxine Hong Kingston uses a different technique—a vivid im-age—to conclude an essay about an aunt who committed suicide by drowning:

My aunt haunts me—her ghost drawn to me because now, after fifty years of neglect, I alone devote pages of paper to her, though not origamied into houses and clothes. I do not think she always means me well. I am telling on her, and she was a spite suicide, drowning herself in the drinking water. The Chinese are always very frightened of the drowned one, whose weeping ghost, wet hair hanging and skin bloated, waits silently by the water to pull down a substitute.

—Maxine Hong Kingston,
"No Name Woman"

In the next paragraph the author concludes an essay on environmental protection with a call for action:

Until we get the answers, I think we had better keep on building power plants and growing food with the help of fertilizers and such insect-controlling chemicals as we now have. The risks are well known, thanks to the environmentalists. If they had not created a widespread public awareness of the ecological crisis, we wouldn't stand a chance. But such awareness by itself is not enough. Flaming manifestos and prophecies of doom are no longer much help, and a search for scapegoats can only make matters worse. The time for sensations and manifestos is about over. Now we need rigorous analysis, united effort and very hard work.

—Peter F. Drucker, "How Best to
Protect the Environment"

v Ineffective conclusions

The preceding examples illustrate ways of avoiding several pitfalls of conclusions:

3 Using short emphatic or transitional paragraphs

A short emphatic paragraph can give unusual stress to an important idea, in effect asking the reader to pause and consider before moving on.

In short, all those who might have taken responsibility ducked it, and catastrophe was inevitable.

A transitional paragraph, because it is longer than a word or phrase and is set off by itself, moves a discussion from one point to another more slowly or more completely than does a single transitional expression or even a transitional sentence attached to a larger paragraph.

These, then, are the causes of the current contraction in hospital facilities. But how does this contraction affect the medical costs of the government, private insurers, and individuals?

So the debates were noisy and emotion-packed. But what did they accomplish? Historians have identified at least three direct results.

Use transitional paragraphs only to shift readers' attention when your essay makes a significant turn. A paragraph like the following one betrays a writer who is stalling:

Now that we have examined these facts, we can look at some others that are equally central to an examination of this important issue.

4 Writing dialog

When recording a conversation between two or more people, start a new paragraph for each person's speech. The paragraphing establishes for the reader the point at which one speaker stops talking and another begins.

The dark shape was indistinguishable. But once I'd flooded him with light, there he stood, blinking. "Well," he said eventually, "you're a sight for sore eyes. Should I stand here or are you going to let me in?"

"Come in," I said. And in he came.

—Louise Erdrich, *The Beet Queen*

Though dialog appears most often in fictional writing (the source of the preceding example), it may occasionally freshen or enliven narrative or expository essays. (For guidance in using quotation marks and other punctuation in passages of dialog, see pp. 444–46 and 471–72.)

EXERCISE 4.17 Analyzing an introduction and conclusion

Analyze the introductory and concluding paragraphs in the first and final drafts of the student essay in Chapter 3, pages 47–48 and 63–65. What is wrong with the first-draft paragraphs? Why are the final-draft paragraphs better? Could they be improved still further?

EXERCISE 4.18 CONSIDERING YOUR PAST WORK: INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Examine the opening and closing paragraphs of the essay you've been analyzing in Exercises 4.3, 4.10, and 4.15. Do the paragraphs fulfill the requirements and avoid the pitfalls outlined on pages 102–08? Revise them as needed for clarity, conciseness, focus, and interest.

4e Linking paragraphs in the essay

Your paragraphs do not stand alone: each one is a key unit of a larger piece of writing. Though you may draft paragraphs or groups of paragraphs almost as mini-essays, you will eventually need to stitch them together into a unified, coherent, well-developed whole. The techniques parallel those for linking sentences in paragraphs:

- ▼ **Make sure each paragraph contributes to your thesis.**
- ▼ **Arrange the paragraphs in a clear, logical order.** See pages 32–43 for advice on essay organization.
- ▼ **Create links between paragraphs.** Use repetition and restatement to stress and connect key terms, and use transitional expressions and transitional sentences to indicate sequence, direction, contrast, and other relationships.

The essay “A Picture of Hyperactivity” on pages 42–43 illustrates the first two of these techniques. The following passages from the essay illustrate the third technique, with circled repetitions and restatements, boxed transitional expressions, and transitional sentences noted in annotations.

A hyperactive committee member can contribute to efficiency. A hyperactive salesperson can contribute to profits. When children are hyperactive, though, people—even parents—may wish they had never been born. A collage of those who must cope with hyperactivity in children is a picture of frustration, anger, and loss.

The first part of the collage is the doctors. In their terminology, the word hyperactivity has been replaced by ADHD, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. They apply the term to children who are abnormally or excessively busy. . . .

As the mother of an ADHD child, I can say what the disorder means to the parents who form the second part of the collage. . . .

The weight of ADHD, however, does not rest on the doctors and parents. The darkest part of the collage belongs to the children. . . .

The collage is complete, and it is dark and somber. ADHD, as applied to children, is a term with uncertain, unattractive, and bitter associations. The picture does have one bright spot, however, for inside every ADHD child is a lovely, trusting, calm person waiting to be recognized.

EXERCISE 4.19 Analyzing paragraphs in an essay

Analyze the ways in which paragraphs combine in the student essay in Chapter 3, pages 63–65. What techniques does the writer use to link paragraphs to the thesis statement and to each other? Where, if at all, does the writer seem to stray from the thesis or fail to show how paragraphs relate to it? How would you revise the essay to solve any problems it exhibits?

EXERCISE 4.20 Considering your past work: Paragraphs in the essay

Examine the overall effect of the essay you’ve been analyzing in Exercises 4.3, 4.10, 4.15, and 4.18. Do all the paragraphs relate to your thesis? Are they arranged clearly and logically? How do repetition and restatement, transitional expressions, or transitional sentences connect the paragraphs? Can you see ways to improve the essay’s unity, coherence, and development?

CHAPTER 5

Designing Documents

Imagine how hard it would be to read and write if text looked like this. To make reading and writing easier, we place a space between words. This convention and many others—such as page margins, page numbers, and paragraph breaks—have evolved over time to help writers communicate clearly with readers.

5a Designing academic papers and other documents

The design guidelines offered in this chapter apply to all types of documents, including academic papers, Web sites, business reports, flyers, and newsletters. Each type has specific requirements as well, covered elsewhere in this book.

1 Designing academic papers

Many academic disciplines prefer specific formats for students' papers. This book details four such formats:

- ▼ **MLA**, used in English, foreign languages, and some other humanities (pp. 687–89).
- ▼ **Chicago**, used in history, art history, religion, and some other humanities (pp. 775–77).
- ▼ **APA**, used in the social sciences (pp. 800–03).
- ▼ **CSE**, used in some natural and applied sciences (p. 820).

