

A photograph of a brick archway. The arch is constructed from reddish-brown bricks. Inside the arch, there is a mosaic of small, colorful tiles depicting several figures, possibly saints or historical figures, in various poses. The background of the entire image is a brick wall.

PALIMPSEST:

Writing Advice from the Augustana Writing Center Tutors

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2014

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September Symens

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This publication, the first Palimpsest, is currently a compilation of writing tips from Augustana's 2013-2014 Writing Center tutors, but we hope that it will eventually grow into a true palimpsest—cumulative layers upon layers of writing that will serve to advise generations of the Augustana community's writers. In this edition, you'll find pieces discussing college and professional writing essentials, such as how to build resumes, use proper citations, write for the business and science worlds, find your voice as a writer, and so much more. Each tutor tackled a topic that they felt they could successfully cover in 2,000 words or so, and the end result is a Writing Center-certified booklet jam-packed with excellent advice from people who love to write. We hope that this Palimpsest will assist you in your writing endeavors in ways that will help you learn to love the writing process as much as we do.

-September Symens, EiC

DISCOVER YOUR LOVE FOR WRITING

Claire Bestul

The aspect of writing that is appealing (and also terrifying) is that it is your opportunity to communicate with others and say exactly what you want to say. It's one reason you can wholeheartedly love writing or desperately hate it, really.

I have always wanted to be one of those writers who writes something that resonates with someone so profoundly that they wished they had said what I did. I've always hoped to say something that hits the same spots in somebody else as it did in me. At the very least, I've yearned for somebody to say "yes!" to my writing. I'm not at that point yet, but through practice, I can now convey my thoughts more effectively, and I can even write exactly what I want to say—sometimes.

If you're struggling with loving to write, then you know that it's tougher than it sounds. You know that being able to successfully communicate thoughts, even sometimes, is an accomplishment. Writing is a powerful means of communication, and it is intimidating to put your skills as a communicator out there in the open where they can be examined and scrutinized. But it is important to be able to communicate effectively in order to make somebody understand what you're trying to say.

Besides just being capable of conveying your thoughts, it can be extremely rewarding to be deeply in love with doing so. Along with being intrinsically rewarding, loving to write is beneficial because if you love what you're doing, you're likely to do it better and therefore produce a better product. Show who you are, a bit of where you've been, and who has affected your life, because when you write, you are imbuing your piece of writing with little bits of everything else you've read and what you've experienced. Writing is a powerful tool of communication. I'll tell you some of the steps I've gone through to discover my love for writing, and maybe you can find yours, too.

If you're trying to discover your love for writing, you're probably familiar with the fundamentals of writing conventions, but you should refresh your knowledge with a handbook. I recommend *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White. This book helped me solidify my understanding of the rules of writing, which consequently helped me enjoy writing more. Once you learn to write a structurally sound and correct piece, you can break the rules and display your creativity. This concept is like Picasso; he mastered the fundamentals of realism, which allowed him to reconfigure his style into creative, expressive masterpieces. Learn the rules so you can effectively break the rules when it will add to your art.

I'm not encouraging wanton omission of commas or capitalizing every other word in a sentence because you like the look. Use discretion. Sentence fragments can be impactful. Italics can help *emphasize* your point. I've never been a proponent of the phrase "rules were meant to be broken," but I have learned that being familiar with rules and breaking them with purpose can elevate your writing. One of my favorite rules to

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manipulate is the grammatical role that words are capable of fulfilling. This means that a noun doesn't always have to be used as a noun and so on. Sometimes using a word in an unprecedented way creates more concise and vivid language, and is therefore more effective. For example, I could say "the dog slimed the tennis ball." I'm using the word "slime" as verb

instead of its typical role as a noun. An alternative sentence is “the dog covered the tennis ball in slime.” In this sentence, “covered” is the verb and “slime” is used in its usual role—as a noun. But the sentence has become lackluster, and the image is not as intense. Verbing often stands out, so it should be done with restraint. Regardless, this is just one way that breaking the rules can be fun.

By writing for classes, personal statements, and various projects, you can discover your writing process simply by being forced to write. Becoming familiar with your process will help you understand the conditions that work best for your writing and help you refine your skills. Planning what you want to say is one way to ease the process.

First off, write about something you care about whenever you can. Incorporate your passions into assignments, or free-write on your own. Writing about something you care about can be higher pressure because you’re putting your real thoughts and beliefs out there, but it often reveals more truth. Writing about what you love comes off as more real, relatable, and interesting.

Next, discovering your technical process leads to discovering your love for writing. Here is how you can discover your writing process: write. Under different circumstances, in different conditions. Try different approaches; figure out what works best for you and what feels good. I’ve found that spewing is imperative to my process. At some point in my papers, I just write every thought in my head, regardless of how relevant it is to my piece and regardless of its grammatical accuracy. Sometimes my word vomit comes in bullet points, in sentence fragments, or containing no punctuation at all (I alter these parts later). There are also parts of my pieces that I form with painstaking precision. I simply cannot put words down if they are not exactly what I want. I have found no trend in which parts of my papers are word vomit and which aren’t, but I know that all of my papers contain both methods.

Maybe it’s best for you to create first and criticize later. Write whatever you need to, and come at it later with a fine-toothed comb. Don’t become too concrete in your routine, but know that certain habits may be conducive to your communication. Maybe you’ll find that you prefer to write your first draft by hand. Window light may be your favored source of illumination. Perhaps you’ll find that reading your piece out loud works for you. Discovering your process can assist you in discovering your love for writing. Your process may entail wearing your nun-crafted slippers or listening to Elton John. My process often involves these two factors as well. The point is just to write and see what works. Discover your love for the process itself.

To stay in love with writing, remind yourself that art is never finished—it is simply abandoned. Keeping this whole “it’s only a draft” idea is liberating, because you are acknowledging that there is always room for improvement, which takes the pressure off of striving for absolute perfection. Everything you write is a draft, a draft that can be edited, morphed, played with, and improved. Every paper you submit to a professor is merely a final *draft*. It’s just the last draft you’ll write, because you have to stop and turn it in. You have to abandon it. But during the re-writing process, nitpicking each word and sentence for its aesthetic and flow is fun. For pieces with deadlines, you will not be able to fall in love with a piece if you begin writing it the night before the due date. That is simply not enough time to develop more than platonic feelings. You have to give yourself ample time to write a piece, become intimately familiar with it, learn its strengths and weaknesses, and alter it accordingly. Make re-writing and drafting an essential part of your process. Write and re-write and love it. Always try your best; writing improves with every draft, so the more effort you expend, the better. Recognize that you are just doing the best you can, and this acknowledgment will cultivate your love for writing.

Recognize that writing is your communication outlet. Figure out what you like writing about. Discover your process and *how* you like to write. Finally, remember that everything you write is a draft and that you should just do the best you can. These small steps will help you discover your love for writing.

BUSINESS WRITING

Erin Williams

Communication is the key to a sound business. Effective communication is vital to a successful business. Whether it's a resume, email, report, proposal, or interview, the ability to express oneself in a professional environment will lead to impressed employers and customers. Business writing is characterized by purpose, clarity, and a straightforward structure.

Before beginning a business composition, it is important to decipher why you are writing, or the purpose of the piece. Ask yourself what it is you want people to do as a result of the email, memo, or proposal. Are you hoping to persuade or inform them, ask a favor, or deliver instructions? What response are you hoping for? By thinking through the end goal of your writing and its purpose, your communication will be that much clearer.

