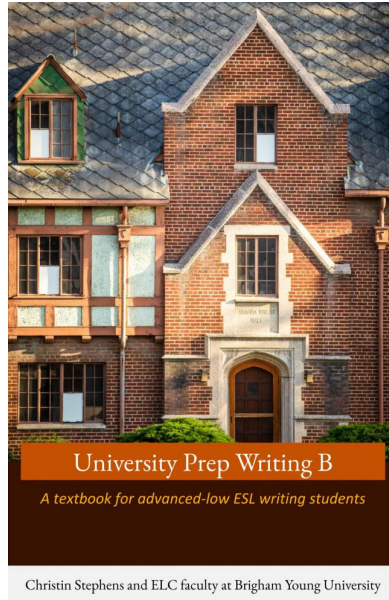


# University Prep Fall Writing B

## Fall Semester Packet



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# Table of Contents

<b>Addressing the Prompt</b> .....	4
<b>A Shifting Structure</b> .....	6
<b>Personal Statements</b> .....	7
<b>Example Personal Statement</b> .....	8
<b>Types of Personal Statements</b> .....	9
<b>Organization For Comprehensive Personal Statement</b> .....	11
<b>Organization for Personal Statement with Prompt</b> .....	13
<b>Revision</b> .....	15
<b>Example Personal Statement</b> .....	16
<b>Timed Writing</b> .....	18
<b>Student Choice (Pick Two)</b> .....	20
Creative Writing .....	21
Formal Emails .....	27
Reflections .....	32
Reviews .....	35
<b>Refining Writing</b> .....	39
<b>Development</b> .....	40
<b>Unity</b> .....	42
<b>Cohesion</b> .....	44
<b>Back Matter</b> .....	49
<b>Citation Information</b> .....	50

# Addressing the Prompt

One of the most essential steps of writing is ensuring that you fully understand what you are being asked to write about.

## Verbs

First of all, the verb used in the prompt is an important signal to you on how you need to write your essay. If you think carefully about the meaning of the verb, it will help you decide on your organization and you can use it to check that you included all of the necessary information.

## Example Prompts

1. Describe your home city.
  1. This topic is more general. You could approach it by describing the people who live in your city, history, architecture, popular tourist sites, or even the urban planning. If you had the opportunity, it would be wise to clarify with the teacher if there is a more specific explanation of what aspect of your city should be described.
2. Compare and contrast your home city and Provo, UT.
  1. You need to explain similarities and differences. You must include both in order to completely respond to the prompt. This requires you to do a little more than describe the characteristics of the two places, you need to also make some judgements about them.
3. Summarize the speaker's thoughts about Provo, UT.
  1. In this response, your supporting ideas should be limited to the content in the original source. You should not have any of your own ideas mixed into this answer. It should also be limited to the opinion about the city, not about any other area in Utah.
4. Many cities in the United States do not have reliable, widespread public transportation. Do you think college towns, such as Provo, UT, should be required to provide public transportation for the students? Support your position on this issue with reasons and examples.
  1. The question is about more than your opinion. The idea of supporting your ideas implies that you need to bring in additional sources to add strength to your argument. If the prompt is timed, you would need to focus your support on general knowledge or personal experience to give reasons and examples.

## Content

Next, you need to understand what content you are expected to include. The prompt may be very narrow because the topic is very specific. In other cases, the prompt may be very general and allow you space to make personal decisions about what supporting ideas to include.

**Always remember to review the prompt throughout the writing process to make sure that the focus of your essay matches the same scope as the prompt.**

## **Example Content**

1. Describe your home city.
  1. This topic is more general. You could approach it by describing the people who live in your city, history, architecture, popular tourist sites, or even the urban planning. If you had the opportunity, it would be wise to clarify with the teacher if there is a more specific explanation of what aspect of your city should be described.
2. Compare and contrast your home city and Provo, UT.
  1. Again, this topic is fairly broad. You know you need to talk about what is the same or different, but it could again be about many different attributes of the two cities.
3. Summarize the speaker's opinion about Provo, UT.
  1. In this response, your supporting ideas should be limited to the content in the original source. You should not have any of your own ideas mixed into this answer. It should also be limited to the opinion about the city, not about any other area in Utah.
4. Many cities in the United States do not have reliable, widespread public transportation. Do you think college towns, such as Provo, UT, should be required to provide public transportation for the students? Support your position on this issue with reasons and examples.
  1. The content of this essay is restricted to public transportation accessibility for college students specifically. Your focus should only be on this population and the unique environment of college towns. Additionally, you need both reasons and examples as support, excluding one of those types of support would result in an incomplete response.

## **Constraints**

Finally, you should also look at any limitations included in the prompt. Constraints could include

- limits of time
- characters (letters, punctuation, and spaces)
- words
- revision tools (dictionaries, thesaurus, spell check)
- sources (required or no access)
- teacher, tutor, or peer review (required or no access)

# A Shifting Structure

This structure is sometimes referred to as a traditional "five-paragraph essay." When you write a five-paragraph essay, your organization is very predictable. There is always one introduction paragraph with the thesis at the end, body paragraphs that each develop one topic related to the thesis, and a conclusion paragraph that begins with a restatement of the thesis. This structure is excellent to use when you write **short** essays (e.g., essays for AA/AB, the TOEFL independent essay, etc.).

By properly using a five-paragraph essay structure, you show that you understand the basics of American English writing. This foundation is important because once you can write a solid five-paragraph essay, then you can expand it without confusing your reader.

In **longer** academic essays, the structure has to become more flexible. Imagine an eight-page research paper with only five paragraphs. The topic and the length is too complex for a five-paragraph structure. Longer essays may have more than one paragraph for the introduction, headings may signal major parts of the essay, or one topic may be developed over several paragraphs. The same general principles apply to longer writing that you have learned for shorter essays, but you should not try to fit an eight-page research paper into five massive paragraphs.

Do not be surprised if your college writing teachers ask you to stop using the five-paragraph essay for your writing assignments. One of the most essential steps to success when you write in college is to clearly understand the professor's expectations. If your professor shows you a sample of what you need to write, you should use the sample to help you understand what your professor expects.

Your college teachers may ask you to write something other than an essay (e.g., a literary analysis, reflection, chapter summary, etc.). Often, these other types of writing assignments will have an entirely different structure. This book emphasizes the importance of analyzing model writing because that will help you know how to write whatever you need to write in college, regardless of the structure of the assignment.

Consider how the following essay starts to break the patterns of a typical five-paragraph essay. The structure is less predictable, but it still follows the same general principles of good essay writing that you have learned. Click to see the example essay on the next page.

# Personal Statements

Personal statements are writing tasks that require the writer to describe their experiences, characteristics, purpose, or plans. These types of writing are common for job and school applications. While there is a lot of variation in the prompts and expectations, there are some key things writers need to know about this style of writing.