Other academic formats can be found in the style guides listed on pages 764, 784, and 812.

The design guidelines in this chapter extend the range of elements and options covered by most academic styles. Your instructors may want you to adhere strictly to a particular style or may allow some latitude in design. Ask them for their preferences.

2 Writing online

In and out of school, you are likely to do a lot of online writing—certainly e-mail and possibly Web logs and other Web sites. The purposes and audiences for online writing vary widely, and so do readers' expectations for its design. Chapter 54 details the approaches you can take in different online writing situations.

3 Designing business documents and other public writing

When you write outside your college courses, your audience will have certain expectations for how your documents should look and read. Guidelines for such writing appear in the following chapters:

- ▼ **Chapter 55 on public writing:** letters, job applications, reports, proposals, flyers, newsletters, brochures.
- ▼ **Chapter 56 on oral presentations:** *PowerPoint* slides and other visual aids.

5b Considering principles of design

Most of the principles of design respond to the ways we read. White space, for instance, relieves our eyes and helps to lead us through a document. Groupings or lists help to show relationships. Type sizes, images, and color add variety and help to emphasize important elements.

The sample documents on pages 114–15 illustrate quite different ways of presenting a report for a marketing course. Even at a glance, the revised document is easier to scan and read. It makes better use of white space, groups similar elements, uses bullets and fonts for emphasis, and more successfully integrates and explains the chart.

As you design your own documents, think about your purpose, the expectations of your readers, and how readers will move through your document. Also consider the following general principles of design, noting how they overlap and support each other.

1 Creating flow

Many of the other design principles work in concert with the larger goal of conducting the reader through a document by establishing flow, a pattern for the eye to follow. In text-heavy documents like that on page 115, flow may be achieved mainly with headings, lists, and illustrations. In more visual documents, flow will come from the arrangement and spacing of information as well as from headings.

2 Spacing

The white space on a page eases crowding and focuses readers' attention. On an otherwise full page, just the space indicating paragraphs (an indention or a line of extra space) gives readers a break and reassures them that ideas are divided into manageable chunks.

In papers, reports, and other formal documents, spacing appears mainly in paragraph breaks, in margins, and around headings and lists. In publicity documents, such as flyers and brochures, spacing is usually more generous between elements and helps boxes, headings, and the like pop off the page.

3 Grouping

Grouping information shows relationships visually, reinforcing the sense of the text itself. Here in this discussion, we group the various principles of design under visually identical headings to emphasize them and their similar importance. In the revised design on page 115, the bulleted list details statistics about students' computer use. The list uses similar wording for each item to reinforce the similarities in the data. Thinking of likely groups as you write can help you organize your material so that it makes sense to you and your readers.

4 Standardizing

As we read a document, the design of its elements quickly creates expectations in us. We assume, for instance, that headings in the same size and color signal information of the same importance or that a list contains items of parallel content. Just as the design creates expectations, so it should fulfill them, treating similar elements similarly. Anticipating design standards as you write a document can help you treat its elements consistently and emphasize the elements you want to draw attention to.

Standardizing also creates clear, uncluttered documents. Even if they are used consistently, too many variations in type fonts and sizes, colors, indentions, and the like overwhelm readers as they try to determine the significance of the parts. Most formal documents, such as papers and reports, need no more than a single type font for text and headings, with type size and highlighting (such as CAPITAL LETTERS, **boldface**, or *italics*) distinguishing the levels of headings. Publicity documents, such as flyers and brochures, generally employ more variation to arrest readers' attention.

5 Emphasizing

Part of a critical reader's task is to analyze and interpret the meaning of a document, and design helps the reader by stressing what's important. Type fonts and sizes, headings, indentions, color, boxes, white space—all of these establish hierarchies of information, so that the reader almost instinctively grasps what is crucial, what is less so, and what is merely supplementary. In this book, for example, the importance of headings is clear from their size and from the use of decorative elements, such as the boxes around 5c and the heading below; and boxes like the one on page 113 clearly mark summaries and other key information. As you design a document, considering where and how to emphasize elements can actually help you determine your document's priorities.

5c Using the elements of design

Applying the preceding principles involves margins, text, lists, headings, color, and illustrations. You won't use all these elements for every project, and in many writing situations you will be required to follow a prescribed format (see pp. 111–12). If you are addressing readers who have vision disabilities, consider as well the points discussed on pages 125–26.

Note Your word processor may provide wizards or templates for many kinds of documents, such as letters, memos, reports, agendas, résumés, and brochures. **Wizards** guide you through setting up and writing complicated documents. **Templates** are preset forms to which you add your own text, headings, and other elements. Wizards and templates can be helpful, but not if they lead you to create cookie-cutter documents no matter what the writing situation. Always keep in mind that a document should be appropriate for your subject, audience, and purpose.

1 Setting margins

Margins at the top, bottom, and sides of a page help to prevent the pages from overwhelming readers with unpleasant crowding. Most academic and business documents use a minimum one-inch margin on all sides. Publicity documents, such as flyers and brochures, often use narrower margins, compensating with white space between elements.

2 Creating readable text

A document must be readable. You can make text readable by attending to line spacing, type fonts and sizes, highlighting, word spacing, and line breaks.

v Line spacing

Most academic documents are double-spaced, with an initial indentation for paragraphs, while most business documents are single-spaced, with an extra line of space between paragraphs. Double or triple spacing sets off headings in both. Web sites and publicity documents, such as flyers and brochures, tend to use more line spacing to separate and group distinct parts of the content.

v Type fonts and sizes

The readability of text also derives from the type fonts (or faces) and their sizes. For academic and business documents, generally choose a type size of 10 or 12 points, as in these samples:

10-point Courier 10-point Times New Roman
12-point Courier 12-point Times New Roman

Fonts like these and the one you're reading have **serifs**—the small lines finishing the letters, such as the downward strokes on the top of this T. Serif fonts are appropriate for formal writing and are easier for most people to read on paper. **Sans serif** fonts (*sans* means “without” in French) include this one found on many word processors:

10-point Arial 12-point Arial

Sans serif fonts are usually easier to read on a computer screen and are clearer on paper for readers with some vision disabilities (see p. 126).

Your word processor probably offers many decorative fonts as well:

10-point Bodega Sans	10-point Tekton
10-POINT STENCIL	10-point Ruzicka Freehand
10-point Lucinda Sans	10-point Park Avenue

Decorative fonts are generally inappropriate in academic and business writing, where letter forms should be conventional and regular. But on some Web sites and in publicity documents, decorative fonts can attract attention, create motion, and reinforce a theme.