Once you have determined why you are writing, you must make your words understandable. In business writing, you get points for clarity, not style. The best emails and memos can be read quickly and digested easily. The goal should not be to wow your readers with six-syllable words or a paragraph-long-and-shockingly-grammatically-correct sentence. Instead, you want to deliver smart content that is worth reading.

To do so, it helps to limit your scope. Determine what information is necessary for the reader to comprehend your point and to understand the purpose of the message. When revising, remember that every sentence should serve a purpose. Take a hard look at what you've written and determine if the piece holds too much fluff. Any tangents? Unnecessary background information? Cut 'em.

Using active voice and a direct writing style keeps your business piece professional and concise. It is best to stick with plain English and avoid any jargon that is unnecessary or unfamiliar to your audience. Furthermore, a polite tone goes a long way, so be sure to use bias-free language. Let no discriminatory or ignorant vocabulary taint your office memo. Doing so proves you to be a poor writer and an even worse employee.

Additionally, many businesses can have relaxed and informal atmospheres, but while informality in person can create a comfortable and chummy environment, a similar tone in writing can seem lazy and disorganized. It is best to play it safe and keep memos, emails, and proposals professional. Focus on grammar and spelling, limit your exclamation point and emoticon usage, and use an appropriate sign-off, such as "Best" or "Regards" (not "xoxo" or "toodles"). A professional tone and form can improve the reception of a business piece and aid in achieving your end goal.

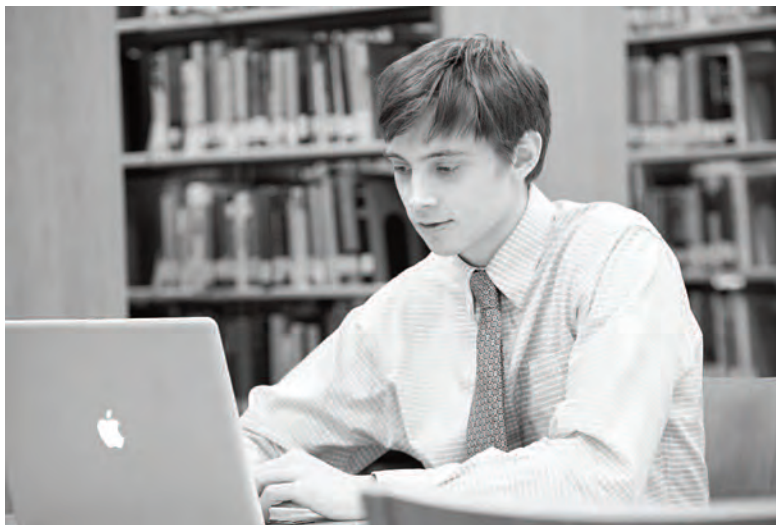
Finally, an organized and easy-to-follow structure is vital to effective communication. Similar to journalistic writing, business writing has an

an organized and easy-to-follow structure is vital to effective communication.

inverted triangle structure, meaning the most important information is at the beginning. There is no need to draw your reader in with a spunky introduction or an in-depth background story—these can seem unprofessional and may be a waste of your reader's time. Put your main or most important point in the first paragraph and continue with supplementary detail. Cut to the chase, and your busy audience will thank you for it.

However, while brevity has its place, one should not sacrifice clarity. Be sure to include all relevant information. Getting to the point while at the same time making your writing understandable is essential, and breaking down the different aspects of the piece will help. Aim to deal with only one topic or question per paragraph. Unlike literary essays or creative writing assignments/projects, business writing is not concerned with the flow of the piece. The memo or email does not need to sound elegant—it needs to get your point across. To do so, aim for the simple sentence structure of subject-verb-object so your audience can read and comprehend quickly. Such a style can seem choppy to those accustomed to literary writing, but it tends to be more efficient and appreciated by business professionals.

Business writing has its own sort of style. At times it can seem more formal and structured than literary or journalistic writing because of its focus on constructing a clear and concise tone. However, by keeping the audience and the purpose of the piece in mind, anyone can sound like a professional in business writing and can master effective communication.



SCIENCE WRITING

Emily Weber

It's the night before your first lab report is due. The clock strikes midnight and you are still sweating over your conclusion. You chose to become a science major to avoid writing, and now you have spent the past three hours toiling over this paper. But stop stressing. After knowing a few simple rules, science writing is easier than a titration lab.

The one golden rule to remember throughout all of science writing is to be clear and concise.

The one golden rule to remember throughout all of science writing is to be *clear and concise*. Unlike other writing, in science writing, you will rarely be worrying about how many words you have left to type or filling up another page. Most science professors actually appreciate short papers, as long as they still have the necessary content.

One of the biggest obstacles in science writing is explaining your content. Trying to put into words why your product was a white solid when you started out with two clear liquids can be quite the feat. Here is a trick I have used over the years: pretend you are explaining it to your parents. Do not try to get fancy with terminology; instead, state the content simply. However, being simple does not mean being lazy. Still take care to use the correct words as well as correct grammar.

In the world of science literature, there are a couple of grammatical rules to learn. The first stumbling blocks many new science writers trip over are a few weird spellings of plural words. Here's a list I stole from the "Augustana College Biology Department Laboratory Report Instructions" to minimize avoidable mistakes.

Singular	bacterium	genus	nucleolus	mitochondrion	phylum	species
Plural	bacteria	genera	nucleoli	mitochondria	phyla	species
Adjective	bacterial	general	nucleolar	mitochondrial		

For the admittedly lazy science writers (like myself), keep in mind you can use abbreviations in a plethora of ways. First, for common terms like "deoxyribonucleic acid" or "sodium," use their well-known abbreviations, "DNA" and "Na." You can also abbreviate species names after the first time they are used. For example, feel free to write "yeast" after you have already correctly identified that eukaryotic species as *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Also, if you have a unit of measurement after a numeral, use the abbreviated form. Instead of saying, "the howler monkey ate 49 grams of bananas," say, "The howler monkey ate 49 g of bananas." Finally, never type out "degrees Celsius"; use the fancy "°C" sign. In science writing, you will never need to use "°F," because the scientific community uses the metric system.

Besides the United States, Liberia, and Myanmar, the rest of the world commonly uses the metric system for measurements. Unless you have specific numbers for your measurements, always spell out the numbers ten and below unless they come at the beginning of the sentence. With these simple rules in mind, you are now ready to begin writing your lab report.

In my experience, most professors do not require a title page, but it makes your paper look approximately 12 times more professional, and it is simple to do. Sum up your experiment with a title, such as, "Differences in Howler Monkey Food Preferences between Living in Dorm Rooms and Jungles," and center it on your page. Add the names of your group members and where you did your research, and then pat yourself on the back for being a professional scientist.

The next common section, especially if you are doing a biology lab report, is the abstract. I usually wait until the end to write this section, because it is a complete summary (in less than 250 words) of the rationale, main findings, and conclusion of your experiment. However, if you write it first, the abstract can be a great outline for the rest of your paper.

The introduction of your paper should be the wittiest section of the paper. This is the paragraph you want to begin with the best, most enticing, exciting sentence you have ever written to pull your reader in and make them care about your experiment. Refer to a couple of other papers in this section, showing how your experiment fits into the big picture and why it's important.

If the introduction is the flashy, exciting part of your paper, the next section, materials and methods, should be the boring part. Simply and logically, tell how you collected your data. You want to make sure your reader could replicate the experiment by following these instructions, so don't be afraid if it's duller than reading a phone book. Tell the reader about specific instruments, temperatures, and measurements. Most importantly, do not be repetitive. Do not forget to list specific instruments, temperatures, and measurements.

