

For a Personal Statement or Statement of Purpose:

- [Writing the Personal Statement](#)

Writing the Personal Statement

Summary:

This handout provides information about writing personal statements for academic and other positions.

Contributors: Jo Doran, Allen Brizee

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The personal statement, your opportunity to sell yourself in the application process, generally falls into one of two categories:

1. The general, comprehensive personal statement:

This allows you maximum freedom in terms of what you write and is the type of statement often prepared for standard medical or law school application forms.

2. The response to very specific questions:

Often, business and graduate school applications ask specific questions, and your statement should respond specifically to the question being asked. Some business school applications favor multiple essays, typically asking for responses to three or more questions.

Questions to ask yourself before you write:

- What's special, unique, distinctive, and/or impressive about you or your life story?
- What details of your life (personal or family problems, history, people or events that have shaped you or influenced your goals) might help the committee better understand you or help set you apart from other applicants?
- When did you become interested in this field and what have you learned about it (and about yourself) that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field? What insights have you gained?
- How have you learned about this field—through classes, readings, seminars, work or other experiences, or conversations with people already in the field?
- If you have worked a lot during your college years, what have you learned (leadership or managerial skills, for example), and how has that work contributed to your growth?
- What are your career goals?

- Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain (great grades but mediocre LSAT or GRE scores, for example, or a distinct upward pattern to your GPA if it was only average in the beginning)?
- Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships (for example, economic, familial, or physical) in your life?
- What personal characteristics (for example, integrity, compassion, and/or persistence) do you possess that would improve your prospects for success in the field or profession? Is there a way to demonstrate or document that you have these characteristics?
- What skills (for example, leadership, communicative, analytical) do you possess?
- Why might you be a stronger candidate for graduate school—and more successful and effective in the profession or field than other applicants?
- What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the admissions committee to be interested in you?

General advice

Answer the questions that are asked

- If you are applying to several schools, you may find questions in each application that are somewhat similar.
- Don't be tempted to use the same statement for all applications. It is important to answer each question being asked, and if slightly different answers are needed, you should write separate statements. In every case, be sure your answer fits the question being asked.

Tell a story

- Think in terms of showing or demonstrating through concrete experience. One of the worst things you can do is to bore the admissions committee. If your statement is fresh, lively, and different, you'll be putting yourself ahead of the pack. If you distinguish yourself through your story, you will make yourself memorable.

Be specific

- Don't, for example, state that you would make an excellent doctor unless you can back it up with specific reasons. Your desire to become a lawyer, engineer, or whatever should be logical, the result of specific experience that is described in your statement. Your application should emerge as the logical conclusion to your story.

Find an angle

- If you're like most people, your life story lacks drama, so figuring out a way to make it interesting becomes the big challenge. Finding an angle or a "hook" is vital.

Concentrate on your opening paragraph

- The lead or opening paragraph is generally the most important. It is here that you grab the reader's attention or lose it. This paragraph becomes the framework for the rest of the statement.

Tell what you know

- The middle section of your essay might detail your interest and experience in your particular field, as well as some of your knowledge of the field. Too many people graduate with little or no knowledge of the nuts and bolts of the profession or field they hope to enter. Be as specific as you can in relating what you know about the field and use the language professionals use in conveying this information. Refer to experiences (work, research, etc.), classes, conversations with people in the field, books you've read, seminars you've attended, or any other source of specific information about the career you want and why you're suited to it. Since you will have to select what you include in your statement, the choices you make are often an indication of your judgment.

Don't include some subjects

- There are certain things best left out of personal statements. For example, references to experiences or accomplishments in high school or earlier are generally not a good idea. Don't mention potentially controversial subjects (for example, controversial religious or political issues).

Do some research, if needed

- If a school wants to know why you're applying to it rather than another school, do some research to find out what sets your choice apart from other universities or programs. If the school setting would provide an important geographical or cultural change for you, this might be a factor to mention.

Write well and correctly

- Be meticulous. Type and proofread your essay very carefully. Many admissions officers say that good written skills and command of correct use of language are important to them as they read these statements. Express yourself clearly and concisely. Adhere to stated word limits.

Avoid clichés

- A medical school applicant who writes that he is good at science and wants to help other people is not exactly expressing an original thought. Stay away from often-repeated or tired statements.

For a Poster Presentation:

- [INDOT Poster Design Handout](#)
 - **Media File:** [INDOT Poster Design Handout](#)
 - This resource is enhanced by an Acrobat PDF file. [Download the free Acrobat Reader](#)
 - This pdf handout will help you design and construct a research poster presentation. The handout explains how to build a mock up presentation as a rough draft before you build your larger poster presentation. Download the pdf from the Media box above.
-
- [Visual Rhetoric](#)

Visual Rhetoric: Overview

Media File: [Visual Rhetoric: Overview](#)

This resource is enhanced by an Acrobat PDF file. [Download the free Acrobat Reader](#)

This section of the OWL discusses the use of rhetorical theory and rhetoric as it relates to visuals and design. "Visual rhetoric" has been used to mean anything from the use of images as argument, to the arrangement of elements on a page for rhetorical effect, to the use of typography (fonts), and more.

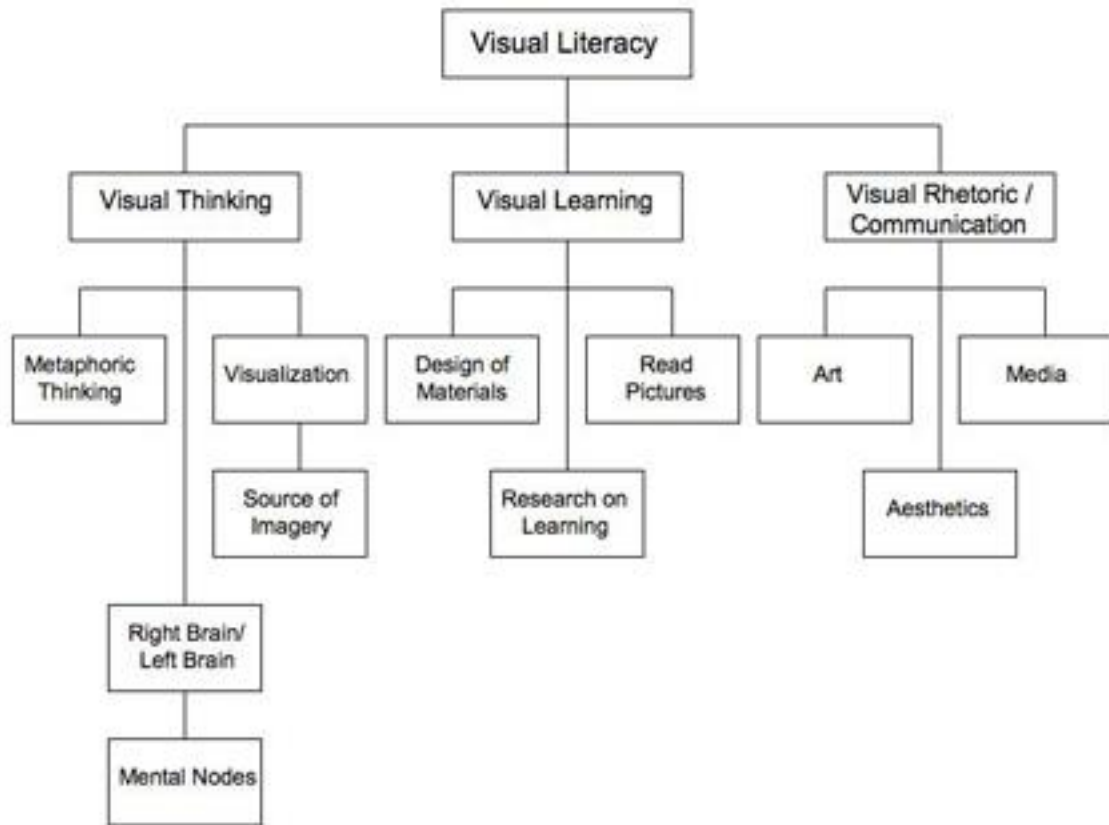
While we cannot hope to cover these and many other topics in depth in this resource, it will be possible for us to look at some of the common visual rhetoric problems encountered by student writers: the text elements of a page (including font choices), the use of visuals (including photographs, illustrations, and charts and graphs), and the role of overall design in composing a page rhetorically.