Note The point size of a type font is often an unreliable guide to its actual size, as the decorative fonts above illustrate: all the samples are 10 points, but they vary considerably. Before you use a font, print out a sample to be sure it is the size you want.

v **Highlighting**

Within a document's text, underlined, *italic*, **boldface**, or even **color** type can emphasize key words or sentences. Underlining is rarest these days, having been replaced by italics in all but a few disciplines. (It remains called for in MLA style. See p. 660.) Both academic and business writing sometimes use boldface to give strong emphasis—for instance, to a term being defined—and publicity documents often rely extensively on boldface to draw the reader's eye. Neither academic nor business writing generally uses color within passages of text. In Web and publicity documents, however, color may be effective if the color is dark enough to be readable.

(See p. 120 for more on color in document design.)

No matter what your writing situation, use highlighting selectively to complement your meaning, not merely to decorate your work. Many readers consider type embellishments to be distracting.

v **Word spacing**

In most writing situations, follow these guidelines for spacing within and between words:

v **Leave one space between words.**

v **Leave one space after all punctuation, with these exceptions:**

Dash (two hyphens or the so-called em dash on a computer)	book--its book—its
Hyphen	one-half
Apostrophe within a word	book's
Two or more adjacent marks	book.'')
Opening quotation mark, parenthesis, or bracket	(``book [book

v **Leave one space before and after an ellipsis mark.** In the examples below, ellipsis marks indicate omissions within a sentence and at the end of a sentence. See pages 484–86 for additional examples.

book . . . in
book . . . The

v **Line breaks**

Your word processor will generally insert appropriate breaks between lines of continuous text: it will not, for instance, automatically begin a line with a comma or period, and it will not end a line with an opening parenthesis or bracket. However, you will have to prevent it from breaking a two-hyphen dash or a three-dot ellipsis mark by spacing to push the beginning of each mark to the next line.

When you instruct it to do so (usually under the Tools menu), your word processor will also automatically hyphenate words to prevent very short lines. If you must decide yourself where to break words, follow the guidelines on page 556.

3 Using lists

Lists give visual reinforcement to the relations between like items—for example, the steps in a process or the elements of a proposal. A list is easier to read than a paragraph and adds white space to the page.

When wording a list, work for parallelism among items—for instance, all complete sentences or all phrases (see also p. 408). Set the list with space above and below. Number the items, or mark them with bullets: centered dots or other devices, such as the squares used in the list below about headings. On most word processors you can format a numbered or bulleted list automatically using the Format menu.

4 Using headings

Headings are signposts: they direct the reader's attention by focusing the eye on a document's most significant content. In Web and publicity documents, headings may be decorative as well as functional, capturing the reader's attention with large sizes, lots of white space, and unconventional fonts. In academic and much business writing, however, headings are more purely functional. They break the text into discrete parts, create emphasis, and orient the reader.

When you use headings in academic and business writing, follow these guidelines:

- ✓ **Use one, two, or three levels of headings** depending on the needs of your material and the length of your document. Some level of heading every two or so pages will help keep readers on track. (A three-page paper or a one-page letter probably will not need headings.)
- ✓ **Create an outline of your document to plan where headings should go.** Reserve the first level of heading for the main points (and sections). Use a second and perhaps a third level of heading to mark subsections of supporting information.
- ✓ **Keep headings as short as possible** while making them specific about the material that follows.
- ✓ **Word headings consistently**—for instance, all questions (*What Is the Scientific Method?*), all phrases with *-ing* words (*Understanding the Scientific Method*), or all phrases with nouns (*The Scientific Method*).
- ✓ **Indicate the relative importance of headings** with type size, positioning, and highlighting, such as capital letters or boldface.

First-Level Heading

Second-Level Heading

Third-Level Heading

Generally, you can use the same type font and size for headings as for the text.

- ✓ **Don't break a page immediately after a heading.** Push the heading to the next page.

Note Document format in psychology and some other social sciences requires a particular treatment of headings. See pages 800–03.

5 Using color

With a color printer, most word processors and desktop publishers can produce documents that use color for bullets, headings, borders, boxes, illustrations, and other elements. Web and publicity documents almost always use color, whereas academic and business documents consisting only of text and headings may not need color. (Ask your instructor or supervisor for his or her preferences.) If you do use color, follow these guidelines:

- ✓ **Employ color to clarify and highlight your content.** Too much color or too many colors on a page will distract rather than focus readers' attention.
- ✓ **Make sure that color type is readable.** For text, where type is likely to be relatively small, use only dark colors. For headings, lighter colors may be readable if the type is large and boldfaced.

- √ **Stick to the same color for all headings at the same level**—for instance, red for primary headings, black for secondary headings.
- √ **Use color for bullets, lines, and other nontext elements.** But use no more than a few colors to keep pages clean.
- √ **Use color to distinguish the parts of illustrations**—the segments of charts, the lines of graphs, and the parts of diagrams. Use only as many colors as you need to make your illustration clear. (See below.)

See also page 126 on the use of color for readers who have vision disabilities.

EXERCISE 5.1 Redesigning a paper

Save a duplicate copy of a recent paper or one you are currently working on. Then format the duplicate using appropriate elements of design, such as type fonts, lists, and headings. (For a new paper, be sure your instructor will accept your new design.) When you have finished the redesign, share the work with your instructor.

5d Using illustrations

Illustrations can often make a point for you more efficiently than words can. Tables present data. Figures (such as graphs and charts) usually recast data in visual form. Diagrams, drawings, photographs, and clip art can explain processes, represent what something looks like, add emphasis, or convey a theme.

Note The Web is an excellent resource for photographs (see pp. 594–96), and you can edit the images with a program such as *Adobe Photoshop* or *Corel Paint Shop*. Your word processor may include a program for creating tables, graphs, diagrams, and other illustrations, or you can work with specialized software such as *Excel* or *Quattro Pro* (for graphs and charts) or *Adobe Illustrator* or *CorelDRAW* (for diagrams, maps, and the like). Use *PowerPoint* or a similar program for visuals in oral presentations (see pp. 860–62).