In the next section, share your results. This section is the time to use all the fancy Excel graph and table skills you have acquired through the years. Put in captions, which go above every table and under every figure. They should have the table/figure number, the title, and a brief description. The title should summarize the data; an excellent title, for example, would be "Howler Monkeys Eat More Ramen while Living in Dorm Rooms than in the Jungle." This section should be written in a similar manner to the materials and methods: it needs to be very factual and straightforward.

In the last section, the discussion, it is your time to pull everything together. Repeat what your experiment is and why you did it in the first paragraph, and then tell the reader why your results matter. Readers should be inspired by your excellent work. Throughout your paper, do not forget to use all the proper grammar you learned in English 110. You are a scientist, and your work is going to change the world. By mastering science writing, you can share your great science achievements with everyone.

FINDING (AND USING) YOUR VOICE

Dylynn Makepeace

You have a unique voice, a particular way of articulating yourself that sets you apart from everyone else. When I say “voice,” I’m not simply referring to your vocal inflections or the way you sound; I’m referring to the way you express yourself—the words you choose, the phrases you use, what you choose not to say and express between the lines. You’ve experienced things during your lifespan that have shaped you in both good and bad ways. That being said, upon entering into the realm of writing in college, you must always remember this: you’re not an academic robot who is programmed to regurgitate information. You’re so much more than that. You’re a person whose perspective deserves to be heard. No two people view a situation the same way, and it’s precisely that variation—the way you notice small, specific details about the world around you that no one else does—that makes your voice worth sharing.

For many students, academic writing is a daunting, unapproachable monster. Yet this horror of horrors pales in comparison to writing that requires you to bare your soul, to share your voice with your readers. Now, imagine if these two behemoths—academic writing and using voice—merged. Dare I say it? Their offspring would be downright terrifying! Welcome to college.

It’s normal to want to impress your professors. After all, at the end of the day, they’re the ones who slap a letter grade on your work, which ruthlessly dictates the course of your future. Sure, I may be exaggerating here, but in a way, my wry humor contains a kernel of truth. What you write during your college years *matters*. Maybe you don’t aspire to make a career out of writing. Few people do these days, and that’s fine. But even if you brazenly declare you “won’t have to write again after college,” that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t take pride in the writing you do while you’re in college. After all, every time you write, you’re sharing a bit of yourself. And that can be scary. Intimidating, in fact. Especially if the people reading your writing could potentially send you on a fast track to med school. Or to your parents’ couch. (See what I did there? In good writing, and I use the term “good” loosely here, everything always has a way of coming back full-circle.) All jokes aside, Pulitzer prize-winning sportswriter Walter Wellesley Smith sums it up best when he writes, “There’s nothing to writing. All you have to do is sit down at a typewriter and open a vein.”

Sure, Smith’s image of sitting down at a typewriter may seem a bit archaic, but the big picture he’s getting at here is profound: there’s nothing easy about writing. Writing is a deeply personal experience, and it requires you to share a bit of yourself. Now, I’m not suggesting that each and every piece of your writing will manifest some hidden part of your psyche; it would be foolish to make such a claim. Instead, I suggest that each and every piece of your writing will be 100 percent, uniquely you. Believe it or not, the English language is so complex that, every day, each English-speaking person forms a sentence that has never been spoken before. The ways in which you can express yourself are endless.

There’s nothing easy about writing. Writing is a deeply personal experience, and it requires you to share a bit of yourself.

Therefore, finding your voice (and using it in your writing) is much easier than you'd think. Consider how you express yourself to the people you care about most—your parents, your significant other, or your teammates. The information you share with each of these people may be the same, but the way you go about presenting the information is vastly different. Eureka! You're already controlling your voice, your way of expressing yourself, and you might not even be aware of it. Now that you've found your voice, you just need to translate it into academic writing.

For many, this is the most difficult part of the process. It's natural to find yourself struggling with writer's block, which, I can attest, is a very real thing. The mere prospect of being graded used to send shivers down my spine. In the end, a professor shared a piece of advice that forever changed the way I approach academic writing: "Don't look at writing as a chore. Don't get caught up in using big words or impressing your professor. Be yourself. Write like you're sharing your research with a loved one—use those words. It'll seem more natural; it'll flow more seamlessly. If you do that, your writer's block will disappear."

A word of caution: this piece of advice doesn't give you free reign to use slang or incomplete sentences in your writing. This is merely a way of framing your assignment to allow your words to flow naturally.

Write at your own risk.



EMPLOYING VOCABULARY

Matthew Housiaux

In one of his many instances of pithy, literate insight, famed American scribe Mark Twain once quipped, “the difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.” Hyperbole notwithstanding, Twain makes a very important point. Whether you are an undergraduate writing a final paper or a twentysomething preparing an official cover letter and resume, the

Sometimes, a last-second switch between “rebellious” and “recalcitrant” may make all the difference in the world.

sophistication of your diction and vocabulary may make all the difference between a few, rather lackluster paragraphs and a truly impactful piece of prose.

Living in the age of the internet and online databases has additionally provided writers of all skill levels and backgrounds with greater access to important literary tools and references—the most prominent of these being the dictionary and its prehistoric-sounding

partner in crime, the thesaurus. With these resources so readily available, almost anyone can improve the scope of his or her command of the English lexicon with a quick click of the mouse (or, if one is going about things the old-fashioned way, the flip of a page). That being said, however, “big,” “smart” or obscure words present their own challenge: namely, when do they truly improve the point you are trying to make as a writer, and when do they amount to little more than a highfalutin’ flourish? Answers will differ depending on the context. In this case, I will try to provide a more general overview of when, where, why, and for whom a student should strive to improve his or her word selection. Although such moments are rare, sometimes, a last-second switch between “rebellious” and “recalcitrant” may make all the difference in the world.

Truly effective writing depends on a careful balance of three equally important but often-variable (what if I said “three equally, but variably important”) facets: content, clarity, and style (or, as I like to say, “*élan*”). The first of these is, I would argue, most crucial. When composing any essay or paper for a class, if your work is based on unsound, unsubstantiated, or poorly outlined ideas, clarity and style will do little to salvage it. Before

In most cases, too much jargon alienates the reader and undermines the writer’s credibility. Used sparingly, though, specialized terminology reduces word count and conveys your proficiency in a particular field.

commencing any project, you should always do the most preplanning and research possible to assure that you do, indeed, know the topic on which you are writing. This may entail learning and utilizing certain specialized terminology that may be unknown to the average reader. All academic fields—especially science and philosophy, but also literature and history—have words that characterize certain codified concepts that would otherwise take a great

deal of space merely to outline and explain. If overused, these words are pejoratively dubbed as “jargon.” In most cases, too much jargon alienates the reader and undermines the writer’s credibility. Used sparingly, though, specialized terminology reduces word count and conveys your proficiency in a particular field. In short, subject-specific “big” words can help improve quality and limit quantity—two great virtues for any writer to possess.

If content is the most essential aspect of writing, however, clarity is an extremely close second. More than anything, writing is a method of

communication—a means to relate information and ideas. An enormously intelligent student may have a multitude of enlightening ideas to share with his or her educational colleagues (professors, fellow students, etc.). Unfortunately, he or she may also be a flagrant sesquipedalian (someone who enjoys using long words, the irony not being lost on this humble writer) and, as a result, produces writing that is unnecessarily difficult and sometimes incomprehensible. A simple declaration such as “Hockey is a terribly violent sport” suddenly balloons into “the truculence of hockey traduces the well-being of each *Homo sapiens* who happens to be involved with it.” Besides its commendable use of alliteration, the latter sentence is, by most points, inferior to the former in the way that it sacrifices clarity for style and/or humor without also elucidating a more complex concept. The worst kind of writing is not necessarily simplistic. Rather, it is writing that forgets to communicate when the writer uses many big words to ultimately say very little.