Note: Much of the current use of "visual rhetoric" is directed at analyzing images and other visuals that already exist. This handout is meant to help you generate visual material.

What is visual rhetoric?

The term *visual rhetoric* falls under an umbrella term known as visual literacy, which is generally split into three categories: visual thinking, visual learning, visual rhetoric/communication (though clearly visual thinking and visual learning must occur in order to communicate visually). The following diagram illustrates these ideas. The graphic is modified from Sandra Moriarty's diagram in her essay, "A Conceptual Map of Visual

Communication" and from "Teaching Visual Literacy and Document Design in First-Year Composition" (MA Thesis) by Allen Brizee.



Essentially, a beginning definition of visual rhetoric and its applications are as follows:

- Use of images as argument
- Arrangement of elements on a page
- Use of typography (fonts, etc.)
- Analysis of existing images and visuals
- **Visual Rhetoric Slide Presentation**
- **Media File:** [Visual Rhetoric Slide Presentation](#)
- This resource is enhanced by a PowerPoint file. [Download the free Microsoft PowerPoint Viewer](#)
- Click on the link above in the Media box to download the PowerPoint presentation on visual rhetoric.

Document 11

- [Color Theory Presentation](#)
- **Color Theory Presentation**
- **Media File:** [Color Theory Presentation](#)
- This resource is enhanced by a PowerPoint file. [Download the free Microsoft PowerPoint Viewer](#)
- This presentation is designed to introduce your students to color theory, which will help them make color choices that are more than appeals to aesthetics. The nineteen slides presented here are designed to aid the facilitator in an interactive presentation of color theory. This presentation may be supplemented with other OWL resources on visual literacy, visual rhetoric, and design.

Document 12

For a PowerPoint Presentation:

- [Designing an Effective PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Designing an Effective PowerPoint Presentation: Quick Guide

Media File: [Designing an Effective PowerPoint Presentation: Quick Guide](#)

This resource is enhanced by a PowerPoint file. [Download the free Microsoft PowerPoint Viewer](#)

This presentation is designed to quickly introduce you into the world of PowerPoint creation. It covers concepts of visual rhetoric, design, and good presentation skills

https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/ppt/20071016123141_686.ppt

- [Using Fonts with Purpose](#)

Using Fonts with Purpose

Summary:

This handout addresses how to make appropriate font choices to add additional meaning and emphasis to print documents and web pages

Contributors: Mark Pepper, Nick Hurm, Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2011-05-03 04:40:39

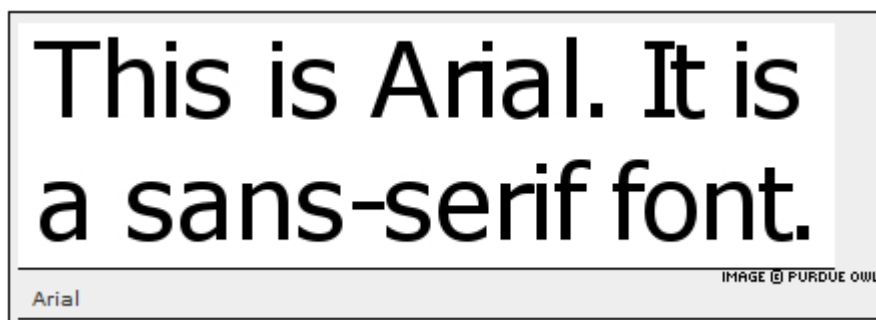
Does Type Font Matter?

It is easy to think that type font doesn't matter. We read text all the time and have become very accustomed to focusing on the content or message of the words themselves and not what the words look like visually. In reality, the visual appearance of words themselves can (and should) have just as much effect on how a document is received as the content itself. Fonts can create mood and atmosphere. Fonts can give visual clues about the order a document should be read in and which parts are more important than others. Fonts can even be used to control how long it takes someone to read a document.

The professional printing industry has recognized this fact for a long time. Since the 1500s, they have used text called a "Lorem Ipsum" to demonstrate what a font will look like without having the reader become distracted by the meaning of the text itself. Although the term resembles ancient Latin, it is not actually intended to have meaning.



Above is a font that is probably quite familiar to you - Times New Roman. Especially in academic circles, Times New Roman is so popular that you almost have to use a Lorem Ipsum to actually see the curves and spacing characteristics of the font itself.



Here is another popular font called Arial. Looking at the Times New Roman and Arial fonts together it's possible to see some subtle differences. Perhaps the choice to use Times versus Arial won't make the most drastic of differences; however, there are so many

different fonts to choose from that the point becomes much clearer once we move beyond more traditional choices.



Above is a lesser known font called Chalkboard. This font is so different that it shouldn't be hard to realize that a page full of text in Chalkboard would look and feel very different from the more traditional Times or Arial.

Understanding how type fonts work involves learning some new terminology and thinking about the cultural codes behind words themselves. However, once you do so, font choice becomes another highly effective way to fuse your documents with additional meaning and rhetorical effectiveness.

For a Report:

- [Handbook on Report Formats](#)

Handbook on Report Formats

Summary:

This resource is an updated version of Muriel Harris's handbook *Report Formats: a Self-instruction Module on Writing Skills for Engineers*, written in 1981. The primary resources for the editing process were Paul Anderson's *Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach* (6th ed.) and the existing OWL PowerPoint presentation, HATS: A Design Procedure for Routine Business Documents.

Contributors: Elizabeth Cember, Alisha Heavilon, Mike Seip, Lei Shi, and Allen Brizee
Last Edited: 2013-03-11 10:28:48

Report Formats

An overview of the how, what, and why of organizing different types of reports

How do you select a format and use it?