# Example Personal Statement

Prompt: Have you become aware of significant needs in your family, school, and/or community? Please explain how you have worked toward meeting those needs. (300 words max)

Through my studies and professional career, I have had the opportunity to serve in different areas. Before graduating from university, I did social service in a nonprofit organization called [Organization]. [Organization] is in [City, Country] and its objectives are to empower women from the poorest valley in [City] to have better opportunities, be healthy, and start their own businesses. My role was to help women find opportunities to eat healthier, prevent diseases, and be self-sufficient. I worked with a group of nurses and doctors to create and teach workshops on how to choose healthier options. Due to their low income and lack of food available, the most significant challenge was their limited variety of food. Thus, we had to create specialized meal plans that fit their necessities but were also easily accessible for them. We also taught them how to cook their meal plans with the food they had available at that time. In addition, although the organization I worked for didn't ask me to teach their families, I took the time to provide information to them because I thought it was important for the patient to have support from their family so that the patient could reach their goal easily. That experience not only opened my perspective and helped me recognize the diversity that we have in the world, but also made me realize that we, as health professionals, need to understand those differences in order to best treat our patients.



# Types of Personal Statements

There are different situations that would require a personal statement, each of which would have slightly different approaches. The most common types of personal statements are: cover letters, admissions essays, and statements of purpose. In all three of these situations, you as a writer are trying to convince the reader to invest in you by showing evidence of your ability and potential.

While the exact specifications of these writing tasks will vary, all of them expect the writer to disclose personal information and respond to the prompt clearly and fully. The idea of sharing details about your life or "bragging" about your qualities can feel deeply uncomfortable for many people. It is therefore important to remember the purpose of a personal statement. This type of writing exists to provide the reader with relevant information about you that would set you apart from others. A personal statement stands in conjunction with the rest of an application and transforms that data into a full picture of you as a person and how you would fit into the institution.

[The Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) has some excellent personal statement advice and examples.

## Admissions Essay

An admission essay is part of the application to a college or university. The school will have access to a lot of information about you from the rest of your application, but this is your opportunity to present your full self. Think of it as a written interview where you get to provide more details about yourself that add to their understanding of how you would fit in the college environment.

The admissions essay typically prompts you to talk about a specific aspect of yourself that they would not know about from just your transcript and demographic information. The question may be about your goals, overcoming past challenges, service, or any other attribute the college views as being essential for success in that specific school.

Every university will have different expectations for how many admission essays you submit. They will also have varying word or character counts. It is important for you to use that limited space wisely to really persuade the reader that you are an ideal future student.

Examples of admission essay prompts include:

1. Many students submit applications to several colleges. What will determine which one you will choose to attend? Please be specific in your response.
2. Describe a specific time when you were aware of a need in your family, school, or community. How did you respond to that need?
3. Tell us about a time when you did not achieve a goal or experienced a difficult challenge. How did you recover from this experience? What did you learn from this and how will it influence your future reactions to challenges?
4. Discuss an area of interest that you find really engaging. Why is this topic so fascinating to

you? What do you do to learn more about this topic?

## **Cover Letter**

Cover letters serve a similar function to an admissions essay. This type of personal statement goes along with your resume or curriculum vitae to give a more complete description of you and why you would be the best choice for the position. Again, it serves as a written interview that allows a potential employer to narrow down the search to candidates that would be most competitive.

In today's world of online submitted job applications, the resume or CV will get you through the initial sorting of applicants if the necessary experience is listed and certain buzz words are mentioned. The cover letter then discriminates between the applicants based on their character and personal alignment with the business.

Therefore, it is important to fully research the business you are applying for and to tailor your cover letter to the specific company. You can do this by looking at the mission or vision statements on the company website's About Us page. You can also learn about specific current projects and reference them in your cover letter. The cover letter is your way of showing that you really understand what the business is about and how you could contribute to it.

Cover letters do not generally have specific prompts. However, if the prompt were to be articulated, it would be something along the lines of:

1. How do your experience and your skills qualify you for this role and why should we choose you instead of the many other applicants?

That being said, some specialized careers may include a short written response to a question. For example, a teacher may be asked to provide their philosophy on learning.

## **Statement of Purpose**

Finally, there are times when you may be asked to write a more general personal statement. This might be as part of an application for a scholarship, a nomination to receive an award, a promotion, or an investment pitch. It may also be part of your personal goal setting routine.

The statement of purpose is slightly different than the other two personal statements because it is more focused on the present and future goals rather than your past experience. Like a cover letter, there is unlikely to be a specific prompt to respond to. However, you can approach a statement of purpose by thinking about these questions:

1. Where do you see yourself in (number) of years?
2. How do you plan to achieve your goals?

# Organization For Comprehensive Personal Statement

To write a personal statement, let's begin with a general, comprehensive approach. This means that rather than develop your statement for a specific purpose, you will consider how you would respond to the three main personal statement types in general.

## The Hook

A personal statement needs a hook, just like any other type of writing. In fact, a personal statement is almost more in need of getting the reader's attention early because you want to be memorable among the many statements the reviewers will see. While this can be done in the usual ways you have learned for writing hooks, one of the most common types is the use of an anecdote. An **anecdote** is simply an interesting and relevant true story. A personal statement often uses a specific story to illustrate important attributes or to create an organization for highlighting experience.

## The Thesis

Your personal statement should have a clear sentence that directly expresses your purpose. Your goal should be abundantly clear in this sentence and all other points in your personal statement need to support this main idea.

## Supporting Ideas

The remainder of your personal statement should focus on clearly establishing your qualifications and experience, demonstrating your character and personal qualities, and indicating your potential for growth. This may be done with a variety of examples or one extended description that highlights all of the necessary traits that set you apart.

## Conclusion

Finally, your comprehensive statement should have a concluding sentence that recommends you to the reader. This final sentence should be memorable and emphasize your purpose in sending this information.

## Writing a Comprehensive Personal Statement

Here are some things to keep in mind as you write this general form of a personal statement.

1. The terms *general* and *comprehensive* here are about purpose, not content. This version is meant to be a starting point for you to use when you are called on to provide a personal statement. Therefore, the examples, reasons, and descriptions should be powerful, clear, and detailed. Once you have a comprehensive statement you are happy with, it will be easier to make adjustments to it for a specific situation.
2. Because it is a *personal* statement, remember to focus on yourself and present yourself honestly and fully. You do not need to adhere to the same rigid writing style as the typical academic writing.
3. Your writing should be full of energy. You want to present the best version of yourself in the writing. If you think of this as a preliminary interview, you can imagine the combination of positivity and professionalism you would want to present. Especially if you are sharing an experience that had some negative aspects, remember to focus on the positive side and the lessons learned.
4. Make it stand out! Imagine sitting in an office for hours looking at short essay after short essay. You are trying to narrow down the search for a new employee. As a writer, you need to pop off of the page and share something that will stay with the reader.

# Organization for Personal Statement with Prompt

Once you have your more general personal statement, you will need to tailor it for specific audiences. This means that whenever you are asked to submit a statement, you make adjustments to your personal statement to fit the requirements, expectations, or tone of the unique situation.

## Specific Prompts

There may be times when you will need to start from scratch because there is a specific prompt or the circumstance renders the general statement irrelevant, but you will usually have at least some part of the general statement that you can use as a starting point. This will typically be the case when the person or organization requesting the personal statement is looking for specific information that would not be included in a resume that is necessary for the applicant.

Examples of information they would try to find through providing a specific prompt would be:

- How you respond to challenges
- Your philosophy on a topic and whether or not it aligns with their own
- Intentions and long-term perspective
- Signals that indicate how well you would mesh with an existing team

When you face a specific personal statement prompt, be sure to look at each part of the question and consider:

1. What does the reviewer expect to learn from my answer?
2. How would my answer separate me in a positive way from other applicants?
3. How to I show myself in the best light in this question?
4. What information is not included in my personal data and resume that they already have access to?