With regards to communication, a writer must always consider his or her audience. Who will be reading a particular essay or paper is a major determining factor in what sorts of words can be used to explain or convey a certain point. A writer like Malcolm Gladwell—someone who distills complex sociological and psychological data into more easily accessible popular science literature like *The Tipping Point* and *Outliers*—would more than likely explain such information in a much different fashion than the scientist or researcher who gathered it in the first place. To generalize somewhat, a scientist’s primary concern is to share his or her findings with intellectual peers. This permits them to use a number of rarified terms that constitute common knowledge among their academic circle. Thus, scientific text tends to be (but is not always) dense, difficult, and heavy on specialized language. Someone like Gladwell, however, assumes the educated public as his audience, meaning that he must balance his own interests as a writer with stipulations of subject matter and preferences of the reader. The more often you consider this balance and the more often you choose your words accordingly, the better your writing will be as a whole.

On the one hand, content and communication are undoubtedly most crucial to writing well as a whole. On the other hand, they are also perhaps the least exciting. This is the point at which the personal style of an individual writer comes into play. Style may be superfluous past a certain point, but it can also add nuance and intrigue to prose that is otherwise merely functional. There are a number of ways one can do this. Sentence structure, for example, provides a huge point of contrast between such renowned novelists as Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner. Hemingway practically telegraphed his work while Faulkner composed sentences that go on for multiple pages.

For the young writer, however, experimenting with sentence structure can be risky business—especially if he or she is compelled to emulate Mr. Faulkner and his dramatic longeurs. Instead, it might be more beneficial to expand and diversify your diction or word choice. Some words are simply used too often and by too many people to have a truly meaningful effect. “Angry” is one term that, by dint of its common usage, now fails to pack much of an emotional impact. “Livid” or even “enraged” would provide a much more dynamic meaning without totally confusing the reader. Moreover, they can give your writing a certain panache that sets it apart from that of your peers. Writing, like language in general, is essentially a means of communication. Depending on the circumstances, though, it may also be an outlet of self-expression. Like you choose hobbies that suit your interests and dispositions, you select words that better demonstrate who you are to a reader. And wouldn’t you like the reader to presume you are interesting and intelligent rather than blasé and boring?

Given all this, a writer must also be careful not to over-exercise his or her vocabulary. The greatest wordsmiths are those who use sophisticated phraseology sparingly, employing it to emphasize and accent rather than overwhelm. Mastering this ability will bring you untold benefits inside and outside the classroom. Furthermore, it will help expand your mind. Ours is a world of words, and thus, the more you learn of the latter will drastically increase your knowledge of the former.

INTELLECTUAL COURAGE

Sarah Kocher

There's a special kind of panic that rises in us when we think of intellectual confrontation. We've been taught not to discuss religion or politics at the dinner table. We agree to disagree. We break up with people over text messages. There's something in us that oftentimes pressures us to stay quiet, a pressure that is amplified in academic settings.

This won't always be the case. There will be situations, both academically and personally, in which you will feel comfortable enough to wrestle with questions that don't have easy answers. But there will also be situations in which that comfort is a luxury that you are not privy to. Perhaps you disagree with a classmate or a professor. Perhaps you are still trying to figure out what you agree or disagree with. Either way, the classroom is the perfect place to figure this out.

You have a responsibility to the world to speak out about the issues and topics that you believe are worth speaking out about.

In order to do so, one must have intellectual courage: the ability to write—or speak—about subjects that may be difficult or unwelcome, no matter what others decide is worthy or correct. Yes, you must be respectful, you must be thoughtful and you must be truthful. But to some extent, you have a responsibility to the world to speak out about the issues and topics that you believe are worth speaking out about.

Practicing intellectual courage teaches you to hold your own academically, to assert yourself, and to stand up for what you believe in. Vulnerability is frightening, but it is necessary for growth. Writing helps you to express yourself, but it can involve a surprising amount of self-discovery as well. This is because there is something revealing about writing; you open yourself up to criticism and intense scrutiny (especially in the world of academia, in which evaluation is an essential tool for reflection, revision, rediscovery and progress). You may be afraid that no one will like what you have to say—respectful, thoughtful, truthful or otherwise. Those of you who are GPA-conscious might also worry about how your efforts will be reflected alphabetically and numerically.

This is where the courage part comes in. Perhaps it isn't helpful to say "suck it up and do it," so instead, I will turn to tried and true clichés: face your fears and take a leap of faith. Of all the times in your life, this is not a time to be cynical. It is not a time to caution yourself into silence. Find the idealism in you and let it drive you to act and write upon that which needs to be said. Let it be said, and let it be said by you.

TRAVEL WRITING

Amanda Streng

I was once told by someone I deeply respect, “I love having traveled, but I hate traveling.” The veracity of this statement didn’t hit me until I really took the time to think about how I truly feel about traveling. Traveling can be such a hassle, but when I go back through my Moleskines filled with obscure pictures of random things on my path and scribbles regarding funny comments made by fellow travelers, I realize how much I gained from my experiences. Without having these stories written down, I would not be able to recall most of these events. I am now able to periodically go back to and reminisce upon my expeditions.

I’m not one to tell people what to do, but something compels me to urge you to write about your travels. You don’t have to be a published author basking in the glory of being on the Best Seller list; frankly, you don’t even have to know how to spell to travel write successfully. What’s important is simply that you write when you travel—it is the best way to keep a strong record of your experiences. Traveling offers new experiences that indubitably shape us, but we aren’t able to realize its impact until we have had time to ruminate on these countless endeavors. Most who travel come home feeling refreshed and willing to

share about their adventures. I know I’m the type of person who wants to share every last bit with my family upon my return.

While verbal stories are important and impactful, I wholeheartedly feel that one of the best ways to capture the moments and experiences is through writing. Much more can be retained when this form of documentation occurs. Drawing from my experiences, I want to explain how to travel write and what is most important to focus on.

So, here goes my list on how to best write about travel excursions. Some advice may seem rudimentary, but, nonetheless, it is vital.

1. **Bring a pen and paper with you everywhere you go.** You’re probably thinking, “duh,” but you’d be surprised at how many people simply don’t bring something to write with or on. I would advise something small and fun, but any sort of utensil and paper will suffice.
2. **Write every single day.** Yes, simply write. Don’t write to impress anyone, and don’t plan on sharing your experiences. Just write what you feel. Don’t worry about grammar or punctuation, but rather, spend more time taking in the scenery and the culture.
3. **Draw pictures.** I am probably the world’s worst artist, but attempting to draw something you find intriguing leaves you with a picture of why that particular image was important to you.

4. **Focus on what stands out to you.** Don't write about things you think you should write about; write about the random encounters and funny, unexpected events that happen on the trip. That way, when you look back, you'll be able to laugh and connect well with that memory. Write about the important people you meet, and be specific in the stories you document about their lives. We can all learn something from someone.
5. **Write down quotes.** What people say while traveling are some of the best memories, and their quotes bring about the best laughs. Communication barriers often turn into funny stories as well.
6. **Allow time for reflection.** The best time to reflect on your entire experience is on the plane ride home (if you are traveling in a plane). Some things won't hit you until you have had time to fully reflect.
7. **Share your words with others.** Your journals can inspire others to travel and may help teach others what else is out there. Spread the word.