1 Using illustrations appropriately for the writing situation

Academic and many business documents tend to use illustrations differently from publicity documents. In the latter, illustrations generally attract attention, enliven, or emphasize, and they may not be linked directly to the document's text. In academic and business writing, however, illustrations directly reinforce and amplify the text. Follow these guidelines for academic and most business writing:

- √ **Focus on a purpose for your illustration**—a reason for including it and a point you want it to make. Otherwise, readers may find it irrelevant or confusing.
- √ **Provide a source note whenever the data or the entire illustration is someone else's independent material** (see p. 633). Each discipline has a slightly different style for such source notes: those in the illustrations on the next four pages reflect MLA style for English and some other humanities. See also Chapters 47 and 51–53.
- √ **Number figures, photographs, and other images together**, and label them as figures: Fig. 1, Fig. 2, and so on.
- √ **Number and label tables separately**: Table 1, Table 2, and so on.
- √ **Refer to each illustration in your text**—for instance, “See fig. 2.” Place the text reference at the point(s) in the text where readers will benefit by consulting the illustration.
- √ **Determine the placement of illustrations.** The social sciences and some other disciplines require each illustration to fall on a page by itself immediately after the text reference to it (see p. 803). You may want to follow this rule in other situations as well if you have a large number of illustrations. Otherwise, you can place them on your text pages just after their references.

2 Using tables

Tables usually present raw data, making complex information accessible to readers. The data may show how variables relate to one another, how two or more groups contrast, or how variables change over time. The table on the following page emphasizes the last two functions.

Some tables use rows and columns to present related textual information rather than data. An example appears on page 145.

3 Using figures

Figures represent data or show concepts visually. They include charts, graphs, and diagrams.

v Pie charts

Pie charts show the relations among the parts of a whole. The whole totals 100 percent, and each pie slice is proportional in size to its share of the whole. Use a pie chart when shares, not the underlying data, are your focus.

v Bar charts

Bar charts compare groups or time periods on a measure such as quantity or frequency. Use a bar chart when relative size is your focus.

v Line graphs

Line graphs show change over time in one or more subjects. They are an economical and highly visual way to compare many points of data.

v Diagrams

Diagrams show concepts visually, such as the structure of an organization, the way something works or looks, or the relations among subjects. Often, diagrams show what can't be described economically in words. For other examples of diagrams, see pages 3, 103, and 833.

v Photographs and other images

Sometimes you may focus an entire paper on an image such as a photograph, painting, or advertisement (see pp. 175–77). But most commonly you'll use images to add substance to ideas or to enliven them. You might clarify an astronomy paper with a photograph of Saturn (see opposite), add information to an analysis of a novel with a drawing of the author, or capture the theme of a brochure with a cartoon. Images grab readers' attention, so use them carefully to explain, reinforce, or enhance your writing.

One kind of image rarely appears in academic writing: **clip art**, consisting of icons and drawings such as those below from the free site *Barry's Clipart Server* (<http://www.barrysclipart.com/index.php>):

Many word processors provide files of clip art, and they are also available from CD-ROMs and Web sites (links appear on this book's Web site at *ablongman.com/littlebrown*). Be selective in using these resources: clip art is mostly decorative (which is why it seldom appears in academic and business documents), and an overdecorated document is not only cluttered but unemphatic. In a Web or publicity document, use only clip art that is relevant to your theme and content, directing readers' attention to elements you want to stress.

Note When using an image prepared by someone else—for in-stance, a photograph or an item of clip art downloaded from the Web—you must verify that the source permits reproduction of the image before you use it. In most documents but especially academic papers, you must also fully cite the source of any borrowed image. See pages 635–37 on copyright issues with Internet sources.

5e Considering readers with disabilities

Your audience may include readers who have low vision, problems with color perception, or difficulties processing visual information. If so, consider adapting your design to meet these readers' needs. Here are a few pointers:

- ✓ **Use large type fonts.** Most guidelines call for 14 points or larger.
- ✓ **Use standard type fonts.** Many people with low vision find it easier to read sans serif fonts such as Arial than serif fonts (see p. 117). Avoid decorative fonts with unusual flourishes, even in headings.
- ✓ **Avoid words in ALL-CAPITAL LETTERS.**
- ✓ **Avoid relying on color alone to distinguish elements.** Label elements, and distinguish them by position or size.
- ✓ **Use red and green selectively.** To readers who are red-green colorblind, these colors will appear in shades of gray, yellow, or blue.
- ✓ **Use contrasting colors.** To make colors distinct, choose them from opposite sides of the color spectrum—violet and yellow, for instance, or orange and blue.
- ✓ **Use only light colors for tints behind type.** Make the type itself black or a very dark color.

<http://www.ablongman.com/littlebrown>

Visit the companion Web site for more help with discovering and shaping ideas.

Techniques for developing a subject

- √ Keep a journal (below).
- √ Observe your surroundings (p. 19).
- √ Freewrite (p. 20).
- √ Make a list or brainstorm (p. 21).
- √ Cluster (p. 23).
- √ Use the journalist's questions (p. 23).
- √ Use the patterns of development (p. 24).
- √ Read (p. 25).
- √ Think critically (p. 26).

Clustering

Functions of the thesis statement

- √ The thesis statement **narrows your subject** to a single, central idea that you want readers to gain from your essay.
- √ It **claims something specific and significant** about your subject, a claim that requires support.
- √ It **conveys your purpose**, your reason for writing.
- √ It often concisely **previews the arrangement of ideas**.

Checklist for revising the thesis statement

- √ How well does the **subject** of your statement capture the subject of your paper?
- √ What **claim** does your statement make about your subject?
- √ What is the **significance** of the claim? How does it answer "So what?" and convey your purpose?
- √ How can the claim be **limited** or made more **specific**? Does it state a single idea and clarify the boundaries of the idea?
- √ How **unified** is the statement? How does each word and phrase contribute to a single idea?

Tree diagram

Principles of the formal outline

- √ Labels and indentions indicate order and relative importance.
- √ Sections and subsections reflect logical relationships.
- √ Topics of equal generality appear in parallel headings.
- √ Each subdivision has at least two parts.
- √ Headings are expressed in parallel grammatical form.
- √ The introduction and conclusion may be omitted (though not, of course, from the essay).

Schemes for organizing ideas in an essay

- √ Space
- √ Time
- √ Emphasis

General to specific	Increasing importance (climax)
Specific to general	Decreasing familiarity
Problem-solution	Increasing complexity

Introduction
establishing subject of essay

Thesis
statement

Paragraph idea, linked
to thesis
statement

Paragraph developed with evidence supporting its idea

Paragraph idea, linked
to thesis
statement

Paragraph developed with evidence supporting its idea

Transition

Paragraph idea, linked
to thesis
statement

Paragraph developed with evidence supporting its idea

Conclusion echoing thesis statement, summarizing, and looking ahead

<http://www.ablongman.com/littlebrown>

Visit the companion Web site for more help with drafting, revising, collaborating, and preparing a writing portfolio.