## Brainstorming

Before you begin writing, break down the prompt into the individual pieces. Make sure that you fully understand what it is asking and that you include answers to every part of it. Once you have the prompt broken down into pieces, begin your brainstorm. Your brainstorm should give you a chance to write down all ideas you have about each section. At this stage, nothing is good or bad. The only purpose of the brainstorm is to get all of the ideas out of your head and onto paper. Then you can begin to look for patterns and evaluate the strength of the different points. You may want to mark the ideas you like so that they stand out. Then, review your general personal statement and identify any parts of it that would be useful in responding to this particular prompt.

## Development

Once you know what the reviewer wants to know and have brainstormed your ideas of your response, you need to consider how to develop those ideas further. To do this, consider the points in your brainstorm in terms of your motivation, your qualifications, and the expectations of the reviewer. Choose a limited number of items from your brainstorm to include. Because a personal statement is so brief, you want to thoughtfully construct your ideas.

As you develop your ideas, you may find yourself writing much more than you can actually include in your final product. This is ok during the drafting stage. You want to fully build a mental image for your reader, but you also want to discard the irrelevant points later. After you have drafted your ideas, think about these questions to eliminate the extra thoughts.

1. Does the reader *need* to know this?
2. Is anything here sufficiently included in the materials I have already submitted?
3. How does this sentence add to the reader's understanding of me?
4. Is the information memorable and unique?
5. Do I fully answer the question?

## Cohesion

The most important thing to remember as you finalize your personal statement is that it should feel very clear and direct. It should be obvious to the reader why you included specific details. Every idea needs to point back to the prompt. The response should show unity in the tone and content. You do not have room for any stray ideas in this short of a writing task. After you think you have answered the question as completely as you can, give yourself time to look over it again for cohesion and/or ask for someone to review it for you.

# Revision

## Review the Prompt

One strategy for revision that may help you is to highlight the different points of the prompt in different colors. Then use those same colors to highlight the sentences in your response that relate to those parts of the prompt. For example, a prompt may ask you to describe an award you received, what you did to earn it, and what resources you used to achieve success. You may mark any ideas in your writing that relate to the purpose of the award in yellow, the narrative/process sentences in green, and the resources in blue. This will help you recognize if there are any unmarked sentences that might not address the prompt. It can also help you to see if ideas are repeated or underdeveloped.

## Word Choice

Because personal statements are often limited in terms of character or word count, you want to be sure that you get the most impact out of the words you choose to use. Choosing a word that is more precise in its meaning and connotation will help you to use the space wisely.

# Example Personal Statement

## Exercise: Analyze a personal statement

1. How does the writer introduce herself?
2. What information do you think the prompt asked for?
3. Are the ideas sequenced in a logical order?
4. Is there a clearly stated purpose (conclusion) in this personal statement?
5. What suggestions would you give this writer to improve the personal statement?

As the daughter of a lawyer, when I was a young woman I saw many people suffer the injustice of poverty, discrimination, divorce, and criminality. So after my LDS mission in [country], I decided to study law. I built a law firm in [country]. Even though my services were very specialized in legal medicine, many of my clients came to my office, not for trials, but for family problems, they wanted a divorce. As a missionary, I taught about celestial marriage, I testified that families can be together forever. Therefore, my instinct has been to help people understand the importance of family, and I have explained to them how destructive divorce is, not just for the couple, but for the children. I could have earned a lot of money divorcing people, but money is not everything in life. I find satisfaction in helping families remain together.

It has been an amazing experience for me to work with couples in order to reinforce their marriages and their relationships. I am proud that many of my clients and friends are even now together, thriving to have an eternal family. Furthermore, I have worked as an advisor to young single adults, and I have taught them how to acquire the qualities in order to become the right person and to find the person with the right kind of qualities to get married to by applying the principles of The Family: a Proclamation to the World. I am a unique woman who strives to achieve my goals every day. For instance, I earned a magna cum laude during my bachelor's degree. Recently, I have been studying English, and I have been recognized as an outstanding student by the BYU English Language Center. I am a good listener and a good adviser. I am a lifelong student who wants to become an expert in marriage and family relationships.

In addition, after finishing the BYU's Pathway program, I began to study for a certificate in Marriage and Family Relationships at BYU-I. Because of my studies, I now have a better understanding of the doctrine and principles of the family. For that reason, I am profoundly interested in applying for a master's program in marriage and family relationships at BYU-Provo because I know that BYU has the best academic program for what I want to learn and what I want to become. BYU focuses on eternal principles applied to understand the significance of family for the individual and society. I want to belong to and learn from people who are engaged with the family.

I am committed to the most essential institution in the world: the family. I know that I can be a great influence on the university community because I am an example of a successful marriage. My



husband and I have been married for almost twenty-two years. We have two children, and we will all be together forever and ever because we have been sealed for time and all eternity. I want to earn a master's degree in Marriage and Family Relationships at BYU-Provo considering that my purpose is to acquire all the knowledge, experience, abilities, and skills BYU has to offer in order to defend the family as God has ordained. I want to inspire young people about marriage and help families in conflict, not just as a counselor, but as a voice to all nations.

# Timed Writing

Timed writing can take many forms, but the obvious unique factor of this type of writing is the fact that there is a limit on the amount of time you have to complete it. This most commonly occurs in an exam situation, where the tester is evaluating how well you understand a topic and/or can explain your thoughts without any external assistance. The amount of time and the expected length of your writing will vary based on the instructions.

You could expect to find a timed writing portion of a test or quiz in virtually any subject. It doesn't matter whether you plan to study business, engineering, music, or linguistics. Timed essays are used frequently to get you to analyze, argue, or create something with what you have learned. Essays push you to show more than just recognizing a correct answer.

## Step One: Recognize the constraints

This means that when you encounter a timed writing prompt, you should first think about the context.

- How much time do you have?
- What length of a response does the teacher expect?
- What aspect of my writing is most important to the teacher?
- Are there other sections of the test that you need to complete?
- Does the testing format provide spell check?

Usually you will know in advance that there will be a timed writing component to an assessment, so you can think about these questions beforehand. This will help you prioritize your time.

## Step Two: Organizing your ideas AND your time

It is common for students to feel a sense of panic when they see a clock counting down the seconds during an exam. Because of this psychological pressure, it is easy to overlook a few important things.

First of all, an outline will *always* benefit you. You may think that the best idea is to immediately start writing because the time is limited, but that could lead to a very disorganized presentation of an answer. Read the prompt carefully and make a brief outline of ideas so that you know all parts of the prompt will be addressed and all of your most important details will be included.

Second, consider how to use the time as your ally. Rather than allowing it to control you, think of how you can use the time to keep yourself on track. For example, if the essay is only a small part of the total grade, control the amount of time you give yourself to write the answer. You might do this by answering that question first under a stricter time limit before you answer any of the multiple choice questions. Divide your the time you have to work with so you can work smarter.