Travel writing really is what you make it. Be diligent. Try to do it every single day. Be in the moment, and don't be stressed about finding time to write. Life is about making the most of experiences, and writing can help capture those special moments.



NONFICTION CREATIVE WRITING

Crystal Ortbahn

Pretend you can write about anything. Does that sort of assignment relieve you or does it stress you out? For some people, writing about personal topics is easy. For others, it might seem daunting to think of an event in one's life worth talking about in an essay.

Like any writing project, an important first step is to brainstorm a list of story ideas. Think of things you want to learn more about in the real world or events in your life you want to share with a reading audience. For a personal essay, you might list experiences in your life, or you might list observations. Once you've finished the brainstorming process, consider this writing guide to be a list of guidelines you should consider when tackling any one of the following forms of nonfiction creative writing:

PERSONAL ESSAY

What tone are you going for? If you want the piece to feel conversational, write the story in the hopes of impressing yourself, and yourself alone.

You have a story, and it is very possible to write your story factually and creatively.

Use language you are personally comfortable using. You have a story, and it is very possible to write your story factually and creatively.

The beginning of your story is essential in grasping your readers' attentions. Setting the stage for later action is important. Initial background information may not prove interesting, though, unless the reader knows why this information is important. Starting your story *in medias res*, or in the middle of things, might prove to provide a more intriguing hook than introducing characters or setting, which can come later.

For instance, the opening sentences of David Sedaris' hilarious personal essay, "Jesus Shaves," are two questions: "And what does one do on the fourteenth of July? Does one celebrate Bastille Day?" Sedaris later clarifies that he's writing about his experience in a French class learning about holidays, but instead of providing the context of the story initially, Sedaris's opening lines force you directly in the middle of the action of the class.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

Especially with graduate school application processes, the personal statement is an important piece of writing. It should be formal, but it can still be creative and, in effect, show you know how to communicate in writing. The personal statement can take shape in many forms, but it's always important to include specific examples that highlight the certain character traits you're trying to communicate. Don't just *tell* me you respond well under pressure—*show* me a time you handled pressure with ease. Similarly, don't just *tell* me that you have an excellent work ethic—*show* me that you have an excellent work ethic. This is your opportunity to color in your excellent character traits. Write it. Read it out loud, and consider if what you hear would impress you.

Adding colorful details is important in providing evidence of your interest in a program. However, sometimes, you may have a character or word limit that does not accommodate an exceptional amount of details. If this is the case, try to focus on one trait that you think is especially important to what you're applying for. These statements don't need to include all of the reasons why you're an amazing candidate, just the best reasons. This would also be an excellent time to visit the Career Center or Writing Center for advice about crafting a concise personal statement.

SOCIAL BLOG

The world of social media is increasingly important. Students interested in pursuing journalism, design, and public relations are often encouraged to maintain personal websites or blogs. In the social sphere, however, solid writing is still an important feature.

Even tweets, like a longer personal essay or statement, show followers evidence of your ability to communicate clearly and concisely. Grammatically correct tweets are especially important if you have a public profile and if you are applying for jobs.

While this landscape for communication offers free range on what you can write, it's still important to be mindful of writing clearly.



JOURNALISTIC WRITING

September Symens

So you're taking a journalism class this semester. I know what you're thinking: How different can writing an article be from writing a term paper, really? Believe it or not, journalistic writing is surprisingly different, but thankfully, it's not necessarily more difficult.

When writing journalistically, you are writing strictly to convey information, not to discuss your own opinions about a topic or to argue a particular point.

Perhaps the most striking difference is the change in tone. When writing journalistically, you are writing strictly to convey information, not to discuss your own opinions about a topic or to argue a particular point. Journalists strive for *objectivity* in their work; in other words, they try to give readers a fair and balanced representation of a newsworthy event without letting their own biases come through in the story. Putting together interviews and factual material to create a piece of informational writing can

initially sound intimidating, but looking at the process as this list of steps to follow helps simplify the task:

1. Contacting sources

Let's say you've been assigned to write a story for the *Mirror* about ASA's recent decision to install a permanent chocolate fountain in the Commons. The first question you should ask yourself is this: who will be able to give me pertinent information (and good quotes) about this decision? For most average-length stories, finding three to four sources will be adequate, but it's important to include varied voices. For example, when writing about the chocolate fountain, you would probably want to talk to one or two people who were involved in the decision-making process (so, perhaps the general manager of Sodexo at Augie and a key ASA member). Getting student opinion about the new addition would also be a good idea since you're writing for the student newspaper.

Now that you've figured out whom you'd like to interview, start contacting people. Sending a brief email that a) introduces yourself to your source, b) explains your story and c) asks your source if they would be available for an interview will usually work, but don't be afraid to pick up the phone and call someone if necessary. Once your interviewees have responded and you've agreed on a time to meet, you're ready for step two.

2. Interviewing

Interviewing someone can seem just as scary as being interviewed if you're not properly prepared, so grabbing a few essential tools before you begin will help you feel more at ease. When interviewing someone, it's beneficial to bring the following:

- A notebook and several writing utensils (and/or your laptop) for taking notes while your subject speaks.

- A digital recorder (or an app that records content on your smartphone). A recording of your interview will definitely come in handy when you're ready to transcribe. Just be sure to ask your source's permission before hitting "record," and don't forget to test your device beforehand.
- Five or six thought-provoking questions. Pro tip: don't ask anything that can be answered with a "yes" or "no"—start your questions with "How?" and the 5 Ws (Why did ASA decide to install the chocolate fountain? How, in your opinion, will the new addition affect those trying to combat the "freshman 15"?). Don't ask questions in hopes of hearing a specific answer, though; let the source provide his or her opinions without your influence. Coming to the interview prepared allows you to be in control of the interview, and therefore, to get the answers you need for your story.

3. Transcribing

Now that you've interviewed your sources, you're ready to transcribe. If you recorded the meeting, simply listen to the audio file and type out exactly what your source said, word for word. Yes, it's a time-consuming and slightly painful process, but careful transcription protects your credibility as a journalist—by being precise, you will be less likely to misquote your source. If you didn't record your interview, transcribing your (probably) messy notes still isn't a bad idea for accuracy's sake. Once you've selected your favorite quotes from the dialogue, you're ready to write.

Journalistic writing gives you the opportunity to be creative with words while simultaneously presenting factual information to readers in an objective way.

4. Writing the story

Now, it's time for the fun part. Journalistic writing gives you the opportunity to be creative with words while simultaneously presenting factual information to readers in an objective way. A basic news story (like your story about the chocolate fountain) would probably be best presented in a style called the *inverted pyramid*, a

format that provides the reader with the most crucial information at the beginning of the story and then adds additional details about the story in order of importance. Other key components in a news story include the following:

- **Lead:** The *lead* will be the first few sentences of your article. Ideally, it should be snappy and eye-catching, as it is intended to grab the reader's attention right away. More importantly, though, it should convey the main point of the story by answering one or more of the 5 Ws. For example, your lead might read, "Things just got a lot sweeter in the Commons thanks to ASA's recent decision to install a permanent chocolate fountain in the Ordall Dining Room." This lead is fun, not too cutesy, and it answers who, what, and where.
- **Quotes:** Quotes should be formatted like this: *"I'm going to gain 80 pounds this semester," senior Cocoa Puff said.* Note that the comma indicating the end of the sentence is inside the quotation marks, and the "said" comes after the source's name. While using attribution words like "exclaimed" or "sobbed" is okay in English papers, we want to stick with "said" in journalistic writing so as to avoid accidental bias or an inaccurate portrayal of the speaker. Also, remember to begin a new paragraph every time a new speaker is introduced (so whenever you decide to insert a new quote).