- Purposes and types of report formats
- Parts of a report
- Specific advice for writing reports

What is format?

- A plan of organization
- A means of structuring material
- A framework for arranging information

Why should you use a format?

- To present your report as clearly and as concisely as possible to one reader or to a variety of audiences
- To signal the type of information being presented
- To enhance the presentation

Your readers

Before you write a report, you must consider your readers. How you format your report will depend on your readers' goals and needs. Ask yourself the following.

- Who are my readers? Remember there may be more readers than you expect. For example, a feasibility report for your boss may be given to someone higher up in the company and a research report may be used by another researcher years later.
- Why do they need this report?
- What information do they need to get from this report?

General report format guidelines

When you write a report, you will want to make it easy to read and understand. Here are some guidelines to apply to any report you write.

- **Use lists:** Whenever you can, help your reader by using lists. Give your lists visual emphasis by bullets.
- **Use headings and subheadings:** Use headings and subheadings to guide your reader through the organization of the report and list them in the table of contents. Each section should have a clear topic statement to let the reader know what will be included in the section.
- **Use clear typefaces, such as Times New Roman or Arial:** Avoid using more than one typeface in a document. Bold section headings for emphasis.
- **Use white space to enhance your information:** Dense blocks of text are difficult to read and will make it more difficult for your readers to find the information they need. For further information on this topic, see the OWL resource on document design, HATS.

Other guidelines for writing reports

- **Write the body of your report first—before you write the abstract:** Most report writers prefer to save the mechanical elements, such as the title page and the table of contents, for the last step.
- **Maintain consistent structure:** Once you determine the structure you will use, keep using it consistently throughout the report. This will make it easier for your readers to understand your report.
- **Choose carefully the voice, mood, and tense:** These depend on the rhetorical situation. Consider the expectations of your readers and the needs of your readers. For lab reports and long formal reports, most companies and most teachers prefer that you use the third person passive: "A test was run... NOT "I ran the test..."

Past tense is used for explaining procedures, and present tense is used for generalizations and for stating what the results show.

For memos and letters, most companies prefer the first person active: "I have reviewed the program..." NOT "The program has been reviewed..."

Check out [the Purdue YouTube Channel](#) for vidcasts on writing engineering reports

- [Writing Engineering Reports](#)

Writing Engineering Reports

Media File: [Writing Engineering Reports](#)

This resource is enhanced by a PowerPoint file. [Download the free Microsoft PowerPoint Viewer](#)

This PowerPoint slide presentation covers major aspects of writing reports in Engineering. Click on the link above in the Media box to download the slides.

The presentation includes information about:

- Report purpose and planning
- Report format and organization
- Headings and language
- Visual design
- Source documentation
- Finishing touches

Check out [the Purdue YouTube Channel](#) for vidcasts on writing engineering reports.

For a Résumé:

- [Résumés](#)

Introduction to and Expectations for Résumés

Media File: [Introduction to and Expectations for Résumés](#)

This resource is enhanced by an Acrobat PDF file. [Download the free Acrobat Reader](#)

What is a résumé?

A résumé is a brief document that summarizes your education, employment history, and experiences that are relevant to your qualifications for a particular job for which you are applying. The purpose of a résumé (along with your cover letter) is to get an interview. Research has shown that it takes an average of ten (10) interviews to receive one (1) job offer, so your résumé needs to be persuasive and perfect. Given this, your résumé must be [user-centered and persuasive](#).

What should it look like?

A general résumé should be a brief summary of your experience, so it should be as concise as possible—no shorter than one full page and no more than three pages (some specific kinds of résumés can be longer). Résumés differ from letters and papers, and they are written in a concise style using bullet lists rather than long sentences and paragraphs. A résumé is designed to be skimmed quickly. You should look at as many résumé examples as possible before writing your own. You can check our samples to see several different formats.

Though you may maintain a general résumé, you should tailor your résumés to fit the needs and expectations of each company and job position. To help tailor your résumé, collect as much information as possible on the organization and its mission/goals. Then collect information on the people who may read your résumé: human resources, decision makers, potential boss, etc. Finally, collect information on the job position and its requirements. When you know about the company, the audience, and the position, you can match your training and experience to their needs and expectations. Please see the Audience Analysis page for details on collecting information on readers.

What should it include?

There are several sections that almost every résumé must have, including objective, education, work experience, and contact information.

Objective

The objective should be short and concise, but it must also be user-centered. User-centered objectives are tailored to the specific organization and position. User-centered objectives state the organization's name and the specific position title, and they briefly outline *how the applicant will help the organization* achieve its goals. An example:

Objective: Help ABC Aerospace achieve its mission of designing tomorrow's technology today by joining the Navigation Software Development Team as a programmer.

Creating a user-centered objective is important because you don't want to sound like you're using the organization selfishly to further your own career. An example:

Objective: Expand my skills in programming in the software development field

Notice how the second objective does not mention the specific organization or job, and it does not discuss how the applicant plans to help the company.

Education

In the education section, state the highest degree you have earned and provide the following details.

- Institution where the degree was granted
- Date of graduation
- Level of degree (B.A., M.A., etc.) and field (Electrical Engineering), any minors(English), and your GPA. You are not required to state your GPA, but potential employers may assume you left it off because it was low. However, if your GPA is lower than a 3.0, consider omitting it.

Work Experience

The section on work experience is usually broken down by company or position. For each, provide the following.

- Name and address of the organization
- Dates of employment
- Position title
- Responsibilities

You may also want to include skills learned if the job has little or nothing to do with the position for which you are applying. Try to connect your experience with your current job interest.

Contact Information

The contact information section is where you detail how potential employers can get in touch with you. Make sure all information is accurate and current. You should, at minimum, include your name, address, and phone number. Many people also include cell phone numbers, email addresses, and Web pages. It is in your best interest to make sure your potential employers can contact you.

Please see the *Résumé* Section pages for more specific information about each of these sections.

Optional Sections

In addition to the basic sections, you may also want to include other optional sections to provide a more accurate idea of your skills, achievements, education, etc. These can include the following:

- Computer skills
- Honors and awards
- Languages
- Certifications
- Volunteer experience
- Hobbies and interests
- Foreign travel
- Professional memberships
- Community service, etc.

If you believe there is information about you an employer needs to make an informed decision (and you cannot include it in a cover letter), you may create a section on your résumé to showcase that information. Although the résumé is a highly formatted document, it should reflect what you think will convince your potential employer to grant you an interview.

What are the expectations for résumé?

Readers have expectations about how a résumé should look. For instance, your name typically appears at the top of the résumé and is usually the largest item. In addition, headers usually categorize the various sections of the text. Also, readers expect the information in your résumé to be accurate and correct. Finally, your résumé should be free of grammatical and spelling errors. Know that your résumé should be easy to read quickly and contain all necessary and pertinent information. The persuasive quality of your résumé depends on its usability.

Job seekers at Purdue University may find value in the Purdue career Wiki [here](#).

