

Writing Tutorial by Cecelia Munzenmaier

Writing Like an Expert

When you wrote your first essays, all you had to do was write like someone who knew the basics:

- Take a stand.
- Prove your point.
- Sum up what to remember.

Covering the Basics

If you were really sophisticated, you took these basic elements of thesis, body, and conclusion a step further. Besides presenting evidence for your opinion, you also presented [evidence against the other side](#).

Now you're expected to do more than develop an argument. You're supposed to write like a graduate student.

Does that mean that most of the words in your paper should have five or six syllables? No, although you will use terms like *andragogy* or *performance improvement* that are part of the vocabulary of your field. Your graduate papers will also follow the same basic structure as those you've already written for your undergraduate work.

What makes graduate papers different? You and your audience are supposed to know the basic information about your topic. A paper proving that Malcolm Knowles believed that adults can direct their own learning isn't worth writing. Your readers already know that, and anyone who's taken an introductory ALOP course should too.

At the graduate level, your paper is expected to contribute something new to what's already been said about a topic. Fortunately, you don't have to go as far as Knowles, who developed a new model of adult learning. To go beyond the basics, you might

- compare Knowles' model of adult learning to a different model
- apply his ideas to a problem at your workplace
- argue for or against Knowles' ideas about self-directed learning
- review what's been written about self-directed learning and evaluate Knowles' contribution to this area
- test Knowles' theory in a research project

Joining the Conversation

Your previous essays might have had only one reader: your teacher. Your purpose might have been to show that you knew how to write a certain type of paper. When you got your grade, that was probably the end of the dialogue.

In graduate school, your paper is part of an ongoing conversation with people who share your interest in the topic. Some of those people are no longer living, but their ideas still influence the conversation.

For example, a Chinese general named Sun Tzu, who wrote *The Art of War* around 500 BCE, is

widely quoted by today's military strategists, diplomats, and management gurus. Anyone writing about strategy would be expected to be familiar with Sun Tzu's ideas. They are already part of the discussion, just as Kirkpatrick's levels of evaluation or Knowles' theory of andragogy are part of the discussion about adult learning.

Making an Original Contribution

What can you contribute to a conversation that started long before you joined it? Perhaps you can add an original insight or a unique perspective. For example, how could Sun Tzu's ideas about strategy help today's workers survive mergers and layoffs? What could women learn from his strategic approach?

If the conversation has been long or intense, you might serve as a moderator. Suppose your topic is Sun Tzu's influence on current thinking about management. You need to summarize the general's key ideas and those of any contemporary gurus you discuss. What's original about that?

Your contribution is your judgment about which concepts and which thinkers are important. For example, in *Sun Tzu and the Art of Business*, Mark McNeilly distills the 13 chapters of the Chinese general's classic text into [six principles](#). The principles are not original, but McNeilly advances the conversation by

- making Sun Tzu's strategies available to more people
- organizing the general's ideas into principles that are easy to understand
- giving examples of how Sun Tzu's strategies can be applied today

Dialoging with Your Sources

One way to develop original insights is to work your way up [Bloom's taxonomy](#). The lowest levels are based on facts. For example, James Macgregor Burns wrote *Leadership* in 1978. What can you do with this fact? One of the higher levels of the taxonomy is evaluation. You might ask: Why is this book important? *Leadership* (1978) is the work that established the field of leadership studies.

Taxonomy Level	Example	Tasks
Knowledge	<i>Procrastination</i> comes from two Latin words meaning "to put forward until tomorrow."	Recall information: Label, identify
Comprehension	Dictionary definitions all include the idea of postponement or delay.	Understand information: Summarize, describe
Application	One way to overcome procrastination is to challenge lies procrastinators tell themselves , such as <i>I have to feel like working to do good work.</i>	Use information to solve problems: Apply, show, calculate, modify
Analysis	Ferrari identifies three types of procrastinators: arousal,	See patterns: Analyze, separate, classify,

	avoiders, and decisional (Marano, 2003).	compare/contrast
Synthesis	Steel (2007) tried to “incorporate... useful elements” of other definitions of procrastination into his own: “to voluntarily delay an intended course of action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay.”	Generalize or use old ideas to create new ones: Combine, integrate, predict, rearrange, generalize
Evaluation	“Procrastination is not a neutral or innocuous form of time management, let alone a helpful or beneficial one (as some people claim).” (Tice & Baumeister, 1997)	Make judgments; assess value; weigh evidence: Assess, rank, recommend, judge