- **Style:** Specific formatting questions (like how to properly abbreviate “South Dakota” and whether it’s “President” or “president” Rob Oliver) can usually be answered with a copy of the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook. Here are a few of the essential rules to follow when writing journalistically:
 - o Keep your sentences (and paragraphs) short and simple to ensure clarity.
 - o Write out numbers one through nine, and then use numerals.
 - o Avoid semicolons whenever possible.
 - o Don’t use Oxford commas, no matter how much you love them (for instance, you would write a list this way: the chocolate fountain will flow with milk, dark and white chocolate).
 - o Avoid clichés and exclamation points like the plague!!!

5. Submitting the story

Finally, be sure to meet your editor or professor’s deadline. Unhappy journalists are not the most forgiving bunch, so this might be the most important guideline of all. Seriously.

So now, with your AP Stylebook in hand and a solid understanding of the journalistic writing process fresh in your mind, you’re ready to write a news article. The technique will get easier with practice, so don’t be afraid to make a few mistakes and ask a lot of questions as you work—after all, that’s a sign of a good journalist.

RESUME WRITING

Alexandra Hjerpe

If you have yet to write a resume for an internship, job, or scholarship opportunity, fear not! Crafting a professional resume may sound like a discouraging and overwhelming task, but framed with a few simple guidelines and go-to skills, your work toward a stellar, attention-grabbing resume will be made easy.

Basically, it's your chance to make your time as a student or employee sound as badass as possible with the help of a focused-in topic like acquired or developed skills.

Many students feel uncomfortable with writing resumes because they're afraid of bragging or sounding too arrogant. Resumes, though, are the perfect opportunities for you to reflect on your favorite learning experiences since they are shaped in statements of your best skills, qualities, and interests. You've invested lots of time, energy, and brain cells

into your classes and part-time jobs, and now is the time to share what you have learned. Basically, it's your chance to make your time as a student or employee sound as badass as possible with the help of a focused-in topic like acquired or developed skills.

The first resume skill to master is to place verbs first in your sentence structure (giving attention to your actions) when describing your past employment and experiences.

Bad Example: *I worked at Bagel Boy.*

Good Example: Organized pastry case, cleaned work stations, and managed cash register at Bagel Boy.

Have you ever worked a job that sounded dull, or are you unsure how to use a certain experience towards your resume? Focus on *leadership qualities* or *transferable skills*. These say more about your conduct, personal development, and ability to learn new tasks than the glamour of the tasks themselves.

Bad Example: *I flipped burgers at Burger Time.*

Good Example: Efficiently prepared fresh produce and managed multiple grilling stations at Burger Time.

If you find yourself repeating words like “managed” more than once in your resume, try brainstorming other verbs that clearly or physically represent the task that you are doing. Chances are you will find another truthful word that represents your actions even better and that will convey other, unstated strengths. In this case, if you were in a position where you oversaw co-workers while flipping burgers, you could replace your repeated verb, “managed,” with “supervised” or “directed.”

This strong writing form should carry over into the six major parts of your resume:

1) *Objective:* State your goal, including specific job title and employer title.

- 2) *Education*: State your qualifications, including years attended.
- 3) *Work Experience*: State your skills, as seen above, based on past job experiences, including years.
- 4) *Supportive Skills*: State your inborn, natural talents that relate to your specific objective.
- 5) *Activities & Honors*: State academic, community, and club distinctions and awards worthy of note.
- 6) *References*: State three to four qualified references, ideally ones that relate to your specific objective.

The arrangement of these main resume parts is up to you, but most resumes follow a format with the objective and education at the top of the page, directly following your name, contact information (address, email, phone number), and professional social media connections (LinkedIn, WordPress, Wix).

Did you have a really cool study abroad experience? Are you proud of that “Woo” on your StrengthsQuest? Feature those favorite parts of your story under *Experience* or *Supportive Skills*. As long as you can relate some learned skills or qualities from these stories in a way that an employer might appreciate, these stories will make you stand out as a unique candidate for the job.

Finally, don’t forget the importance of a powerful visual presentation. Outside of your word choice, nothing says professional like a clean, clear, and well-organized document. As a general rule, keep your resume visually consistent. If you are using bullets, make sure all of the bullet points are lined up at the same distance from the paper’s edges. Keep your sentences active and, if possible, on one line. Check for a period at the end of each sentence. If you are using any bolded, italicized, or underlined words, make sure that this formatting is used the same way throughout the page. It often looks appealing to have a bold or underlined heading for each of the main parts (for example, bold word “Objective”), with smaller, normalized paragraphs underneath. This creates what is called a visual hierarchy, and it makes your resume both easier to read and more appealing to take in.

Bad Example:

Objective: Getting a job. Education, Augustana College

Good Example:

Objective

Using professional skills of active writing, thoughtful organization, and clear formatting to acquire the position of News Writer at *The International Herald Tribune*.

Education

Augustana College: Bachelor of Arts in English & journalism. 2010-2014.

Hutchinson Senior High School: 2006-2010.

Work Experience

Bagel Boy: Organized pastry case, cleaned work stations, and managed cash register. 2011-2012.

Burger Time: Efficiently prepared fresh produce and managed multiple grilling stations. 2009-2011.

Activities & Honors

- Study Abroad Experience: *Dharma: Contemporary Indian Culture*. January 2013.
- Dean's List, 5 out of 5 completed semesters at Augustana College.
- Member of Augie Green, organization for sustainable student living.

As a professional touch, turn in your printed resume on a heavy or glossy paper in colored ink. (But while a spot of color can add a bang of interest to your print, a rainbow can return you to middle school; choose just one color to accent your resume by highlighting your name or main headings.) Happy resume writing! Go show those employers what you're made of.



WRITING AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Jukka Rysgaard

Traveling to America is hard. You have to get a passport, a visa, an expensive plane ticket, and when you finally arrive in America, you will have to constantly speak English. And while constantly speaking and thinking in English is hard enough, writing in English is even harder. Trust me; I have been through every single step, from traveling in 24 hours, to getting mentally exhausted from all the English, to struggling with translations, wording, and sentence structure in my papers. Why have I experienced all this, you may ask? Because I am an international student at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

My name is Jukka Kleinnibbelink Rysgaard, and I am half Dutch (my mom is from Holland) and half Danish (my dad is from Denmark). I come from the Kingdom of Denmark, where I have lived all my life with my parents and my two brothers. Now you may wonder, “What is a Dane, or a 50 percent Dane, doing in America?” Funny you should ask, my friend. I came to America in 2011 to pursue my dream of playing American football in the land that the sport originated in. To my luck, the coaching staff allowed me to walk on, and so I became a student athlete. The reason “student” is first in “student athlete” is because getting an education comes first and foremost. This is why I am writing to you: I work for the Writing Center as a tutor, and I am hoping to pass down some of my knowledge and experience in writing as an international student in America.

We all have our different relations to the English language, but the most common relation is verbal. We sing in English (some better than others), we watch Hollywood movies where the actors speak English, our favorite TV shows are usually in English, and English words are now an integrated part of our own languages. Words and phrases such as “Nice,” “Cool,” “Okay,” and “How you doin’?” (said, of course, like Joey from *Friends*—with a tiny bit of an Italian accent) are used frequently. Therefore, the most natural thing for us is to write as we speak. However, our verbal language is full of grammatical mistakes, bad sentence structure, run-on sentences, and slang that all carries over to our papers.