Go to the [OWL homepage](#) and select Professional, Technical, and Job Search Writing to find other cover letter and résumé resources.

For more information about how to develop a résumé, visit these OWL resources:

https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20061128102341_564.pdf

When to Use Two Pages or More

Summary:

You have probably heard the saying, "Keep your résumé to a page." Although this is true for most cases, many employers are accepting longer résumés...in certain instances. Use this resource to gain more understanding about what constitutes the page length of a résumé.

Contributors: Angie Olson, Allen Brizee, and Katy Schmaling

Last Edited: 2013-03-12 08:59:04

The following online resources were consulted for information:

- Hansen, Katharine, "The Scoop on Résumé Length: How Many Pages Should Your Résumé Be?" *Quintessential Careers*, 25 Oct. 2005.
- Isaacs, Kim "How to Decide on Résumé Length," *Résumé Center*. 2006.
- *Monster.com*. 25 Oct. 2005.

Deciding résumé length

As the job market becomes ever more competitive, you may need to use multiple pages to persuade a potential employer to grant you an interview. For résumés, limiting your document to one page is a good approach for new college graduates and high school students. Some employers may specifically ask for a one-page résumé. However, do not shy away from adding that extra page of accomplishments—as long as it is relevant and persuasive.

The following sections will give you more advice about when to use résumés of different lengths and will suggest some ways to create a memorable second or third page. Remember, though, that the length of your résumé depends on the rhetorical situation and your audiences' needs.

When to use one-page résumés

1. New college graduates and other entry-level job seekers tend to need a one-page résumé for the following reasons.

- The applicant does not have enough relevant experience to fill more than one page
- The situation requires the résumé to focus on coursework and/or other leadership activities that connect you to the job you are seeking
- The résumé must meet a job fairs' expectations
- The résumé must meet a potential employer's expectations.

2. If you have less than ten years of experience, you may need to focus on one/two jobs, which may shorten your résumé to one page.

- Focus on skills you have obtained
- Do not record every single action of that job to take up space; emphasize the relevant duties

3. If you are pursuing a radical career change, much of your experience may not be relevant to the new job.

- Focus on the relevant skills you have obtained
- Do not stretch your information to cover more than one page if you cannot relate it to your current goal in some way

When to use two-page résumés

1. Some new college graduates and other entry-level job seekers do have the experience to qualify for a two-page résumé.

- Some employers require a second, separate page for references
- The length of the document depends on relevant jobs, internships, extracurricular involvement, and leadership
- Do not make your font smaller than 10 or your margins less than 1 inch. If you must do this to fit a one-page résumé, consider the two-page format
- Remember that some recruiters at job fairs will accept a two-page résumé, but you should bring a one-page version to be safe
- Always ask a company if they accept two-page résumés before sending one

2. Consider a two-page résumé if you are above entry-level positions, but below the executive level.

- You should include the various jobs/duties you have held

3. If you are seeking a job that requires technical/engineering/scientific skills, you may need a second page.

- You should list/prove your technical/scientific knowledge and/or experience

When to use three- or more page résumés

1. If you are a senior-level manager/executive, your résumé may require three or more pages.

- You should include a long record of leadership accomplishments

- You may be required to give very specific details of your past duties because you will be given more responsibility at the job you are seeking
- You should possibly include examples of your vision, flexibility, ethics, integrity, etc.

2. If you are seeking a job in the academic or scientific field, you will likely be required to provide a curricula vita (a long résumé with different information). In addition to listing your education, you should include the following:

- Publications, presentations, licenses, etc.
- Teaching and/or research experience

Tips on making a second or third page

Before you make your résumé longer, you should first ask employers if they even accept two-page résumés. If they do, then you should plan the extra pages. For instance, you may want to focus an extra page on key leadership skills or projects. You could even title that page to reflect its focus. Then, you could list and describe projects you led in classes, organizations, sororities/fraternities, etc.

You may find that the extra pages work best as supplemental sheets. Such sheets could list presentations, awards, technical skills, etc. If you use this option, you could pick and choose which sheets to send to what employer. For example, you may send a detailed list of your technical skills to a computer company, but you would send a list of your research awards and presentations to a research firm.

When you include extra pages, you must consider the effect a longer résumé will have on your reader. For instance, you will always need to have the attention-getting information on the first page. Some employers may skip over other pages.

Coherence is also important for someone to understand your skills. In this regard, avoid splitting the details of a specific job onto another page. However, you could have one job detailed at the bottom of page one, and another at the top of page two. Another way to increase coherency is to number the résumé pages and include header/footers, such as "Jodi Forrester's Accomplishments Continued..." In addition, consider adding a summary of your skills/high points to the beginning of the résumé. Such a summary would allow readers to see your main qualifications at a glance...and then read the rest of your résumé to find specific details.

Extra pages can:

- Focus on leadership skills/projects
- Work as supplemental sheets to list certain points that specific audiences would want to know.

Extra pages must:

- Be coherent
- Be organized
- Not make your reader lose interest

What is a Scannable Résumé?

Media File: [What is a Scannable Résumé?](#)

This resource is enhanced by an Acrobat PDF file. [Download the free Acrobat Reader](#)

A scannable résumé can be viewed by a computer using the latest document imaging technology (known as optical character recognition, or OCR), allowing employers to store résumés in databases and search through many applicants electronically. As a personal summary of your professional history and qualifications, a scannable résumé is the same as a traditional résumé. Scannable résumés include information about your goals, education, work experience, activities, honors, and any special skills you might have. If you already have a traditional résumé, you can create a scannable by modifying the traditional one for scanning.

The two most important elements of a scannable résumé are keywords and formatting.

Keywords

Just below your name, create a Keyword section (like the other sections in your résumé: Education, Experience, etc.). List discipline-unique words and phrases potential employers can search for in the résumé database. For example, keywords for a business professional might include the following.

- Leadership skills
- Ethics
- Finance
- Teamwork
- Marketing
- Total quality management

Keywords for a computer programmer would include software applications and programming languages s/he has used.

- C++
- Java
- Flash
- CSS
- XHTML

Formatting

Keep in mind that the first reader of your scannable résumé will be a computer, not a human. A fancy format pleasing to the human eye may confuse OCR scanners. Using simple format and font/typestyle decreases the likelihood that scanners will misread your résumé.

For example, use one common font (such as Times New Roman) throughout your résumé. Rather than increasing the size of the font to indicate section headings, use spacing to break up your Keyword, Education, Experience sections. Avoid using bullets, tables, and visuals in scannable résumé. Instead, use dashes, left-justified text, and simple spacing to format your document.

Human resources personnel will review your résumé only after the computer retrieves it from keyword searches. Including nouns and noun phrases that are likely to be used in a database search and using simple formatting will help your résumé be chosen from the multitudes of others. To view a comparison between a traditional résumé and a scannable résumé in PDF format, visit the media links above.

https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/200511300133_547.pdf

- [Résumé Design](#)

Résumé Design

Summary:

This handout provides information on visual résumé design.