As an example, you may have 30 minutes to complete an essay. In order to work quickly, you could follow a time schedule like this:

<b>Time (Counting down)</b>	<b>Task</b>
30:00-27:00	Write your thesis and topic sentences (outline)
27:00-20:00	Write your first body paragraph
20:00-13:00	Write your second body paragraph
13:00-8:00	Write your introduction paragraph
8:00-3:00	Write your conclusion paragraph
3:00-0:00	Revise and edit your essay

You will obviously need to structure your times differently depending on the length of time you have to work with. It may also be necessary to adjust times depending on what is most important to the teacher. For example, there may be a larger emphasis on accuracy, so you will need to give yourself more time to revise and edit.

### **Examples of timed writing prompts**

- Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between Greek and Roman civilizations. Choose at least three aspects in your comparison. (Civilization-History)
- As part of a midterm, you would need to read and analyze financial statements. (Intro to Business)
- Analyze the rhetorical devices used in the poem above. Be sure to include at least 5 specific terms from the textbook in your analysis. (English Literature)
- Explain the process for prototype design. Include each step and a complete description of each stage of the process. (Engineering)
- Discuss the physiological and psychological changes that occur in humans between the ages of 18-25. (Psychology)

## **Student Choice (Pick Two)**

Because students are able to repeat University Prep, the class will vote each semester on two of these four short essays to write. This will hopefully create some additional different experiences for students taking the course more than once. It also gives the class an opportunity to focus on skills that feel most relevant to their future goals.

Please remember that self-plagiarism (resubmitting your own work for another grade) is unacceptable. You should begin each writing assignment from the very beginning.

# Creative Writing

While there may be some educational and professional settings that will encourage creative writing, the purpose of this practice is more about developing your own voice in writing. Creation in your second language is an important part of both establishing your sense of self and extending your language finesse without the pressure of grades or rigid structure of academic writing.

## Purpose

Creative writing is centered on the idea of expressing original ideas and reflecting on experiences. The most common purpose for creative writing is entertainment. This takes many forms, from novels to poetry to movie scripts to song lyrics to a personal history. In all of those forms (and many others), creative writing serves as a vehicle to share ideas and emotions with the audience. Creative writing also often has the purpose of description and reflection, which further connect the audience to your ideas by painting a picture with words in such a way that the reader can see or feel that same experience second-hand. Finally, creative writing is often for the purpose of self-expression. In these cases, the potential audience is less important than you as a writer having a space to explore your internal world through your own words.

In other words, the purpose of creative writing is a varied as the product itself. Although there are many types of creative writing, this chapter will only discuss the short story (fiction) and short memoir (personal non-fiction).

## 1 Exercise: Creative Purpose

You will need to write a creative essay for this assignment. The first step of the process is to choose a creative writing purpose by selecting one of the prompts below for your writing:

1. Focus your purpose on entertaining with a positive emotion at the center. Your purpose is to make your reader laugh, smile, and feel happy.
2. Focus your purpose on entertaining with surprise. This could be to shock your reader as in a scary story or to present a mystery that will be explained by the end.
3. Focus your purpose on connecting with the reader over self-expression about something difficult. This may take the form of sharing a disappointment, sadness, or struggle.
4. Focus your purpose on describing so carefully that the reader can picture all of the details. There might be some emotion or reflection involved, but the principle reason for writing is to transport a reader somewhere else.

## Prewriting

Although some creative writing can be spontaneous, for the purpose of this course, you will be

producing planned and drafted creative work.

## Genre Selection

The first step is to decide what type of creative writing you will work on. This begins with deciding between fiction (not based on history or fact) and non-fiction (accurately presents true events). For this assignment, this becomes either a short story or a memoir.

A short story is a fictional writing that focuses on an isolated event (or a simplified series of events) and typically has few characters, but it is fully developed and unified.

A memoir is a true (or at least assumed to be true) retelling of a lived experience. A short memoir is focused on an episode (scene, incident, occurrence).

From here, you can decide on a more specific genre such as humor, romance, horror, action, drama, mystery, etc. Because this chapter is focused on *short* creative writing, you will want to choose the genre carefully so that you can fully develop your narrative in that amount of space. For example, you would not want to attempt to tell the whole story from beginning to end of how you and your significant other fell in love. Likewise, you would not want to try to fit the entirety of a complicated magic world into two pages of writing. Thinking of a specific situation (like an episode of a tv show) will help you to narrow down your ideas to a manageable story within your chosen genre.

## 2 Exercise: Narrowing by Genre

Decide how you want to achieve your purpose either by telling a fictional story or personal events. The writing assignment is a two page paper, so consider the limits of how much story you can tell in that space.

## Character & Setting

Once the genre has been decided, brainstorming about character and setting begins. In order for creative writing to effectively connect with the audience, the reader needs to be able to visualize the story and understand the people involved. In a novel, you have plenty of space to describe physical appearance, give examples of personality in different situations, and describe the full, detailed world inhabited by the characters. However, in a short story or memoir, you need to communicate only the essential points so that there is space for plot.

Because of this limited space, take time to brainstorm details about the people and places first. When you have a full mind map of everything you *could* include in the story, it will be much faster to identify the *essential* details that relate to the episodic plot you will write. First write all of the descriptions you can think of and mark the ones most related to the genre choice. You will then come back and make that selection even shorter after you have outlined the plot.

An additional point to deciding on character is deciding on the narrative style you will use. The most common styles are first person and third person narratives. A first person narrative is the story told with personal pronouns (I, my, me, etc) as if the main character is writing the story. A third person narrative is the story told as an outside observer (using third person pronouns such as he, she, it).

This is a matter of preference in the perspective, but a successful story can be told in either style. The decision does need to be made before you begin writing however, because you must maintain that grammatical style.

## **Plot Outlining**

The importance of the outlining stage of writing becomes more clear when you have limited space. There is no room for extra ideas. You do not have the luxury of anything unnecessary. The shorter the word or page count, the more intentional you need to be about what details you will include.

Plot outlining begins with identifying the problem, conflict, or peak of drama at the center of the episode. This is known as the *story climax*, and it is the most critical part of the story because it answers both the question *what happened* and *why does it matter*. In a humorous story, this would be the *punchline* or the moment that makes you laugh. In a dramatic story, it may be the moment the main character realizes the truth of the situation. You can think of it as a late thesis statement. It is the sentence, or sometimes paragraph, that is the whole purpose of the story. Everything before it builds up to this moment. The conclusion is the reaction to it.

Once the that point of the story has been established, you can work backward to brainstorm the steps leading up to it and the context of character and setting that create a sense of tension around that main point. Again, it may be easier to first write down all of the facts or minor events prior to the main event and all details from immediately after. Getting all of the ideas down on paper during the prewriting stage will clear your mind and you will be able to sort through the necessary and unnecessary.

### **3 Exercise: Creative Prewriting**

1. Take your initial purpose and genre plan and create a 1-2 sentence summary of what the story is about.
2. Create word webs to brainstorm details about characters, setting, and important plot points.
3. Carefully eliminate the unnecessary details.
4. Practice telling the story to a partner using only the remaining brainstorming details.
5. Add or delete any details based on your spoken draft.

## **Organization**

Creative writing is an excellent opportunity to practice "breaking the rules" of writing. It is a common saying that you have to know the rules in order to know how to effectively ignore or change them for a specific task. A great example of this principle can be seen in the artwork of the famous painter Vincent van Gogh.