Once you’ve developed your ideas, you have something to add to the dialog. The rules for working with sources are much like those of conversation:

- acknowledge what’s already been said before adding your insights
- express agreement or disagreement
- ask questions to clarify issues
- analyze relationships among different points of view

For example, [Piers Steel \(2007\)](#) reviews other definitions of procrastination before proposing his own. He combines “useful” ideas from previous definitions with his insight that procrastinators put things off despite “expecting to be worse-off for the delay.”

If you read much about procrastination, you’ll soon learn that most researchers consider it a bad thing. They point out that procrastinators suffer stress, are more likely to become ill, and do inferior work. However, [Chu and Choi \(2005\)](#) take issue with the majority view. They believe that in rapidly changing situations, choosing to put things off can be a productive strategy.

When you write from sources, you’ll need to show how each source fits into the conversation. Each idea or quotation needs to be introduced. Afterwards, you need to show how this information supports your ideas.

The easiest way to learn how to integrate sources is to read writers who do it skillfully. [Alison Rossett](#) is a good model. [Ruth Colvin Clark](#) is another. You can also learn techniques such as the [quotation sandwich](#):

Sandwich Layer	Example

Introduction (<i>bread</i>)	Chu and Choi (2005) believe that procrastination can sometimes be a good thing. Tice and Baumeister (1997) reject this idea:
Quotation (<i>filling</i>)	“Procrastination is not a neutral or innocuous form of time management, let alone a helpful or beneficial one (as some people claim).”
Explanation of significance (<i>bread</i>)	In their view, the long-term negative effects of procrastination (stress, sickness, and poor quality work) outweigh any short-term benefits. Their findings suggest that using delay to deal with rapidly changing situations may be effective in the short-term, but those who use it will ultimately pay a high price.

To create an explanation, you can answer one of these questions:

- What do I want readers to understand from this quotation?
- Why does this information matter?
- How might this information be applied in real-life?
- Why is the author right (or wrong)?

Meeting Graduate Standards

When you begin writing, the most important thing is to get your ideas down on paper. Some people think of drafts as “brain dumps.” They focus on getting the ideas in their head onto a page as quickly as possible. Then they go back and revise what they’ve written to be sure it’s complete and easy for a reader to follow.

The Academic Writing Rubric defines the standards by which your paper will be graded. The left-hand column identifies several key performance elements. The other columns explain the quality standards that will be used to evaluate each element. Each quality standard is illustrated by an example.

You can use the rubric at two points during the writing process:

- before you begin
- as you revise your draft

Before you write, you can read over the performance elements and examples to get an idea of the level of writing that’s expected in a graduate paper. Then you will have a mental model of what you want to achieve.

However, the main purpose of the rubric is to help you identify things you need to improve. As you revise, use the criteria to judge your paper from a reader’s perspective. For example, ask yourself, “Does my thesis statement clearly define my paper’s scope and purpose?” If the answer is yes, go on to the next criterion. If your thesis is a sweeping generalization like “Throughout history, leaders have motivated their followers in different ways,” look for ways to narrow it.

Getting Help

Many guides to academic writing are available in print and on the Web. These selected resources will give you more in-depth information about particular topics.

Academic Style

- Characteristics of academic style

“Characteristics of Academic Writing” from the Curtin Business School

This introduction to academic writing has several examples that contrast formal and informal styles.

<http://www.cbs.curtin.edu.au/business/current-students/writing-and-study-skills-support/academic-writing-guide/academic-writing-style>

“Features of Academic Writing” from Andy Gillet’s Using English for Academic Purposes site
The Reporting section explains how to use other people’s words and ideas in your writing.

<http://www.uefap.co.uk/writing>

“Thinking Strategies and Writing Patterns: A Word About Style, Tone, and Voice” If you want your writing to show your expertise, this advice from the University of Maryland University College will help.