Contributors: Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2013-03-11 12:45:48

This handout offers advice for making informed design choices in creating a résumé. We also have a sample résumé that uses these design principles available in the media section above.

Why is the design of my resume so important?

Employers will usually take, at most, only thirty-five seconds to look at this one-page representation of yourself before deciding whether to keep or discard it. To ensure that you will make it past that initial screening, you should design your résumé in such a way that employers can read the document easily and process information quickly. One way to do this is to conform to the conventional format of a résumé, since employers know how

resumes work and where to locate certain information. In addition, you should keep certain design principles in mind that will increase your chances of getting your résumé into the "keep" pile. Designing your résumé can be a challenge and requires you to take a closer look at how readers read. Here are some tips to help you make your résumé a winning experience.

The quadrant test

Readers typically read from left to right and from top to bottom when information is "balanced" (about an equal amount of text and white space) on the page. Being able to anticipate the reader's response to a résumé in this way will allow you to manipulate information according to the quadrant test. First, divide your résumé into four quadrants, as seen in the example below.



Each one of your quadrants should have an equal amount of text and white space (empty space where there is no text). When your page is balanced, the reader will typically read anything in quadrant 1 first. So, you should put your most important information—anything you want the employer to see first—in this quadrant.

Using columns to lay out your résumé

One way to create a balanced page is by using columns to format your text. However, keep in mind that since employers spend so little time reading a résumé, you want them to read through it with few stops. The reader's eye will stop when it reaches the end of each column. Although you might want to use columns to create a balanced page, you wouldn't want your reader to have to make too many stops and miss important information. Therefore, you should use no more than three columns on your résumé. Remember that the first place your reader looks at will be located in quadrants 1 and 2, so the most important information should go here. Also keep in mind that when indenting information you might create extra columns, so be aware of your column count.

Here is an example of a résumé section with three distinct columns. The first example has the columns marked in red so that you can see their placement.

Purdue University B.A Professional Writing	W. Lafayette, IN	Graduation: 12/99
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Purdue University W. Lafayette, IN Graduation:
B.A Professional Writing 12/99

To create columns of text, you can use the table function in Microsoft Word to create vertical and horizontal placements for your information.

Serif and sans-serif fonts

By manipulating the fonts used in your résumé, you can easily create a hierarchy of information. In general, fonts are divided into two categories: serif and sans-serif. **Serifs** are the short stems on the ends of the strokes of a letter, as in T of the Times New Roman font. **Sans-serif** fonts are fonts without stems—*sans* means without. Here are some examples of the two kinds of fonts.



How you use these two font types depends upon how you want your reader to read certain sections of your résumé. American audiences are used to reading serif fonts, so these fonts tend to keep the eye reading along the text. sans-serif fonts, on the other hand, make the eye stop. Therefore, sans-serif fonts are typically used for headings and titles, allowing the reader to quickly locate information, while serif fonts are used for descriptions.

The key to using fonts in your résumé is to be consistent. For example, if you decide to use a sans-serif font for a main heading, do so for all your headings, and use the same sans-serif font each time. Generally, you should use no more than two fonts in your résumé. Remember that you want to keep the reader reading; you do not want to create too many "tricks" for the reader's eye.

Other types of emphasis

By using more than one font type in a way that is consistent throughout your résumé (using, for example, a sans serif font for all headings, and a serif font for all text), you create emphasis. Another way to create emphasis is by using **bold**, CAPITALIZATION, *italics*, and underlining. Your choice for emphasis depends upon your personal taste. However, you should not mix methods, nor overuse them. You would not, for example, want to CAPITALIZE, ITALICIZE, AND UNDERLINE pieces of text; doing so would only make the text less visually pleasing for the reader. In addition, overusing these tools makes the

reader ignore the items you wish to emphasize, thus limiting effectiveness. So, be sure to carefully choose which information should be emphasized.

The 20-second Test

How do you know when you have successfully created an easily read résumé that allows employers to process information quickly? Try having someone perform the 20-second test on your résumé. Simply time your reader for twenty seconds as he or she reads your résumé. What all did he or she learn about you? If your reader noticed within twenty seconds what you want employers to learn about you, then most likely you have created an effective résumé. If not, try moving important information to the first quadrant, checking that you have used sans serif and serif fonts consistently, and limiting the tools for emphasis you use in your document.

- [Résumé Workshop](#)

For a Visual Analysis Paper:

- [Visual Rhetoric](#)
- [Visual Rhetoric: Analyzing Visual Documents](#)

For a White Paper:

- [Writing a White Paper](#)

White Paper: Purpose and Audience

Summary:

A white paper is a certain type of report that is distinctive in terms of purpose, audience, and organization. This resource will explain these issues and provide some other tips to enhance white paper content.

Contributors: Sachiko Sakamuro, Karl Stolley, Charlotte Hyde

Last Edited: 2015-01-15 03:49:23

What is a White Paper?

Originally, the term white paper was used as shorthand to refer to an official government report, indicating that the document is authoritative and informative in nature. Writers typically use this genre when they argue a specific position or propose a solution to a problem, addressing the audience outside of their organization. Today, white papers have

become popular marketing tools for corporations especially on the Internet since many potential customers search for information on the Web. Corporations use white papers to sell information or new products as solutions that would serve their customers' needs.

The Purpose of a White Paper

Typically, the purpose of a white paper is to advocate that a certain position is the best way to go or that a certain solution is best for a particular problem. When it is used for commercial purposes, it could influence the decision-making processes of current and prospective customers.

What Kind of Problems Do Readers Want to Solve?

The audience for a white paper can be the general public or multiple companies that seek solutions to their problems or needs. Typically, you will not know your audience personally, unlike when you write a recommendation report for your client. And yet, in order to persuade your audience, you need to focus on their needs. If you can address the problems that your readers want to solve, they will read your white paper for a solution. Otherwise, your white paper may not be read. It is important to emphasize your readers' interests rather than your interests, as shown in the example below:

Not: This white paper introduces ABC company's new freight service.

Instead: This white paper discusses how to choose a freight service company that best fits your needs.

- [Prioritizing Your Concerns for Effective Business Writing](#)

Higher Order Concerns: Is Your Document Sound?

Summary:

When you are revising your résumé or other business messages, there are priorities of concerns in choosing what to look for and work on. This handout provides tips for reviewing the content and quality of your business documents.

Contributors: Sachiko Sakamuro, H. Allen Brizee and Katy A. Schmaling, Dana Lynn Driscoll

Last Edited: 2013-03-01 08:35:06

In revising your business documents, begin with the Higher Order Concerns (HOCs). The HOCs are aspects of the writing most responsible for the content of the document. This

section focuses on the following four main HOCs: Focus and Purpose; Audience; Organization and Document Design; Development.

Focus and purpose

Business writing is action-oriented, rhetorical, and user-centered. It aims to effect positive change, through both persuasive and informative strategies. It is essential that you have a clear understanding of the purpose of your document.