Having a paper with good flow, good structure, and good content is the key to a successful and organized paper, and it is far more important—and arguably easier—than writing with perfect grammar

We have all memorized and practiced grammatical rules such as, “I am, you are, he is...” until the rules were so ingrained in our brains that you could wake us up in the middle of the night and we would, without any hesitation, repeat the rules to you in a zombie-like manner. However, applying these rules can often be difficult—especially as an international student. Therefore, most international students usually bring in concerns about grammatical errors and ask me if their writing makes sense. Here is a little secret: making a few grammatical mistakes does not hurt you as much as poor structure, poor flow and poor content. Having a paper with good flow, good structure, and good content is the key to a successful and organized paper, and it is far more important—and arguably easier—than writing with perfect grammar.

Therefore, here is another bit of advice: before you even start writing, sit down and make an outline. An outline is a step-by-step plan of what you will be writing about. The first part of your outline is an introduction paragraph where you pull the reader in. Your introduction paragraph is your appetizer where you make the reader hungry for more. The introduction paragraph is where you introduce your topic: what you are writing about, why you are writing about

it, some useful facts and information, and lastly, your thesis statement. Your thesis statement is what you are constantly relating back to throughout your paper—I repeat: constantly. After your introduction paragraph come your body paragraphs. In the body paragraphs, you present your arguments supported by evidence and quotes from the context. In your body paragraphs, you are arguing for your thesis statement. Lastly, you will sum up all your arguments in your conclusion. By creating an outline, you know exactly what you will be including in your paper—ergo, good structure. Furthermore, the structure gives you an overview of what each paragraph will include, which makes transitions easier—ergo, good flow. If you have noticed it, I have already included a few transitional words such as “furthermore,” “however,” and “therefore.” After knowing exactly what you will cover in your paragraphs and understanding how to transition from paragraph to paragraph, choosing the appropriate content is your last and most important step.

Content is where you have the chance to enchant your readers with your writing. However, another trend among international students is either long, run-on sentences or really short sentences. My advice to you: keep it simple. By keeping it simple, you avoid the frustrations of people not understanding you, and you avoid getting lost in translation. A technique I have found useful is asking myself the questions, “What am I trying to say? What is the most important message or part in this sentence?” For instance, I underline the significant words I use to get my point through, then I make my statement, such as, “Death is especially represented in Thomas Cole’s painting, *Manhood*, by the tree in the lower right.” The theme, death, is the point I want to highlight, so I place it in the first part of the sentence. Then, I explain how death is represented in a new sentence: “The tree is dropping its leaves, which underlines that time and life are running out and the voyager is in the fall of his life.”

Take notice that I say “your writing,” because a trend among international students is an overuse of quotes. The teacher wants your interpretation, your words, and more importantly, your formulations. The teachers and the readers have probably already read the context material, but they are curious to read how you interpret, analyze, and discuss the topic with your fantastic writing.

You might think, “Yes! That was all I needed,” hit print, and go to bed because you have stayed up all night to finish your paper. However, I am sorry to tell you that it is not bedtime yet. The final and most crucial steps of writing are proofreading and editing. “Start strong but finish stronger” is a phrase used daily in the sports world, but it could not be more spot-on for writing, as well. Proofreading allows you to pick up the grammatical mistakes, to check the flow of the paper, and to check if your language is clear. My suggestion is to print the paper out—please print on both sides to save paper—and read it out loud to yourself. Or, even better, have your roommate read it out loud. By reading it aloud, you recognize missing words, lack of meaning, and bad transitions. Furthermore, by having your roommate or a friendly English speaker read out loud, it allows them to pick up the same mistakes you were looking for but maybe missed. Even better, bring your paper to the Writing Center—we will love to help you. We are trained to help and assist you through mazes of grammatical rules, MLA citations, sentence structure, content, word choice, etc. We are an internationally certified tutoring program that will help you with anything from English papers to Valentine’s poems.

In conclusion, have a plan before you start writing. Do not get overwhelmed or intimidated when you first begin writing in English. If you know the material, have good flow, good structure, and good content, writing in English will be no different than writing in your native language. Lastly, keep this in mind: just like in your native language, writing in English is a process that takes time and patience to master, but using these steps every time creates good habits and, most importantly, good writing. Soon, you will be the one helping the next generation of international students.

THRIVING IN FRESHMAN COMP

Jenna Wilkinson

Regardless of your major, you will be writing papers. Accept this fact. And accept that Freshman Composition is going to be useful for you.

So you're in Freshman Composition. An introductory-level English course may seem like an easy class, but there is much to be gained if you know how to use its information. The lessons learned in Freshman Composition can make the rest of your college career so much simpler. Regardless of your major, you will be writing papers. Accept this fact. And accept that Freshman Composition is going to be useful for you. So go to class and take

notes, because this course is one of the most important you will take while at college. Here are a few tips to help you make the most of your time.

First, ask questions. We all have those little grammar rules that we have never quite understood, but, for some reason, have never asked our teachers for clarification. Instead, we float through high school English in a mildly confused state. It's time to change that. Now is the time to ask questions until you fully

We all have those little grammar rules that we have never quite understood, but for some reason, have never asked our teachers for clarification. Instead, we float through high school English in a mildly confused state. It's time to change that.

understand. What's the actual difference between 'effect' and 'affect'? I am an English major, and I will admit I never completely knew the difference until I was taught in Freshman Composition. Also, now is the perfect time to solve the age-old question that has been keeping you up at night for years: the difference between "who" and "whom." If you aren't completely confident using "who"

and "whom," simply ask your professor to explain the difference. It will change your life. Freshman Composition is the time to ask grammar questions. Take the time to learn the answers in this course, and you'll know them for the rest of your life.

Second, get comfortable citing sources. You will be referencing information in every college paper you write. Whether the source is a novel, an academic article, a textbook, a case study, or anything else—learn how to cite it. How do you learn this? First, ask questions. Are you starting to sense a trend here? Second, finally use that *Writer's Reference* handbook you were forced to buy for the class. I promise, it's useful. There will come a time when you will need to use APA or Chicago citations, and those will be outlined in your handbook. But for general use, MLA format is your friend. Familiarize yourself with both in-text citations and the creation of works cited pages. This knowledge is going to help you in every paper you write for college.

Third, use your professors as resources. They are full of knowledge and love to help you. Take advantage of that. If you are confused and have questions, these are the people to ask. They are there for that specific reason. You can talk to them in class or over email, or you can stop by their offices during their office hours. Also, speaking of using your resources, do not fear your librarians. They are brilliant, and they can teach you how to find sources, take effective notes, use citations, etc. Do not be intimidated by your professors and librarians. They are here both to teach and help you.

Fourth, create your own writing process. In high school, most students were taught the formal, "correct" way to write papers. Now is the time to learn what works best for you when writing. Is your process the same one you were taught in high school? If so, that's okay. If you need to change one or two steps so they

fit your writing style, that's fine too. For example, I make lengthy outlines, complete with my quotations and subheadings, while others jot their outlines down on a post-it note. Freshman Composition is the perfect time for experimenting. Find a process that works best for you and get comfortable using it.