<http://www.umuc.edu/ewc/onlineguide/chapter3/chapter3-21.shtml>

- Academic Writing Models

"Specialized Writing Guides" from George Mason University

Disciplines such as psychology and nursing have specialized writing requirements.

You'll need to scroll to the Writing in Your Major section.

<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources.php>

The Paradigm Online Writing Assistant

Step-by-step guidance for various types of essays is available.

<http://www.powa.org>

- Literature Reviews

“How to Write a Literature Review: Summarizing Resources in Your College Papers”

This overview has good examples of how to integrate your sources into a cohesive whole.

http://studyskills.suite101.com/article.cfm/how_to_write_a_literature_review [How to Write a Literature](#)

Review (Neill)

This site has a sample outline, tips, and frequently asked questions.

<http://wilderdom.com/OEcourses/PROFLIT/Class3LiteratureReview.htm>

Sample Literature Review (Purdue)

A model paper is available from the Online Writing Lab.

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20070515025950_667.pdf

APA Style

- Quick References

Introduction to APA

<http://word-crafter.net/APA/APAoverview.ppt>

- Online Tutorials

APA Documentation tutorial—UW-Madison

Brief, clear explanations of APA-style citation are available. This site is not yet updated to the 6th edition, but it provides a good introduction to the basics of in-text citation and reference lists. For information on DOIs, or Digital Object Identifiers, consult the APA Style Web at

<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/what-is-doi.aspx>

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPA.html>

Social Sciences: Documenting Sources

Diana Hacker's site is up-to-date and reliable; it has examples of how to cite virtually every type of source and a model paper.

http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/social_sciences/intext.html

- Online Guides and Cheatsheets

FAQs About APA Style—APAstyle.org

The most current information for online sources is available at the APA home page.

<http://www.apastyle.org/faqs.html>

APA Style Essentials (Degelman & Harris)

This guide has a helpful discussion of how to handle figures and appendices (updated to the 6th edition).

http://www.vanguard.edu/faculty/ddegelman/index.aspx?doc_id=796

- Model APA Paper literature review: “Can Medication Cure Obesity in Children?”

http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c09_s4.html

- Free Software

Bedford Bibliographer

Once you create a new student account, you'll have access to the most reliable of the free citation-makers. <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/bbibliographer/>

Citation Machine—enter your information and get reference list entries and parenthetical citations; be sure to double-check results

<http://citationmachine.net>

BibMe.org—allows you to save your bibliography; will fill in information for you in auto mode

<http://bibme.org>

Grammar

Charles Darling's “Guide to Grammar and Usage”

This site is a treasure trove of helpful advice on everything from organizing a paper to spelling demons. The best way to find what you're looking for: check the index.

<http://cctc.commnet.edu/grammar>

Six Problem Areas (POWA)

If you need a quick review of grammar, this is a good place to start. The Paradigm Online Writing Assistance (POWA) also has helpful advice on organizing papers and dealing with common problems, such as writer's block. Check out the links at the very top of the page.
<http://www.powa.org/editing/six-grammatical-problem-areas.html>

Online edition of William Strunk's *Elements of Style*

While short, this is a classic.

<http://www.bartleby.com/141/strunk1.html>

Online Writing Labs (OWLs)

"OWLs on the Web (Online Writing Webs) www.ipl.org/div/aplus/linksowls.htm

Plagiarism

"How Not to Plagiarize" from the University of Toronto—a good place to start
<http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html>

"Plagiarism—And How to Avoid It" from Drew University

Several examples of plagiarism are discussed (parenthetical citation is done in MLA rather than APA style).

http://www.depts.drew.edu/composition/Avoiding_Plagiarism.htm

"Plagiarism Resources from Indiana U."

This excellent tutorial includes actual cases and a self-test.

<http://www.education.indiana.edu/%7Efrick/plagiarism>

Writing Process

• Getting Started

Job aid for getting started

http://word-crafter.net/writing-resources/GettingStarted_jobaid.doc

"Introductions" (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

This guide explains what to do and what not to do when beginning a paper.

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/introductions.html>

"Overcoming Writer's Block"

If one of these strategies doesn't work for you, Charles Darling has others to help you get started.

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/composition/brainstorm_block.htm

Proving Your Point

• "Developing a Thesis Statement" (UW-Madison)

This step-by-step guide takes you from topic to polished thesis statement.