- What is your purpose in writing the document?
- What purpose should the document serve for your reader?
- Is your main point stated early in the document?
- What do you want your reader to do when s/he finishes reading the document?

Audience

For professional communication writing, it is very important to keep your audience in mind. Considering your audience will help you make a better argument.

- Have you done enough research about your audience and the organization to which they belong?
- Is your document tailored to the needs of a specific audience (user-centered)?
- Are your tone and language appropriate for your audience?
- Will you have persuaded your reader by the end of the document?

Also see the [Audience Analysis](#) handout.

Organization and document design

Organization

Effective organization is crucial to the success of a business message. User-centered, logical presentation of your ideas makes the document professional. In addition, you need to organize your document so that your arguments are clear to the reader. Finally, your document's design (visual appearance) impacts the persuasiveness of the communication.

- Does your document begin by explaining your point and forecasting the communication's main ideas?
 - Your introduction should answer these three questions from the perspective of the reader:
 2. What is this?
 3. Why am I getting it?
 4. What do you want me to do?
- Does your communication proceed in a logical and organized way, moving from general to specific information?

- Is information arranged in order of importance to your audience?
- Is similar information kept together?
- Is each section organized around only one main idea?
- Do key sentences begin each paragraph?

Ask others to read your document and explain your most important ideas.

Document Design

A clean, correct, and professional-looking document portrays you as professional. Effective document design increases the usability and persuasiveness of your communication and highlights important information, which helps busy readers.

- Does your document conform to the genre expectations of the document you are composing? (résumé, cover letter, memo, report, etc.)
- Can your readers find information where s/he expects to see it?
- Are key points emphasized by using boldface, underlining, or italics?
- Do you have clear and specific headings?
- Is there any place where you can improve the readability of the document by using indentation or bullets?

Please see the [HATS PowerPoint Presentation](#) for details on document design.

Development

Anticipate that your audience will read your document carefully, questioning its validity and claims. Your document should be informative and persuasive, and yet concise enough not to waste your readers' time.

- Do you provide enough background information for the message?
- Have you included specific examples, numbers, dates, names and percentages to support your claims?
- Do you have graphics (charts, graphs, diagrams, and tables) where appropriate?
- Have you eliminated unnecessary and/or obvious information to your audience?

Ask someone to read the document and comment if something is unclear and needs more description, explanation, or support.

Anticipate, also, that your audience may consist of many different readers. Each of these readers will have different needs. Your communication should be designed in a modular fashion, so that different readers can find information they need quickly and easily.

In *Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach*, Paul V. Anderson explains modular communication in this way:

"Modular designs enable you to create a single communication that addresses different readers who have different questions. Dividing your text into modules provides access to a diversity of readers allowing each reader to go directly to the section or sections that are most relevant to him or her" (Companion Site). Communications with complex audiences should contain sections for decisions makers (brief summaries or abstracts) and sections for advisers (the body of the report, technical or budgetary details) (107).

To Revise, Proofread, and Polish Your Writing:

- [Proofreading Your Writing](#)

Where Do I Begin?

Summary:

Proofreading is primarily about searching your writing for errors, both grammatical and typographical, before submitting your paper for an audience (a teacher, a publisher, etc.). Use this resource to help you find and fix common errors.

Contributors: Jaclyn M. Wells, Morgan Sousa, Mia Martini, Allen Brizee, Ashley Velázquez, Maryam Ghafoor

Last Edited: 2018-01-24 02:32:53

Proofreading can be a difficult process, especially when you're not sure where to start or what this process entails. Think of proofreading as a process of looking for any inconsistencies and grammatical errors as well as style and spelling issues. Below are a few general strategies that can help you get started.

1. Before You Proofread
2. When You Proofread
3. After You Are Done

General Strategies Before You Proofread

- **Make sure that you leave plenty of time** after you have finished your paper to walk away for a day or two, a week, or even 20 minutes. This will allow you to approach proofreading with fresh eyes.
- **Print out a hard copy.** Reading from a computer screen is not the most effective way to proofread. Having a hardcopy of your paper and a pen will help you.
- **Have a list of what to look for.** This will help you manage your time and not feel overwhelmed by proofreading. You can get this list from previous assignments where your instructor(s) noted common errors you make.

General Strategies While You Proofread

- **Don't rush.** Many mistakes in writing occur because we rush. Read slowly and carefully to give your eyes enough time to spot errors.
- **Read aloud.** Reading aloud helps you to notice run-on sentences, awkward transitions, and other grammatical and organization issues that you may not notice when reading silently. There are three ways you can read aloud:
 1. Read aloud to yourself. Reading a paper aloud encourages you to read each word and can help you notice small mistakes.
 2. Read aloud to a friend and have the friend give you oral feedback.
 3. Have a friend read your paper aloud while you don't read along.
- **Use the *search in document* function of the computer** to look for common errors from your list.
- **Read from the end.** Read individual sentences one at a time starting from the end of the paper rather than the beginning. This forces you to pay attention to the sentence itself rather than to the ideas of the paper as a whole.
- **Role-play.** While reading, put yourself in your audience's shoes. Playing the role of the reader encourages you to see the paper as your audience might.

When You Are Done

- Have a friend look at your paper after you have made all the corrections you identified. A new reader will be able to help you catch mistakes that you might have overlooked.
- Make an appointment with a Writing Lab tutor if you have any further questions or want someone to teach you more about proofreading.
- Ask your teacher to look at the areas you usually have trouble with to see if you have made any progress.

[Starting the Writing Process](#)

Tips for how to start a writing assignment.

Invention: Starting the Writing Process

Summary:

Tips for how to start a writing assignment.

Contributors: Stacy Weida, Karl Stolley

Last Edited: 2018-01-31 03:45:19

Writing takes time

Find out when is the assignment due and devise a plan of action. This may seem obvious and irrelevant to the writing process, but it's not. Writing is a process, not merely a product. Even the best professional writers don't just sit down at a computer, write, and call it a day. The quality of your writing will reflect the time and forethought you put into the assignment. Plan ahead for the assignment by doing pre-writing: this will allow you to be more productive and organized when you sit down to write. Also, schedule several blocks of time to devote to your writing; then, you can walk away from it for a while and come back later to make changes and revisions with a fresh mind.

Use the rhetorical elements as a guide to think through your writing

Thinking about your assignment in terms of the rhetorical situation can help guide you in the beginning of the writing process. Topic, audience, genre, style, opportunity, research, the writer, and purpose are just a few elements that make up the rhetorical situation.

Topic and audience are often very intertwined and work to inform each other. Start with a broad view of your topic such as skateboarding, pollution, or the novel *Jane Eyre* and then try to focus or refine your topic into a concise thesis statement by thinking about your audience. Here are some questions you can ask yourself about audience:

- Who is the audience for your writing?
- Do you think your audience is interested in the topic? Why or why not?
- Why should your audience be interested in this topic?
- What does your audience already know about this topic?
- What does your audience need to know about this topic?
- What experiences has your audience had that would influence them on this topic?
- What do you hope the audience will gain from your text?