However, regardless of your writing process, everyone's last step must be exactly the same. The fifth tip: get in the habit of editing. Vigorously. This is the step that cannot be skipped. Good writing is careful writing. My Freshman Composition professor once asked me, "How many errors does a paper need to have before I discredit it?" The answer was one. The purpose of writing a paper is to deliver information to the reader. Therefore, we need the reader to be focusing on the information provided rather than the spelling and grammatical mistakes. These errors may be the only part of the paper your reader can focus on, so take your time when it comes to editing. Try reading your writing aloud to a friend, your wall, or your dog; our ears often catch the small mistakes our eyes miss. Have a friend or tutor read your writing. A second set of eyes and a different perspective can't hurt. You put time and effort into writing your paper, so the same time and effort needs to be put into editing. This way, your information comes across professionally to the reader.

You are now equipped with five useful tips to help you thrive in Freshman Composition: ask questions, get comfortable citing sources, use your professors and librarians, create your writing process, and edit carefully. Whether Freshman Composition seems easy or intimidating, this course will be one of the most important ones that you take in college. The information you gain will help you in every college class, regardless of the academic area. So, Freshman Comp students, go to class and take notes. I promise that the information you learn will make the rest of your college career simpler.



CITATIONS

Sarah Kocher

The genesis of an idea is a beautiful thing. Ideas are what gave us mathematical theory and running water. Ideas gave us dictionaries and handbags and YouTube and spelunking (and then, consequently, spelunking helmets). Everything in existence can be traced back to that original idea and every stepping-stone of an idea that led up to it. During an idea's formation, the human brain takes on the equivalence of parkour: it uses other things, other ideas, as catalysts and supporting elements that catapult it into the unknown that is a truly new concept. In academia, these supporting elements must be recognized because, as in parkour, we could do nothing awesome without them.

This analogy is fitting when the ideas that you generate are strongly supported by or dependent on another's work. And I know what you're thinking, but citations aren't just for history papers anymore. College is the big leagues. Any time you use someone else's work to jump off of, to quote or to paraphrase, that person deserves a little written high five in the form of a citation. It's also a plus for you because it shows your reader that you aren't just pulling conclusions out of your ... mental idea folder.

We're not going to focus on specific citation methods here, because if we did, this booklet would be about three times its current size. Citation styles like MLA, APA, and Chicago/Turabian are nuanced and detailed. The good thing, though, is that they are nuanced and detailed in their citation techniques so that you, the writer, never have to wonder, "What if I'm using an e-book and don't have page numbers?" or "What if I'm only using a portion of this book?" or "If this piece was written by fifteen gajillion authors, do I have to write all of their names?" When you are ready to delve into the particulars of the specific citation style you are using, some fabulous online resources exist for you to use (for instance, Purdue Online Writing Lab always has your back). There's also a very good chance that the Augustana Writing Center or your local library will have additional resources for you (including, but not limited to, real, live humans).

Despite the differences of these three main citation styles, they all have one thing in common: each requires you to cite your sources both in-text and with a more detailed, attached page that is either called a Works Cited or a Bibliography, depending on the style. As far as citations go, the in-text ones are trickiest. Forget about how to cite; sometimes just knowing when and what to cite can seem daunting. But fear not, fellow writer. You can crack this like an egg.

As you try to decide what to cite, your main concern will be credibility. Miscellaneous blogs by your second cousin's deceased cat are out (may Snowball rest in peace). To ensure that you are obtaining legitimate, respected sources, use the library's many databases and books as starting points. However, there are some instances in which your argument will necessitate special exceptions to this rule (for example, a piece on the apparent rise of blogs from the perspective of dead cats would be benefited by an example, perhaps from your second cousin's deceased cat's blog—may Snowball rest in peace). Nevertheless, when in doubt, opt for credibility.

That credibility, though, won't do you a lick of good if you don't apply it directly to your essay. When citing in-text, every time you use a quotation or a statistic, you must cite its source. This is not optional and is pretty straightforward. What may feel a little less iffy, however, is any indirectly stated

material. Paraphrasing is one such example. When you paraphrase, you are stating the author's ideas in your own words. The only thing that is new about the paraphrase, then, is the fact that you used different words. Therefore, because the idea was still the source's, you need to cite your paraphrases as well. A helpful guide on when to cite is this question: "Is this my own idea?" If the answer is no, cite it.

At this point, it might feel safer to just cite anything and everything. While it may be enticing, this isn't always the best approach. While under-citing can kill your credibility, over-citing can kill the flow of your piece. Over-citing usually comes in the form of citing separately things that could, in actuality, be cited together. For example, if you have two consecutive sentences and the information in both of them is from the same source, you don't need to cite after each sentence ends. Instead, the general assumption in academia is that the previous conclusions and statistics build up until a source is listed. Therefore, in these two sentences, your reader will understand that the information from both sentences is from the source you cite after your second sentence. In doing so, you are following Hannah Montana's lead. You get the best of both worlds, sacrificing neither credibility nor flow.

The trick, if you haven't noticed, is balance. This is true in regards to how you use your sources, as well. When citing, work to maintain a balance between paraphrases and direct quotations. In addition, leaning too heavily on one source can tip the scale of balance, and not in your favor. Remember

that a diverse source list strengthens your paper's credibility by exposing your reader to a wide range of sources and lets your reader know that you do, in fact, actually know what you are talking about.

And did you notice that I said "what you are talking about"? Because it's true: you are the one who is ultimately writing the paper, citations or no. Your words and

Your sources are there to add integrity and authority to your arguments, all of which are there to add integrity and authority to your thesis.

insights are the glue that holds everything together. Using glue well is an art form. With glue, if you don't have enough, everything will fall apart. There will be no cohesion, no connectedness. But if you use too much, everything gets pretty sticky pretty quickly. It becomes difficult to work with a project that is over-saturated; too much glue can damage the structural integrity of your work. Your sources are there to add integrity and authority to your arguments, all of which are there to add integrity and authority to your thesis. Use your words, the you-glue, to connect your sources to your thesis. Your sources add the fact, but the conclusions are all your own. Don't let your voice get lost in those of others. Instead, use their voices to support yours. Use their voices to help you excel at academia's version of parkour. Now that you have the support you need, there's no direction in which you can't go.

AFTERWORD:

a note on the journal name and cover photo

A palimpsest is, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a surface “having been reused or altered while still retaining traces of its earlier form; a multilayered record.” The word evolved from Latin and originally meant “scraped again” or “written again,” referring to the centuries-old practice of reusing expensive parchment by writing over a surface that was previously written on. Modern technologies such as multispectral imaging have allowed us to discover these previously hidden texts, many of which are quite valuable to the historical record. The photo on the cover of this journal was taken by my father, Max Gerling, of the façade of his father’s blacksmith shop in Ellendale, North Dakota. It once read “Otto Gerling Blacksmith Shop,” but in the past several decades that text has worn away to reveal the texts from the first few decades of the 1900s. Looking carefully, one can barely read “Machine Shop” (likely from 1936); more legible is “Lacey and Barta Horse Shoeing Parlors” (from 1908). In this case, decades of weather did to the brick façade what high-tech imaging equipment does to ancient parchments. Nevertheless, both processes illustrate what the Writing Center intends to do with this journal—demonstrate that we all stand on the shoulders of our forebears and benefit and build from the wisdom they impart to us. Be they the great thinkers and authors, our professors, our parents, the students who came before us, or even our own friends and cohort, we continually rely on this “multilayered record” that feeds our creativity and propels us forward—and never really disappears.

Many heartfelt thanks to the truly wonderful tutors who contributed to this inaugural volume and to the editors who oversaw every step of the process. This journal will be only one of the indelible marks you leave that contribute to an ever richer and more knowledgeable Augustana College.

Dr. Danny Gerling
Writing Center Director



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