## 4 Exercise: Artistic Freedom

1. Take a look at some of van Gogh's early work on [this page from the van Gogh Museum](#).
2. Then click through to see his later self-portraits, landscapes, and floral artwork on [this page from the van Gogh Museum](#).
3. Discuss the differences and similarities between his early artwork and the paintings and drawings he created later in life.
4. How does this relate to writing?

Writing follows a similar pattern. You begin by learning very strict rules about punctuation, organization, appropriate length, etc. However, as you practice and explore and gain skills, you will see that there are many opportunities to break from the rigid structure and expectations to create something that is uniquely designed to fit the task.

This all goes to show that although creative writing is very free and open, there are elements of organization patterns that will be familiar to you from your heavily structured academic writing experiences.

### Hook

Just as with an essay, a creative writing draft needs to begin with something that draws your attention. It is often very memorable and connects the reader immediately to the new world they have opened up. Take a little time to open a few different novels, blog posts, or magazines. You should be able to immediately spot the hook that convinces the reader to continue.

### The problem/conflict

The problem or conflict in a story is similar to a thesis statement. Everything in the story centers around a main event, issue, or individual. All of the details surrounding that idea are given only to create a richer description of the world so that the problem/conflict feels real to the reader. The story will arrive at a moment when the problem reaches its peak (climax), such as the reveal of the villain, the moment when the character falls in love, or the point when a major decision is made that changes everything.

### The solution

The solution is like the conclusion of an essay. It reminds you of how the characters got to the moment where the main problem was solved. It should feel like a natural end, where all the major points (topic sentences) have been addressed. Sometimes the solution includes a message or a clarifying theme (an implied main idea) that emphasizes to the reader a lesson that should have been learned after the experience.



## 5 Exercise: Outlining

1. Rewrite your summary as a problem/conflict thesis statement.
2. Develop a hook connected to the thesis statement.
3. Write a brief conclusion to show how the story will end.
4. Develop the points left from the brainstorm into complete sentences.
5. Organize the outline logically.

## Writing

Aside from the usual practice in presenting clear ideas and logically organized connections between those ideas, creative writing is an opportunity to practice two very useful writing skills.

The first writing skill that gets extra attention in creative writing is word choice. Creative writing should push you to expand your vocabulary and to understand the connotations of synonyms. Finding a more interesting word that conveys an additional meaning (ex. speak vs whisper vs mumble vs rant) can add depth to understanding without using a significant amount of space. This skill transfers very well to academic writing, where you often have strict length limitations and you need to reduce your word count to be more precise.

## 5 Exercise: Adding Detail

Now that the outline is complete, revisit the word choice in your completed sentences to add more descriptive language. Don't just focus on adding adjectives and adverbs. Think about how synonyms with more specific connotations can add interest to all of the parts of speech.

As you add to the existing sentences, keep a list of any extra words you find that do not fit now but could be used in your supporting sentences.

The other writing skill frequent in creative writing that can benefit you in academic writing as well is the use of literary devices. The main literary devices that often crossover between these two genres of writing are *analogy*, *metaphor*, and *simile*.

An *analogy* is a comparison between two different things that emphasizes the similarities to make a point. This comparison explains important attributes of the first thing by drawing connections with the second object or concept. An analogy is typically longer than a sentence or two because of the purpose of explaining with details.

- "O! be some other name: What's in a name? that which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet; So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd" (*Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare)
- "My mom always said life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get." (*Forrest Gump*)

A *metaphor* is a short analogy that does not require explanation, and uses equivalent language that x is y. The comparison is simple and the reader is expected to infer the meaning of the comparison without much difficulty.

- Her anger was a hurricane.
- The truth is a light in the darkness.

A *simile* is a different type of short analogy that also does not require explanation, but uses language for similarity such as x is like y or s is as y. Again, the comparison is simple and the reader is expected to infer the meaning of the comparison without much difficulty.

- He is as strong as an ox.
- The teenager was growing like a weed.

## **6 Exercise: Literary Devices**

1. Add three literary devices (analogy, metaphore, or simile) to your draft.
2. Switch drafts with a partner and evaluate their literary devices.
3. Identify what literary device is used.
4. Give suggestions of how to integrate the phrase more fully into the story.

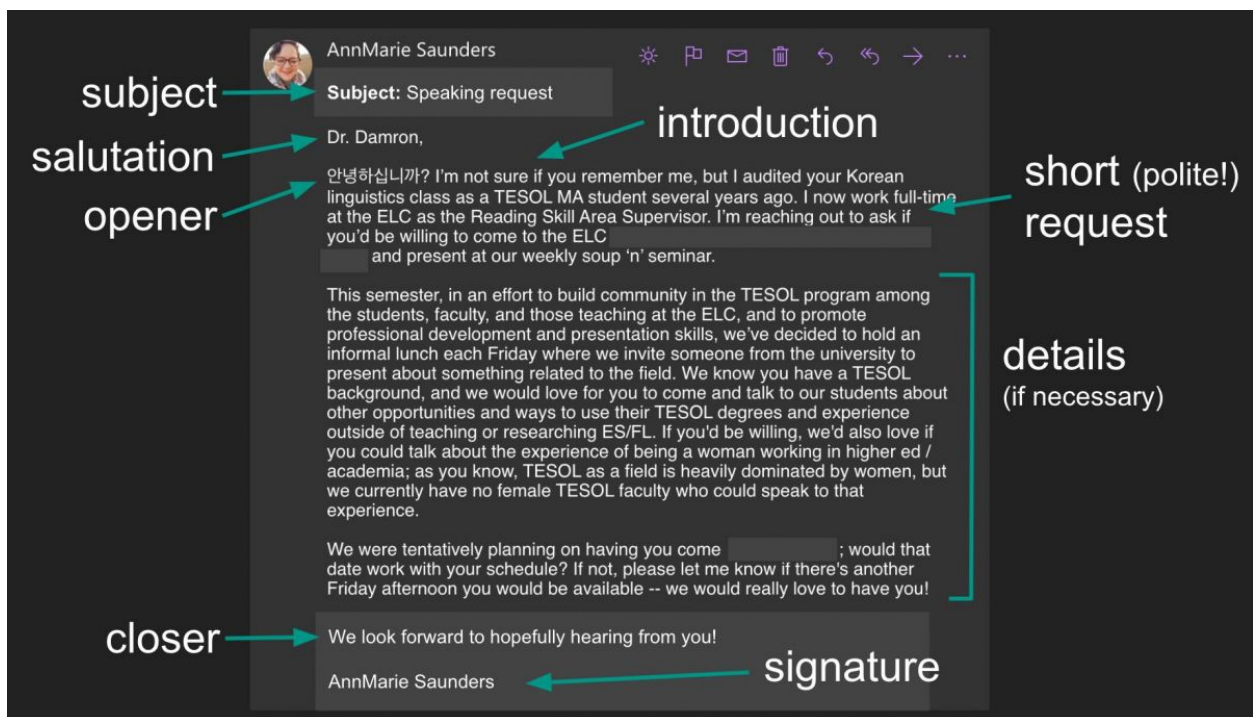
## **7 Exercise: Creative Draft**

Submit a draft of your creative writing online for your teacher to review.

- 2 pages (double-spaced)
- fiction or memoir
- descriptive language (including 3 literary devices)
- clear story structure and purpose

# Formal Emails

One of the common types of writing you will encounter is writing emails in English. The expectations for formality and content vary dramatically in this format depending on to whom you are writing and the topic of the email. For this section of the course, we will focus on formal emails like the ones you will likely send in the future to professors or employers.