For example, imagine that your broad topic is dorm food. Who is your audience? You could be writing to current students, prospective students, parents of students, university administrators, or nutrition experts among others. Each of these groups would have different experiences with and interests in the topic of dorm food. While students might be more concerned with the taste of the food or the hours food is available, parents might be more concerned with the price.

You can also think about opportunity as a way to refine or focus your topic by asking yourself what current events make your topic relevant at this moment. For example, you could connect the nutritional value of dorm food to the current debate about the obesity epidemic or you could connect the price value of dorm food to the rising cost of a college education overall.

Keep in mind the purpose of the writing assignment.

Writing can have many different purposes. Here are just a few examples:

- Summarizing: Presenting the main points or essence of another text in a condensed form
- Arguing/Persuading: Expressing a viewpoint on an issue or topic in an effort to convince others that your viewpoint is correct
- Narrating: Telling a story or giving an account of events
- Evaluating: Examining something in order to determine its value or worth based on a set of criteria.
- Analyzing: Breaking a topic down into its component parts in order to examine the relationships between the parts.
- Responding: Writing that is in a direct dialogue with another text.
- Examining/Investigating: Systematically questioning a topic to discover or uncover facts that are not widely known or accepted, in a way that strives to be as neutral and objective as possible.
- Observing: Helping the reader see and understand a person, place, object, image or event that you have directly watched or experienced through detailed sensory descriptions.

You could be observing your dorm cafeteria to see what types of food students are actually eating, you could be evaluating the quality of the food based on freshness and quantity, or you could be narrating a story about how you gained fifteen pounds your first year at college.

You may need to use several of these writing strategies within your paper. For example, you could summarize federal nutrition guidelines, evaluate whether the food being served at the dorm fits those guidelines, and then argue that changes should be made in the menus to better fit those guidelines.

Pre-writing strategies

Once you have thesis statement just start writing! Don't feel constrained by format issues. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, or writing in complete sentences. Brainstorm and write down everything you can think of that might relate to the thesis and then reread and evaluate the ideas you generated. It's easier to cut out bad ideas than to only think of good ones. Once you have a handful of useful ways to approach the thesis you can use a basic outline structure to begin to think about organization. Remember to be flexible; this is just a way to get you writing. If better ideas occur to you as you're writing, don't be afraid to refine your original ideas.

Prewriting (Invention)

This section explains the prewriting (invention) stage of the composing process. It includes processes, strategies, and questions to help you begin to write.

Introduction to Prewriting (Invention)

Summary:

This section explains the prewriting (invention) stage of the composing process. It includes processes, strategies, and questions to help you begin to write.

Contributors: Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2011-06-08 02:40:36

When you sit down to write...

- Does your mind turn blank?
- Are you sure you have nothing to say?

If so, you're not alone. Many writers experience this at some time or another, but some people have strategies or techniques to get them started. When you are planning to write something, try some of the following suggestions.

You can try the textbook formula:

1. State your thesis.
2. Write an outline.
3. Write the first draft.
4. Revise and polish.

. . . but that often doesn't work.

Instead, you can try one or more of these strategies:

Ask yourself what your purpose is for writing about the subject.

There are many "correct" things to write about for any subject, but you need to narrow down your choices. For example, your topic might be "dorm food." At this point, you and your potential reader are asking the same question, "So what?" Why should you write about this, and why should anyone read it?

Do you want the reader to pity you because of the intolerable food you have to eat there?

Do you want to analyze large-scale institutional cooking?

Do you want to compare Purdue's dorm food to that served at Indiana University?

Ask yourself how you are going to achieve this purpose.

How, for example, would you achieve your purpose if you wanted to describe some movie as the best you've ever seen? Would you define for yourself a specific means of doing so? Would your comments on the movie go beyond merely telling the reader that you really liked it?

Start the ideas flowing

Brainstorm. Gather as many good and bad ideas, suggestions, examples, sentences, false starts, etc. as you can. Perhaps some friends can join in. Jot down everything that comes to mind, including material you are sure you will throw out. Be ready to keep adding to the list at odd moments as ideas continue to come to mind.

Talk to your audience, or pretend that you are being interviewed by someone — or by several people, if possible (to give yourself the opportunity of considering a subject from several different points of view). What questions would the other person ask? You might also try to teach the subject to a group or class.

See if you can find a fresh analogy that opens up a new set of ideas. Build your analogy by using the word like. For example, if you are writing about violence on television, is that violence like clowns fighting in a carnival act (that is, we know that no one is really getting hurt)?

Take a rest and let it all percolate.

Summarize your whole idea.

Tell it to someone in three or four sentences.

Diagram your major points somehow.

Make a tree, outline, or whatever helps you to see a schematic representation of what you have. You may discover the need for more material in some places. Write a first draft.

Then, if possible, put it away. Later, read it aloud or to yourself as if you were someone else. Watch especially for the need to clarify or add more information.

You may find yourself jumping back and forth among these various strategies.

You may find that one works better than another. You may find yourself trying several strategies at once. If so, then you are probably doing something right.

[Writer's Block](#)

Help in overcoming writer's block and a short series of exercises to get you writing.

Symptoms and Cures for Writer's Block

Summary:

Help in overcoming writer's block and a short series of exercises to get you writing.

Contributors: Sean M. Conrey, Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2011-07-06 10:03:26

Because writers have various ways of writing, a variety of things can cause a writer to experience anxiety, and sometimes this anxiety leads to writer's block. Often a solution can be found by speaking with your instructor (if you are in school), or a writing tutor. There are some common causes of writer's block, however, and when you are blocked, consider these causes and try the strategies that sound most promising:

Symptom

You have attempted to begin a paper without doing any preliminary work such as brainstorming or outlining...

Possible Cures

- Use [invention strategies](#) suggested by a tutor or teacher
- Write down all the primary ideas you'd like to express and then fill in each with the smaller ideas that make up each primary idea. This can easily be converted into an [outline](#)

Symptom

You have chosen or been assigned a topic which bores you....

Possible Cures

- Choose a particular aspect of the topic you are interested in (if the writing situation will allow it...i.e. if the goal of your writing can be adjusted and is not given to you specifically, or if the teacher or project coordinator will allow it)
- Talk to a tutor about how you can personalize a topic to make it more interesting

Symptom

You don't want to spend time writing or don't understand the assignment...

Possible Cures

- Resign yourself to the fact that you have to write
- Find out what is expected of you (consult a teacher, textbook, student, tutor, or project coordinator)
- Look at some of the strategies for writing anxiety listed below

Symptom

You are anxious about writing the paper...

Possible Cures

- Focus your energy by rehearsing the task in your head.
- Consciously stop the non-productive comments running through your head by replacing them with productive ones.
- If you have some "rituals" for writing success (chewing gum, listening to jazz etc.), use them.

Symptom

You are so stressed out you can't seem to put a word on the page...