Ways to start drafting

- ✓ **Read over what you've already written**—notes, outlines, and so on. Immediately start your draft with whatever comes to mind.
- ✓ **Freewrite** (see p. 20).
- ✓ **Write scribbles or type nonsense** until words you can use start coming.
- ✓ **Pretend you're writing to a friend about your subject.**
- ✓ **Describe an image that represents your subject**—a physical object, a facial expression, two people arguing over something, a giant machine gouging the earth for a mine, whatever.
- ✓ **Write a paragraph.** Explain what you think your essay will be about when you finish it.
- ✓ **Skip the opening and start in the middle.** Or write the conclusion.
- ✓ **Start writing the part that you understand best or feel most strongly about.** Using your outline, divide your essay into chunks—say, one for the introduction, another for the first point, and so on. One of these chunks may call out to be written.

Ways to keep drafting

- ✓ **Set aside enough time for yourself.** For a brief essay, a first draft is likely to take at least an hour or two.
- ✓ **Work in a quiet place.**
- ✓ **Make yourself comfortable.**
- ✓ **If you must stop working, write down what you expect to do next.** Then you can pick up where you stopped with minimal disruption.
- ✓ **Be as fluid as possible, and don't worry about mistakes.** Spontaneity will allow your attitudes toward your subject to surface naturally in your sentences, and it will also make you receptive to ideas and relations you haven't seen before. Mistakes will be easier to find and correct later, when you're not also trying to create.
- ✓ **Keep going.** Skip over sticky spots; leave a blank if you can't find the right word; put alternative ideas or phrasings in brackets so that you can consider them later without bogging down. If an idea pops out of nowhere but doesn't seem to fit in, quickly jot it down on a separate sheet, or write it into the draft and bracket or boldface it for later attention. You can use an asterisk (*) or some other symbol to mark places where you feel blocked or uncertain. (With a word processor, you can later return to these places by using the Find command to locate the symbol.)
- ✓ **Resist self-criticism.** Don't worry about your style, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and the like. Don't worry about what your readers will think. These are very important matters, but save them for revision. On a word processor, help yourself resist self-criticism by turning off automatic spelling- or grammar-checking functions or by trying invisible writing (p. 20).
- ✓ **Use your thesis statement and outline** to remind you of your planned purpose, organization, and content.
- ✓ **But don't feel constrained by your thesis and outline.** If your writing leads you in a more interesting direction, follow.

Ways to gain distance from your work

- ✓ **Take a break after finishing the draft.** A few hours may be enough; a whole night or day is preferable. The break will clear your mind, relax you, and give you some objectivity.
- ✓ **Ask someone to read and react to your draft.** Many writing instructors ask their students to submit their first drafts so that the instructor and, often, the other members of the class can serve as an actual audience to help guide revision. (See also pp. 68–69 on receiving and benefiting from comments.)
- ✓ **Type a handwritten draft.** The act of transcription can reveal gaps in content or problems in structure.
- ✓ **Print out a word-processed draft.** You'll be able to view all pages of the draft at once, and the different medium can reveal weaknesses you didn't see on screen.
- ✓ **Outline your draft.** Highlight the main points supporting the thesis, and write these sentences down separately in outline form. (If you're working on a word processor, you can copy and paste these sentences.) Then examine the outline you've made for logical order, gaps, and digressions. A formal outline can be especially illuminating because of its careful structure. (See pp. 33–38 for a discussion of outlining.)
- ✓ **Listen to your draft.** Read the draft out loud to yourself or a friend or classmate, read it into a tape recorder and play the tape, or have someone read the draft to you. Experiencing your words with ears instead of eyes can alter your perceptions.
- ✓ **Ease the pressure.** Don't try to re-see everything in your draft at once. Use a checklist like the one on p. 51, making a separate pass through the draft for each item.

Checklist for revision

See also specific revision checklists for arguments (pp. 213–14), research papers (p. 645), and literary analyses (p. 749).

Purpose

What is the essay's purpose? Does that purpose conform to the assignment? Is it consistent throughout the paper? (See pp. 13–15.)

Thesis

What is the thesis of the essay? Where does it become clear? How well do thesis and paper match: Does the paper stray from the thesis? Does it fulfill the commitment of the thesis? (See pp. 27–31.)

Structure

What are the main points of the paper? (List them.) How well does each support the thesis? How effective is their arrangement for the paper's purpose? (See pp. 32–33, 38–42.)

Development

How well do details, examples, and other evidence support each main point? Where, if at all, might readers find support skimpy or have trouble understanding the content? (See pp. 16–26, 90–91.)

Tone

What is the tone of the paper? How appropriate is it for the purpose, topic, and intended readers? Where is it most and least successful? (See p. 12.)

Unity

What does each sentence and paragraph contribute to the thesis? Where, if at all, do digressions occur? Should these be cut, or can they be rewritten to support the thesis? (See pp. 41–43, 72–75.)

Coherence

How clearly and smoothly does the paper flow? Where does it seem rough or awkward? Can any transitions be improved? (See pp. 41–43, 77–78.)

Title, introduction, conclusion

How accurately and interestingly does the title reflect the essay's content? (See opposite.) How well does the introduction engage and focus readers' attention? (See pp. 102–06.) How effective is the conclusion in providing a sense of completion? (See pp. 106–09.)

You can download this checklist from ablongman.com/littlebrown. Save the list in a file of its own, duplicate the file for each writing project, and insert appropriate answers between the questions along with ideas for changes. Print the expanded list so it's handy as you revise.

Save menu

Select File to create new documents, to save documents and choose where to store them, and to open existing documents.

Select Save to preserve changes in an existing document or to save, name, and file a new document.

Select Save As to copy a document and rename the copy or to copy a document in a new location. The original remains intact.

Select Versions to save and time-stamp stages of a document under one file name.

Save As screen

Save As copies an existing document.

Save the file in an existing folder if it relates to others already in the folder.

Select the New Folder icon if the document doesn't fit in existing folders—for instance, the first draft of a paper or the first paper in a course.

Give the copied document a distinctive name.

Track Changes function

Use Save As from the File menu to copy and rename the original document. Here, *D2* indicates the second draft.

Deleted copy is crossed out.

Added copy appears in blue.

Descriptive title names topic and forecasts approach.

Expanded

introduction draws readers into Ling's question and summarizes Kadi's essay.

New transition relates paragraph to thesis statement and smoothes flow.

Blanket assertion is deleted in favor of survey results added later.

Addition clarifies use of invented screen names.

Largest revision presents results of survey conducted to support use of invented screen names.

Use invented names to avoid revealing personal details (30%)

New pie graph presents survey results in an easy-to-read format.

Use invented names for other reasons (11%)

Use invented names to protect privacy (37%)

Fig. 1. Use of invented screen names among seventy-eight Internet users.

New paragraph summarizes survey results and adds ex-amples.

Revisions condense overly long example from Ling's experience.