## The Structure

An email has a very different look than the other types of writing discussed in this text. However, there are still similarities when you are writing a formal email. The basic outline of a formal email is as follows:

### 1. Subject line (similar to an essay title)

Although the subject line is similar to a title for a typical essay, it is important to keep the information limited to only what is necessary. This type of "title" is not meant to be creative, but rather to give the reader an immediate idea of the content of the email. Do not leave this field of the email blank. Keep the ideas brief, and put the most important information first.

Most purposes for emailing can be boiled down to a single noun phrase that highlights the most

important information.

## 2. Salutation

The salutation is where you address the reader. You should use the title that best shows the level of formality. If the reader has a title, be sure to use the appropriate form. Do not assume it is appropriate to use only a first name in the salutation.

---

<b>Most Common English Titles (honorifics)</b>	
Mr.	all men
Miss	unmarried women
Mrs.	married women
Ms.	woman regardless of marital status
Dr.	someone with a PhD, a medical doctor or veterinarian
Professor	used less frequently in the US than Dr.
President/Principal/Dean/Director/Chief Executive	other titles specific to the job may also be used
To Whom it May Concern	when emailing to a general office/business account without knowing the name of the person to address your question to

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Some examples of different formal salutations include:

- (Title + full name of recipient only)
- Hello
- Good morning/afternoon
- Dear (full name of recipient)

## 3. Opener (similar to an essay hook)

The opener should match the level of formality of the email and reflect your relationship with the reader. In other words, a salutation such as "How's it going?" would only be appropriate in an email to a friend. A more common formal version of this would be "I hope this email finds you well."

Similarly to how a conversation in English begins with a pleasantry, or a polite question about your well-being that is not intended to get a true response, this opener exists only for the sake of manners. No one expects an actual response to the opener.

## 4. Introduction

At this point in the email, you will introduce yourself to the reader. This helps to create context for why you are sending the email. For example, you might mention the course you are taking or the department you work in. Unless you have communicated with the individual multiple times, it is helpful to use this space to help the reader identify you.

## **5. Short request (similar to an essay thesis)**

After you have created this brief introduction, you can immediately introduce your purpose for the email. Remember to keep his request polite and clear. Include any references to specific times, places, or products involved in the request. In general, you should try to limit an email to one main idea.

At some point in your email, it is good to acknowledge that you are likely asking them to do additional work, adjust their schedule, or some otherwise inconvenient favor. Where possible, provide some flexibility in the request and emphasize gratitude.

## **6. Necessary details (similar to an essay supporting ideas)**

You may need to include additional information about the request after it is clearly stated. For example, the reader may need to know about the topic of the presentation, concerns about a project, or an outline of the agenda for a meeting. The request should be separate enough to be quickly understood, and this section allows for the additional clarification of the situation. Again, remember to maintain appropriate distance from the reader by not oversharing beyond what is essential to know.

In this section of the email, it may be helpful to use a numbered or bulleted list to separate pieces of information related to the topic. This is a good way to create blank space in the email and to keep it focused on the essentials.

## **7. Closer (concluding sentence)**

As with a typical concluding sentence, it can be helpful to end your email with a sentence that states expectations or a call to action. The most common closers are either in the form of requesting a timely response or a proposing a meeting time.

## **8. Signature**

Always remember to close the email with your name and any other identifying information. This could include a phone number (if needed) or your job title, but can also be as simple as just your name. Don't forget to use the form of your name that would be most easily recognizable to the reader.

### **1 Exercise: Outline**

*Read the situation below and create an outline to show how you would organize your email.*

Your professor has scheduled office hours. Unfortunately, you are unable to make it at that time because of a schedule conflict. You have a question about the course that would be too difficult to discuss over email.

## 2 Exercise: Draft an email

Read the situation below and create an email draft explaining the situation and offering a solution.

You transferred from Ensign College to BYU Provo. Although you took an Introduction to Economics class as part of your Associate's Degree at Ensign, the class credit did not transfer and you are expected to take the class again. Write an email to the BYU Enrollment Services explaining why you think the course should be re-evaluated to count toward your degree at BYU.

## Polite Requests

One of the important aspects of writing a formal email is using polite language to make requests. Culturally speaking, a request in English is more polite the less direct it is. Note the difference between someone saying "I would appreciate it if you would wash your hands before dinner." vs "Wash your hands."

Two ways that grammar can support creating a polite request is through the use of modals and *if* clauses. In the example above, the word *would* is used to soften the request. This can also be done using modals like *could*, *might*, and *can*. Dependent clauses with *if* soften a request as well by focusing on the reader's ability to decline the request and the writer's awareness of the potential disruption the request may cause.

Examples of polite requests:

- "I would appreciate it if you could [request]."
- "It would be [adj] if you could [request]."
- "If you could [request], that would be [adj]."
- "Can/Could you/I [request]?"
- "Would you/I be able to [request]."
- "Would [time/request] work for you?"
- "If possible...?" / "Would it be possible to [request]?"
- "Do/would you mind [request]?"
- "Would you be willing to [request]?"

## 3 Exercise: Polite requests

Your teacher will assign a partner to you. With your partner, practice 2-3 different ways of making a polite request in each of the following scenarios:

- You need to borrow a stranger's phone to make a call because you lost yours.
- You are sick on the day of a major presentation and need to reschedule it.
- You need your team at work to come to an urgent extra meeting about a project.

Other common words used to demonstrate politeness are known as hedging adverbs. These are words such as *just*, *only*, *possibly*, *maybe*, and *perhaps*. Writers will include these to increase the courtesy felt in a request.

- I am just emailing to ask if you could check the budget report attached in this email.

- Would you possibly be available for me to interview for my career development course? It would only take twenty minutes, I know you are very busy.

#### **4 Exercise: Draft an email**

*Read the situation below and create an email draft explaining the situation and offering a solution.*

You have a personal emergency that you need to take care of during one of your class times. However, the schedule for that class day includes information that is essential for the upcoming test. You know that the professor teaches another section of that class at a later time which you could attend after resolving the personal issue.

### **Formatting**

Formal emails follow many of the same conventions of formatting and style as an essay. It should be written in an easy to read font in a 10-12pt size. Colorful text should be avoided unless necessary to draw attention to something (such as a deadline). Do not use ALL CAPITAL LETTERS at any point in your email because the internet culture designates this as yelling (angry). You are welcome to instead use bolded, italicized, or underlined text to make an emphasis. Expressive punctuation (such as multiple exclamation points or ellipsis) and emojis should also be avoided. The main difference between an email and an essay is that an email does not need to be indented, and can instead just be left-aligned.

#### **5 Exercise: Choose a prompt**

*Choose one of the prompts below as your situation for an email that you will submit as your final assignment. Remember to explain the situation, propose solutions, and maintain an appropriate level of formality.*

- Request to add a course that is currently full
- Contact a potential employer about your interest in applying for a job (no job is currently open)
- Invite a speaker to present at an upcoming club event
- Ask for a prerequisite class to be waived
- Send a thank you after an interview

### **Responding to a formal email**

The advice here applies to responding to a formal email, not just when you initiate the conversation yourself. In some cases, someone in higher authority may not begin the conversation in a formal manner, but you should still maintain the standards here unless told otherwise. For example, a professor may ask students to call her by her first name rather than her last name or an office environment may frequently use emojis. Once you are aware of the expectations for that context, you are able to adjust your writing accordingly.