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Thesis.html>

• *Developing Arguments*

"Counter-Argument" at Harvard's Writing Tools site

How do you “turn back” challenges the point you’re trying to prove?

<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/documents/Counterarg.html>

“Developing an Argument”

Charles Darling’s advice covers all the basics.

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/GRAMMAR/composition/argument.htm>

“So What IS an Academic Argument Anyway?” (Temple)

This handout answers frequently asked questions about papers intended to prove a point.

<http://www.temple.edu/writingctr/handouts/thesisandargument/FAQarguments.htm>

Books with In-Depth Treatment of Academic Argument

Booth, W., Colomb, G., & Williams, J. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Williams, J., & Colomb, G. (2001). *The Craft of Argument*. New York: Addison Wesley.

- Using Quotations and Other Evidence

“APA Template”

See pp. 3–5 for various ways to introduce quotations and provide in-text citation <http://word-crafter.net/APA/APAtemplate.doc>

“Citing Sources” from Andy Gillet’s Using English for Academic Purposes site

See “Reporting” for examples of how to summarize, paraphrase, and quote your sources.

<http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm>

“Making a Quotation Sandwich” (Guthrie)

“According to Jones” isn’t the only way to introduce quoted material.

<http://virtualguthrie.net/eng/9gt/handouts/SANDWICHING%20QUOTES.htm>

“Effective Quoting” (Michael Harvey)

This site’s name—The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing—is a good clue to the depth of practical information you’ll find here.

<http://nutsandbolts.washcoll.edu/quoting.html>

“Expressing Your Voice in Academic Writing” (U Wollongong, Australia)

This site provides helpful examples of how to use sources to support your argument, instead of just stringing quotations together.

<http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/academic/4bi.html>

“Using Quotations” from the University of Toronto

Answers to frequently asked questions, such as *How much should I quote?*, are provided.

<http://www.utoronto.ca/ucwriting/quotations.html>

“Using the Work of Other Authors” from Central European University

If you’re feeling insecure about how to use the work of other authors correctly, this discussion

offers solid guidance.

<http://web.ceu.hu/writing/sources.htm>

- Using Transitions

“Writing Effective Transitions” (UNC Chapel Hill)

Start here if you need an overview or review of transitions.

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/transitions.html>

“Grammar and Style: Transitions” (UW Madison)

This page has an extensive list of transitional phrases and their uses.

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Transitions.html>

“Transitioning: Beware of Velcro” at Harvard’s Writing Center

This takes you beyond the basics to explain how skilled writers use transitions to create connections.

<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/documents/Transitions.html>

- Summing Up

“Ending the Essay: Conclusions” at Harvard’s Writing Center

How can you create a sense of completeness as you wrap up your essay?

<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/documents/Conclusions.html>

“Strategies for Writing a Conclusion” at St. Cloud State University

Stuck on how to conclude your paper? Choose one of these approaches.

<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/conclude.html>

- **Revising/Proofreading**

Revision Guidelines (Hunter College)

Revision is rethinking. These questions can help you evaluate the strengths and areas needing improvement in your draft.

http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/reading-writing/on-line/revision_guidelines.html

Revision: Cultivating a Critical Eye (Dartmouth)

“The best way to learn to write is to rewrite.” How can you look objectively at your own work?

This guide suggests strategies for large-scale revision, which deals with overall structure and organization, and small-scale revision, which deals with one section or sentence-level issues.

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/ac-paper/revise.html>

“Editing the Essay, Parts One and Two” (Harvard Writing Center)

This two-part essay suggests several ways to clarify your ideas and polish your style.

www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/documents/edit1.html

www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/documents/edit2.html

“Grammar and Style: An Editing Checklist”

This list targets 12 common errors.

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/CommonErrors.html>

“General Strategies for Editing and Proofreading” (LEO)

Strategies like reading your paper backward will help you find and correct more errors.

<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/genproofed.html>

"Editing & Proofreading Strategies for Specific Sentence-Level Errors" (LEO)

Most teachers and professionals think run-ons and sentence fragments are serious mistakes.

These strategies will help you correct sentence-level errors.

<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/editing.html>

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