Possible Cures

- Stretch! If you can't stand up, stretch as many muscle groups as possible while staying seated.
- Try tensing and releasing various muscle groups. Starting from your toes, tense up for perhaps five to ten seconds and then let go. Relax and then go on to another muscle group.
- Breathe deeply. Close your eyes; then, fill your chest cavity slowly by taking four or five short deep breaths. Hold each breath until it hurts, and then let it out slowly.
- Use a calming word or mental image to focus on while relaxing. If you choose a word, be careful not to use an imperative. Don't command yourself to "Calm down!" or "Relax!"

Symptom

You're self-conscious about your writing, you may have trouble getting started. So, if you're preoccupied with the idea that you have to write about a subject and feel you probably won't express yourself well...

Possible Cures

- Talk over the subject with a friend or tutor.
- assure yourself that the first draft doesn't have to be a work of genius, it is something to work with.
- Force yourself to write down something, however poorly worded, that approximates your thought (you can revise this later) and go on with the next idea.
- Break the task up into steps. Meet the general purpose first, and then flesh out the more specific aspects later.
- Try one of the strategies on the next page of this resource.

[Stasis Theory](#)

This resource provides an overview of stasis theory and what you can do with it to help you conduct research, compose documents, and work in teams.

Stasis Theory

Summary:

This resource provides an overview of stasis theory and what you can do with it to help you conduct research, compose documents, and work in teams.

Contributors: Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2013-03-01 10:22:27

Introduction

Stasis theory is a four-question, pre-writing (invention) process developed in ancient Greece by Aristotle and Hermagoras. Later, the stases were refined by Roman rhetoricians, such as Cicero, Quintilian, and Hermogenes. Working through the four stasis questions encourages knowledge building that is important for research, writing, and for working in teams. Stasis theory helps writers conduct critical analyses of the issues they are investigating.

Specifically, stasis theory asks writers to investigate and try to determine:

- The facts (conjecture)
- The meaning or nature of the issue (definition)
- The seriousness of the issue (quality)
- The plan of action (policy).

The four basic stasis categories may be broken down into a number of questions and subcategories to help researchers, writers, and people working together in teams to build information and compose communication. The stases also help people to agree on conclusions, and they help identify where people do not agree. Here are the stases and some questions you can ask to help you conduct research, write, and work toward solving problems:

Fact

- Did something happen?
- What are the facts?
- Is there a problem/issue?
- How did it begin and what are its causes?
- What changed to create the problem/issue?
- Can it be changed?

It may also be useful to ask critical questions of your own research and conclusions:

- Where did we obtain our data and are these sources reliable?
- How do we know they're reliable?

Definition

- What is the nature of the problem/issue?
- What exactly is the problem/issue?
- What kind of a problem/issue is it?
- To what larger class of things or events does it belong?
- What are its parts, and how are they related?

It may also be useful to ask critical questions of your own research and conclusions:

- Who/what is influencing our definition of this problem/issue?
- How/why are these sources/beliefs influencing our definition?

Quality

- Is it a good thing or a bad thing?
- How serious is the problem/issue?
- Whom might it affect (stakeholders)?
- What happens if we don't do anything?
- What are the costs of solving the problem/issue?

It may also be useful to ask critical questions of your own research and conclusions:

- Who/what is influencing our determination of the seriousness of this problem/issue?

- How/why are these sources/beliefs influencing our determination?

Policy

- Should action be taken?
- Who should be involved in helping to solve the problem/address the issue?
- What should be done about this problem?
- What needs to happen to solve this problem/address this issue?

It may also be useful to ask critical questions of your own research and conclusions:

- Who/what is influencing our determination of what to do about this problem/issue?
- How/why are these sources/beliefs influencing our determination?

Note: Related to stasis theory are the six journalistic questions (1) Who? (2) What? (3) Where? (4) When? (5) Why? (6) How? Lawyers also move through a similar knowledge building process known as IRAC: (1) Issue; (2) Rules; (3) Application; (4) Conclusion.

Achieving Stasis

Achieving stasis means that parties involved in a dialogue about a given issue have reached consensus on (or agreed upon) the information and conclusions in one or more of the stases. In ancient Rome, if legal disputants could not agree with the presented information in one of the stases, the argument would stop (arrest) and plaintiffs would attempt to agree (achieve stasis or find common ground) within the disputed information. For an example of how team members can work toward stasis, refer to the [Stasis Theory for Teamwork](#) page.

It is also important to achieve stasis with the issue you are investigating. Put another way, if you are trying to solve the parking problem on your campus, it will not do anyone any good to suggest that students stop smoking. The solution has nothing to do with (does not achieve stasis with) the issue at hand.

[Creating a Thesis Statement](#)

This resource provides tips for creating a thesis statement and examples of different types of thesis statements.

[Developing an Outline](#)

This resource describes why outlines are useful, what types of outlines exist, suggestions for developing effective outlines, and how outlines can be used as an invention strategy for writing.

Reverse Outlining

This exercise is useful for either difficult texts that you must read, or as a way to revise your work for organization and clarity.

Reverse Outlining: An Exercise for Taking Notes and Revising Your Work

Summary:

This exercise is useful for either difficult texts that you must read, or as a way to revise your work for organization and clarity.

Contributors: Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2010-04-17 05:27:33

Some assignments ask you to read and analyze complex information. In these cases, reverse outlining can help you distill the main ideas into short, clear statements. You may also use reverse outlining to revise your own work. Reverse outlining follows a two-step, repeatable process:

1. In the *left-hand* margin, write down the topic of each paragraph. Try to use as few words as possible.

When reading, these notes should work as quick references for future study or in-class discussion.

When revising your own work, these notes should tell you if each paragraph is focused and clear.

2. In the *right-hand* margin, write down how the paragraph topic advances the overall argument of the text. Again, be brief.

When reading, these notes allow you to follow the logic of the essay, making it easier for you to analyze or discuss later.

When revising your own work, these notes should tell you if each paragraph fits in the overall organization of your paper. You may also notice that paragraphs should be shifted after completing this step.

Be brief, particularly when rereading your own work. If you can't complete each step in 5-10 words, the paragraph may need to be altered. You should be able to summarize the topic and the manner of support quickly; if you can't, revise the paragraph until you can.

This exercise can be expanded into an actual outline by rewriting/typing your notes, but writing in the margin might be sufficient.

Proofreading

Proofreading is primarily about searching your writing for errors, both grammatical and typographical, before submitting your paper for an audience (a teacher, a publisher, etc.). Use this resource to help you find and fix common errors.

Where Do I Begin?

Summary:

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Contributors: Jaclyn M. Wells, Morgan Sousa, Mia Martini, Allen Brizee, Ashley Velázquez, Maryam Ghafoor

Last Edited: 2018-01-24 02:32:53

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- Have a friend look at your paper after you have made all the corrections you identified. A new reader will be able to help you catch mistakes that you might have overlooked.
- Make an appointment with a Writing Lab tutor if you have any further questions or want someone to teach you more about proofreading.
- Ask your teacher to look at the areas you usually have trouble with to see if you have made any progress.