New paragraph acknowledges complexities that were previously ignored.

New transition clarifies shift to second main point.

New examples support general statement.

New conclusion qualifies and spells out pre-viously rushed ideas.

New work-cited entry. (See p. 656 on MLA style.)

Ways to find what needs editing

- ✓ **Take a break**, even fifteen or twenty minutes, to clear your head.
- ✓ **Read the draft *slowly*, and read what you *actually see*.** Otherwise, you're likely to read what you intended to write but didn't.
- ✓ **Read as if you are encountering the draft for the first time.** Put yourself in the reader's place.
- ✓ **Have a classmate, friend, or relative read your work.** Make sure you understand and consider the reader's suggestions, even if eventually you decide not to take them.
- ✓ **Read the draft aloud or, even better, record it.** Listen for awkward rhythms, repetitive sentence patterns, and missing or clumsy transitions.
- ✓ **Learn from your own experience.** Keep a record of the problems that others have pointed out in your writing. (See p. 69 for a suggested format.) When editing, check your work against this record.

Checklist for editing

Clarity

How well do words and sentences convey their intended meanings? Which words and sentences are confusing? Check especially for these:

Exact language (pp. 518–28)

Parallelism (pp. 405–11)

Clear modifiers (pp. 364–72)

Clear reference of pronouns (pp. 350–56)

Complete sentences (pp. 334–40)

Sentences separated correctly (pp. 342–48)

Effectiveness

How well do words and sentences engage and focus readers? Where does the writing seem wordy, choppy, or dull? Check especially for these:

- Emphasis of main ideas (pp. 384–93)
- Smooth and informative transitions (pp. 85–88, 108)
- Variety in sentence length and structure (pp. 412–19)
- Appropriate language (pp. 510–17)
- Concise sentences (pp. 529–35)

Correctness

How little or how much do surface errors interfere with clarity and effectiveness? Check especially for these:

- Spelling (pp. 542–54)
- Pronoun forms, especially subjective (*he, she, they, who*) vs. objective (*him, her, them, whom*) (pp. 267–74)
- Verb forms, especially *-s* and *-ed* endings, correct forms of irregular verbs, and appropriate helping verbs (pp. 275–92)
- Verb tenses, especially consistency (pp. 292–98, 359–60)
- Agreement between subjects and verbs, especially when words come between them or the subject is *each, everyone*, or a similar word (pp. 305–12)
- Agreement between pronouns and antecedents, especially when the antecedent contains *or* or the antecedent is *each, everyone, person*, or a similar word (pp. 131–17)
- Sentence fragments (pp. 334–40)
- Commas, especially with comma splices (pp. 342–47), with *and* or *but* (432), with introductory elements (433–34), with nonessential elements (435–38), and with series (441–42)
- Apostrophes in possessives but not plural nouns (*Dave 's/witches*) and in contractions but not possessive personal pronouns (*it 's/its*) (pp. 461–66)

You can download this checklist from ablongman.com/littlebrown. Save the list in a file of its own, duplicate the file for each writing project, and insert appropriate answers between the questions along with notes on specific changes to make.

Spelling checker

A spelling checker failed to catch any of the thirteen errors in this jingle. Can you spot them?

Grammar/style checker

The checker flagged only one repetition of *light*, not the other three.

The checker flagged this sentence because it is long, but it is actually clear and correct.

Techniques for proofreading

- ✓ **Read printed copy**, even if you will eventually submit the paper electronically. Most people proofread more accurately when reading type on paper than when reading it on a computer screen. (At the same time, don't view the printed copy as necessarily error-free just because it's clean. Clean-looking copy may still harbor errors.)
- ✓ **Read the paper aloud**. Slowly and distinctly pronounce exactly what you see.
- ✓ **Place a ruler under each line as you read it**.
- ✓ **Read "against copy."** Compare your final draft one sentence at a time against the edited draft you copied it from.
- ✓ **Ignore content**. To keep the content of your writing from distracting you while you proofread, read the essay backward, end to beginning, examining each sentence as a separate unit. Or, taking advantage of a computer, isolate each paragraph from its context by printing it on a separate page. (Of course, reassemble the paragraphs before submitting the paper.)

Descriptive title

Introduction

Question to be addressed

Summary of Kadi's essay

Thesis

statement

Explanation of Internet's anonymity

Presentation of survey conducted to gauge use of
invented screen names

Explanation of survey method

Summary of
survey results

Do not use invented names (22%)

Use invented names to avoid revealing personal details (30%)

Graph displaying survey
results, with self-explanatory labels and caption

Use invented names for other reasons (11%)

Use invented names to protect privacy (37%)

Fig. 1. Use of invented screen names among seventy-eight Internet
users.

First main point: We are not prejudged by others.

Examples of first point

Qualification of first point

Conclusion of first point

Second main point: We cannot prejudge others.

Clarification of second point

Examples of
second point

Effects of
assumptions

Conclusion of second point

Conclusion, summarizing
essay

Work cited in MLA style (see
p. 656)

Commenting on others' writing

- ✓ **Be sure you know what the writer is saying.** If necessary, summarize the paper to understand its content. (See pp. 140–42.)
- ✓ **Address only your most significant concerns with the work.** Use the revision checklist on p. 51 as a guide to what is significant. Unless you have other instructions, ignore mistakes in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and the like. (The temptation to focus on such errors may be especially strong if the writer is less experienced than you are with standard American English.) Emphasizing mistakes will contribute little to the writer's revision.
- ✓ **Remember that you are the reader, not the writer.** Don't edit sentences, add details, or otherwise assume responsibility for the paper.
- ✓ **Phrase your comments carefully.** Avoid misunderstandings by making sure comments are both clear and respectful. If you are responding on paper or online, not face to face with the writer, remember that the writer has nothing but your written words to go on. He or she can't ask you for immediate clarification and can't infer your attitudes from gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice.
- ✓ **Be specific.** If something confuses you, say *why*. If you disagree with a conclusion, say *why*.
- ✓ **Be supportive as well as honest.** Tell the writer what you like about the paper. Word comments positively: instead of *This paragraph doesn't interest me*, say *You have an interesting detail here that I almost missed*. Comment in a way that emphasizes the effect of the work on you, the reader: *This paragraph confuses me because. . .* And avoid measuring the work against a set of external standards: *This essay is poorly organized. Your thesis statement is inadequate*.
- ✓ **While reading, make your comments in writing.** Even if you will be delivering your comments in person later on, the written record will help you recall what you thought.
- ✓ **Link comments to specific parts of a paper.** Especially if you are reading the paper on a computer, be clear about what part of the paper each comment relates to. You can embed your comments directly into the paper, distinguishing them with highlighting or color. Or you can use the Comment function of a word processor (see below).