# Reflections

In the majority of this text, academic writing relies heavily on summaries and demonstrating a clear understanding of an issue. However, some academic writing you will encounter at the college level will have a different purpose and therefore requires a different approach.

## Purpose

A reflection essay is primarily used by professors to hold students accountable for out of class learning. By requiring you to reflect about what you read or listened to as part of your homework, the reader is able to quickly identify three important outcomes from that homework:

- The student is prepared for the class discussion and/or to participate in a learning experience that requires background knowledge.
- The student understands key information and is attempting to integrate this new knowledge.
- The student can identify and explain questions, lack of understanding, or disagreement with the content.

The first of these outcomes is important because many courses will expect you to come to class with foundational knowledge in place so the professor can focus on the more challenging skills of applying, creating, evaluating, or analyzing. By holding you responsible for that initial learning, everyone in the class can take full advantage of the limited face-to-face time.

The second point is important because information does not exist in isolation. All new knowledge should connect to things you previously learned or what you are currently learning in other courses. Finding connections allows you to think more critically about the content and also improves the likelihood that you will retain the knowledge.

Finally, a reflection gives you time to think through your questions or your counterarguments. The professor can either prepare for the course by reading reflections in advance to anticipate questions or it can simply save time by having ready made comments and questions instead of losing time while you try to figure out what it is you don't understand and/or agree with.

## Prewriting

Before you can begin writing your reflection, you must first prepare for the learning experience you are going to reflect on. One idea for preparing to write a reflection is using an adapted KWL chart. A typical KWL chart has a column for *know*, *want to know*, and *learned*. These are often used with reading assignments because it encourages students to connect to their background knowledge before learning something new. For this purpose of this assignment, the *want to know* column has been removed and *reflect* has been added. Look at the chart below and the prewriting questions in each column to help you understand what notes you might add there.



<b>Know</b>	<b>Learned</b>	<b>Reflect</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you already know about this topic?</li> <li>• What beliefs (if any) do you have connected to this topic?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What about the experience stands out to you?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did what you learn add to and/or change your understanding or opinions?</li> <li>• What questions (if any) do you have after the learning experience?</li> </ul>

## Writing

As stated previously, a reflection should not be a summary of the material. Rather, the reflection is focused on your feelings, reactions, beliefs, understanding, and other aspects of your experience during the learning process. This is meant to be more personal and subjective than other writing. This means that your reflection will vary from the others that are submitted because it is specific to you.

Although it is personal, it should still be academic in the tone. This should not sound like a social media post or an email with informal language. Remember that this is still an essay that will be reviewed by a professor and/or teaching assistant. So while personal pronouns may occur more frequently, the ideas should be expressed appropriately.

In many cases, a reflection-style essay will include some questions to prompt your writing. However, if the assignment does not include any specific questions to guide your reflection, you can use the example questions below to help you develop your ideas.

### General guiding questions for a reflection

- Does the reading, lecture, or experience challenge you socially, culturally, emotionally, or theologically? If so, where and how? Why does it bother you or catch your attention?
- Has the reading, lecture, or experience changed your way of thinking? Did it conflict with beliefs you held previously, and what evidence did it provide you with in order to change your thought process on the topic?
- Does the reading, lecture, or experience leave you with any questions? Were these questions ones you had previously or ones you developed only after finishing?
- Did the author, speaker, or those involved in the experience fail to address any important issues? Could a certain fact or idea have dramatically changed the impact or conclusion of the reading, lecture, or experience?
- How do the issues or ideas brought up in this reading, lecture, or experience mesh with past experiences or readings? Do the ideas contradict or support each other?

SOURCE: <https://edtechbooks.org/-bBZp>

Depending on the length, complexity, and familiarity of the content you are reflecting on, you may have more ideas than you can develop in the limited space given for this assignment. In this case, it is important to carefully choose the ideas that most clearly demonstrate that you completed the work and have considered the implications of that learning.

On the other hand, you may find that your ideas for the reflection are encapsulated in one major idea. This is also appropriate as long as it can be fully developed and fulfill the purpose of the assignment.

## **Organization**

The organization of a reflection paper is generally dictated by the number of points you decide to include. In the case of multiple points of reflection, you may have topic sentences that separate your ideas into three or four paragraphs. If you only have one main idea, your essay may have more of a traditional thesis statement that expresses this overarching theme from the learning experience.

Most reflection essays range from about 300-700 words, which is about 1-2 pages double spaced.

# Reviews

In most cases, reviews will not be part of your academic writing experience. The majority of your evaluation writing will occur in the form of a reflection or a critical reading analysis. That being said, there will be many situations in your life that call for a review of a product or experience. For that reason, this chapter will focus on preparing you to write effectively for the purpose of review.

## Purpose

Reviews exist to give potential future consumers or participants of a product or experience an idea of what to expect from the service based on your own experience. The review can also benefit the provider by giving them feedback on what was successful or what needs to be improved.

For this chapter, when the word product is used, it is referring to items or articles that are typically purchased:

- items such as electronics, books, clothing, games, software, artwork, movies etc
- consumable substances such as food, drinks, candy, beauty supplies, art and craft supplies etc

When the words experience is used, it includes either a place/event or treatment and assistance from a specialized workers :

- places like hotels, vacation resorts, salons, businesses, etc
- events like concerts, art shows, festivals, university courses, etc
- services like repair or maintenance work, healthcare, customer support, public transportation, education, application processes etc

As you can see, there are many different contexts that can lead to either formal or informal reviews.

You are often prompted to leave a review after purchasing a product online. While not required, your insight can be very beneficial. Reviews can also be given for experiences like a performance, vacation, or even a course. The majority of these situations allow you to choose whether or not you give feedback. However, in a context like the English Language Center, you are required to give end of semester feedback.\*

Because the feedback you provide on the product or service can have a strong influence for change, it is important to carefully craft a review so that it reaches the widest audience and provides focused feedback.

\*This is because the ELC is a lab school, meaning many of the teachers are in training and need to get input from the students to improve their teaching. It is also because the administrators are constantly trying to improve the student experience and need to hear directly from the target audience.

## 1 Exercise: Online shopping reviews

*Work with a partner to discuss the following questions.*

1. Do you read reviews before buying something online? Do you read the reviews before agreeing to a service or experience? Why or why not?
2. Do you follow any social media influencers? Why do you follow them?
3. Have you ever purchased a product or experience because of a review? Why or why not?
4. How often do you write reviews (your native language included) about products or experiences you purchased? How often do you review them informally (such as in a conversation or social media post)?

## 2 Exercise: Reviewing reviews

*As a group, choose a product or experience that you are either familiar with or are interested in knowing more about. Follow the steps below to complete this exercise.*

1. Search online to find reviews.
2. Read one positive review (4 or 5 stars, 9/10 or 10/10, etc).
3. Read one negative review (1 star, 0/10 or 1/10, etc).
4. Discuss what details, examples, or other points in the two reviews had the most influence over your opinion.
5. After reading the reviews, do the members of your group feel more or less confident in the product or experience?