Comment function

Use Save As from the File menu to copy and rename the document. The reviewer added *RevPotter* to the original document name.

Clicking on highlighted text shows the comment in a pop-up box.

Make comments specific and supportive.

Highlight text to be commented on by clicking and dragging the cursor across it.

Benefiting from comments on your writing

- ✓ **Think of your readers as counselors or coaches.** They can help you see the virtues and flaws in your work and sharpen your awareness of readers' needs.
- ✓ **Read or listen to comments closely.**
- ✓ **Know what the critic is saying.** If you need more information, ask for it, or consult the appropriate section of this handbook.

- v **Don't become defensive.** Letting comments offend you will only erect a barrier to improvement in your writing. As one writing teacher advises, "Leave your ego at the door."
- v **Revise your work in response to appropriate comments.** Whether or not you are required to act on comments, you will learn more from actually revising than from just thinking about it.
- v **Remember that you are the final authority on your work.** You should be open to suggestions, but you are free to decline advice when you think it is inappropriate.
- v **Keep track of both the strengths and the weaknesses others identify.** Then in later assignments you can build on your successes and give special attention to problem areas.

Record of errors

<http://www.ablongman.com/littlebrown>

Visit the companion Web site for more help and additional exercises on paragraphs.
 General statement relating to thesis: announces topic of paragraph
 Four specific examples, all providing evidence for general statement

Checklist for revising paragraphs

- √ **Is the paragraph unified?** Does it adhere to one general idea that is either stated in a topic sentence or otherwise apparent? (See below.)
- √ **Is the paragraph coherent?** Do the sentences follow a clear sequence? Are the sentences linked as needed by parallelism, repetition or restatement, pronouns, consistency, and transitional expressions? (See p. 77.)
- √ **Is the paragraph developed?** Is the general idea of the paragraph well supported with specific evidence such as details, facts, examples, and reasons? (See p. 90.)

Topic sentence:
 general statement
 Two examples supporting statement
 Digression
 Topic sentence: statement of misconception
 Correction of misconception
 Information supporting and building to topic sentence
 Topic sentence
 Details adding up to
 the unstated idea that Bogart's character could be seen in his clothing

Ways to achieve paragraph coherence

- √ Organize effectively (p. 79).
- √ Repeat or restate key words and word groups (p. 83).
- √ Use parallel structures (p. 83).
- √ Use pronouns (p. 84).
- √ Be consistent in nouns, pronouns, and verbs (p. 84).
- √ Use transitional expressions (p. 85).

Topic sentence
 Sentences related to topic sentence but disconnected from each other
 Topic sentence
 Explanation 1: What mummification is
 Explanation 2: Why the Egyptians were masters
 Specific examples of explanation 2
 Description moving from outside (closer) to inside (farther)
 Unstated central idea: Sunlight barely penetrated the house's secrets.
 Topic sentence
 Details in order of their occurrence
 Topic sentence
 Supporting examples, increasingly specific
 Common belief
 Actual situation
 General conclusion: topic sentence
 Topic sentence and clarification: statement of the problem
 Solution to the problem
 Topic sentence
 Least dramatic example
 Most dramatic example
 Paragraph is choppy and hard to follow
 Transitional expressions (boxed) remove choppiness and spell out relationships

Transitional expressions

To add or show sequence

again, also, and, and then, besides, equally important, finally, first, further, furthermore, in addition, in the first place, last, moreover, next, second, still, too

To compare

also, in the same way, likewise, similarly

To contrast

although, and yet, but, but at the same time, despite, even so, even though, for all that, however, in contrast, in spite of, nevertheless, notwithstanding, on the contrary, on the other hand, regardless, still, though, yet

To give examples or intensify

after all, an illustration of, even, for example, for instance, indeed, in fact, it is true, of course, specifically, that is, to illustrate, truly

To indicate place

above, adjacent to, below, elsewhere, farther on, here, near, nearby, on the other side, opposite to, there, to the east, to the left

To indicate time

after a while, afterward, as long as, as soon as, at last, at length, at that time, before, earlier, formerly, immediately, in the meantime, in the past, lately, later, meanwhile, now, presently, shortly, simultaneously, since, so far, soon, subsequently, then, thereafter, until, when

To repeat, summarize, or conclude

all in all, altogether, as has been said, in brief, in conclusion, in other words, in particular, in short, in simpler terms, in summary, on the whole, that is, therefore, to put it differently, to summarize

To show cause or effect

accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this purpose, hence, otherwise, since, then, therefore, thereupon, thus, to this end, with this object

Note Draw carefully on the preceding list of transitional expressions because the ones in each group are not interchangeable. For instance, *besides, finally,* and *second* may all be used to add information, but each has its own distinct meaning.

General statements needing examples to be clear and convincing
Examples specifying kinds of lies and consequences

Important events in chronological order
Objective description: specific record of sensory data without interpretation

Topic sentence
(assertion to be illustrated)
Single detailed example
Topic sentence

Three reasons arranged in order of increasing drama and importance
General definition

Activities in which quality may figure
Contrast between quality and nonquality
The subject being divided

Elements of the subject, arranged spatially
Topic and focus: how "liveness" seems an extension of daily life
Elements:

Slow conversation

Casual conversation

Intimate close-ups
Familiar sets

Absence of glamour

Appearance of real time

Topic sentence
Three groups:

Alike in one way
(all hire sitters)

No overlap in groups (each has a different attitude)

Classes arranged in order of increasing drama
Subjects: rock and classical audiences
Rock audience
Classical audience
Subjects: ENIAC and personal computer
Size: ENIAC, personal computer

Ease of programming: ENIAC, personal computer
Speed: ENIAC, personal computer
Abstract subject: the universe, specifically the Milky Way
Concrete subject: an atlas
Effect: pattern of Japanese farming
Causes: Japanese dependence on rice, which requires collective effort
Effect: working in harmony
Cause: education
Effects:

Pride

Separation

Loss of intimacies

Hurt

Process: changing oil
Equipment needed
Steps in process
Process: therapeutic touch
Benefits
Steps in process
How process works

Some strategies for opening paragraphs

- √ Ask a question.
- √ Relate an incident.
- √ Use a vivid quotation.
- √ Offer a surprising statistic or other fact.
- √ State an opinion related to your thesis.
- √ Outline the argument your thesis refutes.
- √ Provide background.
- √ Create a visual image that represents your subject.
- √ Make a historical comparison or contrast.
- √ Outline a problem or dilemma.
- √ Define a word central to your subject.
- √ In some business or technical writing, summarize your paper.

Funnel introduction

Questions about subject
Clarification of subject: bridge to thesis statement
Thesis statement
Statement about subject
Clarification of subject: bridge to thesis statement
Thesis statement
Quotation
Bridge to thesis statement
Thesis statement
Incident from writer's experience
Thesis statement
Opinion
Thesis statement
Historical background
Thesis statement

Openings to avoid

- √ **A vague generality or truth.** Don't extend your reach too wide with a line such as *Throughout human history . . .* or *In today's world. . .* Readers can do without the warm-up.
- √ **A flat announcement.** Don't start with *The purpose of this essay is . . .*, *In this essay I will . . .*, or any similar presentation of your intention or topic.

- ∨ **A reference to the essay's title.** Don't refer to the title of the essay in the first sentence—for example, *This is a big problem* or *This book is about the history of the guitar*.
- ∨ **According to Webster.** . . . Don't start by citing a dictionary definition. A definition can be an effective springboard to an essay, but this kind of lead-in has become dull with overuse.
- ∨ **An apology.** Don't fault your opinion or your knowledge with *I'm not sure if I'm right, but . . . ; I don't know much about this, but . . . ;* or a similar line.

Some strategies for closing paragraphs

- ∨ Recommend a course of action.
 - ∨ Summarize the paper.
 - ∨ Echo the approach of the introduction.
 - ∨ Restate your thesis and reflect on its implications.
 - ∨ Strike a note of hope or despair.
 - ∨ Give a symbolic or powerful fact or other detail.
 - ∨ Give an especially compelling example.
 - ∨ Create an image that represents your subject.
 - ∨ Use a quotation.
- Echo of introduction: contrast between past and present
 Restatement and elaboration of thesis
 Summary
 Image
 Summary and opinion
 Call for action

Closings to avoid

- ∨ **A repeat of the introduction.** Don't simply replay your introduction. The conclusion should capture what the paragraphs of the body have added to the introduction.
- ∨ **A new direction.** Don't introduce a subject different from the one your essay has been about. If you arrive at a new idea, this may be a signal to start fresh with that idea as your thesis.
- ∨ **A sweeping generalization.** Don't conclude more than you reasonably can from the evidence you have presented. If your essay is about your frustrating experience trying to clear a parking ticket, you cannot reasonably conclude that *all* local police forces are tied up in red tape.
- ∨ **An apology.** Don't cast doubt on your essay. Don't say, *Even though I'm no expert* or *This may not be convincing, but I believe it's true* or anything similar. Rather, to win your readers' confidence, display confidence.

- Introduction establishing subject and stating thesis
- Thesis statement
- Transitional topic sentence relating to thesis statement
- Transitional topic sentence relating to thesis statement
- Transitional sentence
- Topic sentence relating to thesis statement
- Transitional sentence into conclusion, restating thesis statement

<http://www.ablongman.com/littlebrown>

Visit the companion Web site for more help with document design.

Principles of document design

- √ **Create flow** to conduct the reader through the document.
- √ **Space elements** to give the reader's eye a rest and to focus the reader's attention.
- √ **Group related elements** in lists or under similar headings.
- √ **Standardize elements** to match appearance with content and to minimize variations.
- √ **Emphasize important elements.**

Original design

Runs title and subtitle together. Does not distinguish title from text.

Crowds the page with minimal margins.

Downplays paragraph breaks with small indentions.

Buries statistics in a paragraph. Obscures relationships with nonparallel wording.

Does not introduce the figure, leaving readers to infer its meaning and purpose.

Overemphasizes the figure with large size and excessive white space.

Presents the figure undynamically, flat on.

Does not caption the figure to explain what it shows, offering only a figure number and a partial text explanation.

Revised design

Distinguishes title from subtitle and both from text.

Provides adequate margins.

Emphasizes paragraph breaks with white space.

Groups statistics in a bulleted list set off with white space. Uses parallel wording for parallel information.

Introduces the figure to indicate its meaning and purpose.

Reduces white space around the figure.

Presents the figure to emphasize the most significant segment.

Captions the figure so that it can be read independently from the text.

Table

A self-explanatory title falls above the table.

Table 1

Percentage of Young Adults Living at Home, 1960-2000

1960 1970 1980 1990 2000

Males

Age 18-24 52 54 54 58 57

Age 25-34 9 9 10 15 13

Females

Age 18-24 35 41 43 48 47

Age 25-34 7 7 7 8 8

Source: Data from United States, Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary Tables, 1 July 2002
<http://www.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?_ts=30543101060>.

Self-explanatory headings label horizontal rows and vertical columns. The layout of rows and columns is clear: headings align with their data, and numbers align vertically down columns.

Pie chart

Color distinguishes segments of the chart. Use distinct shades of gray, black, and white if your paper will not be read in color. Segment percentages total 100. Every segment is clearly labeled. You can also use a key, as in the chart on p. 115.

Fig. 1. Marital status in 2004 of adults aged eighteen and over. Data from United States, Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2004-05 (Washington, GPO, 2005) no. 30.

Self-explanatory caption falls below the chart.

Bar chart

Vertical scale shows and clearly labels the values being measured. Zero point clarifies values.

Horizontal scale shows and clearly labels the groups being compared. Self-explanatory caption falls below the chart.

Fig. 2. Lifetime prevalence of use of alcohol, compared with other drugs, among twelfth graders in 2004. Data from Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of American Youth, U of Michigan, 12 May 2005, 10 Oct. 2005

<<http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/data/data.html>>.

Line graph

Vertical scale shows and clearly labels the values being measured. Zero point clarifies values.

Color and labels distinguish the subjects being compared. Use dotted and dashed black lines if your paper will not be read in color.

Horizontal scale shows and clearly labels the range of dates.

Fig. 3. Unemployment rates of high school graduates and college graduates, 1984-2004. Data from Antony Davies, The Economics of College Tuition, 3 Mar. 2005, 26 June 2005

<<http://www.mercatus.org/capitalhill/php?id=420>>.

Self-explanatory caption falls below the graph.

Diagram

Diagram makes concept comprehensible.

Self-explanatory caption falls below the diagram.

Fig. 4. RGB color theory, applied to televisions and computer

monitors, in which all possible colors and white are created from red, green, and blue. From

"Color Theory," Wikipedia, 16 July 2005, 2 Aug. 2005

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_theory>.

Clip art

Photograph

Photograph shows subject more economically and dramatically than words could.

Fig. 5. View of Saturn from the Cassini spacecraft, showing the planet and its rings. From United States, National Atmospheric and Space Administration, Jet

Propulsion Laboratory, Cassini-Huygens: Mission to Saturn and Titan, 24 Feb. 2005, 26 Apr. 2005
<<http://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov/multimedia/images/image-details.cfm?imageID=1398>>.

Self-explanatory
caption falls below
the image.