## Prewriting

Before you begin to write a review, you need to brainstorm about your own experience. Remember that a brainstorm does not require complete sentences, it only requires you to make a list of ideas to help you begin the writing process. To create your brainstorm, you can try asking yourself the questions below to generate your list:

1. Why did you choose this product or experience?
2. Describe your perspective of it. Focus on choosing your adjectives carefully.
3. Did the product or experience live up to your expectations?
4. What are the positive aspects? (pros)
5. What are the negative points? (cons)
6. Do you think others should participate or purchase this?

Once you have your list of ideas, it helps to read through it and mark the most important points. This narrows down the scope of your review and keeps it at paragraph length instead of feeling like an essay.

### 3 Exercise: Brainstorm

*As a class, you will choose a general product or experience that everyone is familiar with. For example, you may choose cellphones or your experience traveling to the United States.*

Use the questions above to create a brainstorm for your review. Compare your brainstorm with a partner.

## Writing

When writing a review, it is always important to keep your intended and unintended audience in mind. An intended audience would be the people you expect to read the review. This could be a potential consumer before committing to the product or experience. An unintended audience is often an employee over online customer service for the related company. This person is monitoring the customer satisfaction levels based on this feedback and reports back trends or patterns (both positive and negative). Remembering that your review will be read by both types of audience is key to writing an effective review.

An effective review is defined by four main characteristics

1. **Honesty:** Submitting a review that inaccurately presents your experience is both unethical and unhelpful. You should avoid purposefully inflating the popularity or effectiveness of something as well as purposefully damaging a reputation without cause. Simply limit your review to truth without exaggeration.
2. **Clarity:** If a review is not clear in presenting ideas, it will be disregarded completely. Your opinion, advice, and/or recommendation should all be easily recognizable.
3. **Specificity:** The brainstorm helps to refine your focus so that your review does not ramble with unnecessary detail or overlook needed support.
4. **Politeness:** Always remember that a review is communication, so on the otherside of your often anonymous review is an actual reader. Especially when dealing directly with a company, recognize that your review may have an impact on someone. This understanding should not come at the cost of being honest, but it should influence your tone.

## Organization

The review should begin with a brief description of the context for the use of the product or your experience. For example, knowing that your negative review of a flight is given in the context of an unexpected snowstorm gives the readers context of how much of your review is applicable to their situation. Another example would be if you used a security camera inside a building instead of outside, it can help a reader know if your context is similar. Keep this section short and specific.

Your thesis statement for this type of writing will be your overall opinion, advice, or recommendation. This should be very clear and obvious.

Next, explain both the positives and negatives you identified in your brainstorm. These points should highlight the parts of your own experience that you think someone needs to know before continuing. Online reviews will often include bullet points to list the pros and cons. This simplifies

reading the review and makes it easier for someone to process. Bulleted items will often be reduced to phrases rather than sentences. For example, the bulleted pros and cons list of a review for a camera battery might say: *lasts for seven hours, takes too long to charge, not worth the cost* etc.

Remember to restate your thesis so that your purpose in writing the review is abundantly clear to the readers.

The length of a review response should be around a paragraph. If the paragraph is any longer, readers will either skim or move to a different review. A longer response typically does not narrow the focus enough on the most important ideas to share with a reader.

In some online review contexts, photos or videos can be helpful additions to clarify your bullet point pros/cons. For example, describing a festival as well-attended or organized will not be as powerful to a reader as seeing videos or pictures that show crowds of people or short lines.

#### **4 Exercise: Write a product review**

*Choose a product that you recently purchased to use as the focus of this review.*

1. Decide on your intended audience, but keep the unintended audience in mind.
2. Brainstorm using the questions in this chapter.
3. Write a product review draft

#### **5 Exercise: Write an experience review**

*Choose an experience that you recently participated in to use as the focus of this review.*

1. Decide on your intended audience, but keep the unintended audience in mind.
2. Brainstorm using the questions in this chapter.
3. Write a product review draft

# Refining Writing

Your writing needs to show good development, unity, and cohesion, in addition to being organized and accurate. This chapter mainly focuses on how to achieve development, unity, and cohesion in your body paragraphs.

# Development

Writing is developed when the ideas are explained in sufficient detail. You need to show that you have thought about the topic and that you have something meaningful to say. Paragraphs that lack development often sound too general or are redundant.

Compare the examples below. The first body paragraph is not developed well. The ideas are repeated and there are no solid examples, details, reasons, etc. Find the supporting sentences in the revised version that help develop the ideas.

## **Example: Body Paragraph (Little development)**

The branch of science known as geology relates to the study of solid earth. Some of the features that geologists study include mountains and other solid features of earth. Geologists study these features extensively. Geologists study the composition of these formations. These studies of the earth are collectively called geology.

## **Example: Body Paragraph (Better development)**

The branch of science known as geology relates to the study of solid earth. That means that geologists study features of earth that are based on rocks and minerals. Some of the features that they study include mountains, volcanoes, canyons, and plate tectonics. Geologists study these features extensively because they want to investigate the gradual processes that form them and by studying the processes, they can help prevent devastation from future disasters (King, 2018). These processes include natural disasters like earthquakes. Geologists also study the composition of these formations by taking samples and analyzing them. These studies of the earth are collectively called geology.

You can revise a paragraph that lacks development by adding supporting sentences. Supporting sentences can give examples, explanations, details, descriptions, facts, reasons, etc. Which types of supporting sentences you use will depend on your topic. In researched essays, using and explaining sources can also help you develop your ideas.

You can start revising a paragraph by asking questions about the topic sentence (or the other supporting sentences). Ask questions like "Why?" "Like what?" and "How?" The answers to these questions can give you ideas to include that will develop your paragraph.

The first example paragraph had poor development because the ideas stopped too soon. The writer basically only said that geologists extensively study solid earth features and their composition.



The revised body paragraph has better development also stated that geologists extensively study solid earth features and their composition, but it did not stop too soon. It gives lots of examples and relevant details.

In order to revise the paragraph, the author might have asked questions like this: Geology relates to the study of solid earth.

- Question: What does that mean?
  - Answer: That means that they study features of earth that are based on rocks and minerals.
- Question: What features do they study?
  - Answer: Mountains, volcanoes, canyons, and plate tectonics.
- Question: Why do they study these features extensively?
  - Answer: Because they want to study the processes that form them.
- Question: What processes do they study?
  - Answer: Natural processes like earthquakes.
- Question: What else do they study?
  - Answer: The composition of earth formations.
- Question: How do the composition of these formations?
  - Answer: By taking samples and analyzing them.

### **Exercise: Ask questions to generate supporting sentences**

*Write questions about this topic sentence or the answers to the questions you write.*

Topic sentence: It is essential to understand the natural resources that exist on the planet.

- Question:
  - Answer:
- Question:
  - Answer:
- Question:
  - Answer:

# Unity

Writing has unity when the supporting sentences all work together to support the topic sentences. Paragraphs that lack unity are confusing to the reader because some ideas do not seem to belong.

Compare the examples below. The first paragraph has poor unity because there are sentences that do not support the topic sentence.

## **Example: Body Paragraph (Poor Unity)**

Chopin was a musical prodigy. While many people are aware of the great pieces he wrote, not as many people are aware of how young he was when he began his musical career. Chopin published one of his first pieces at the age of seven and one year later performed in a public concert (Plantinga & Hendley, 2018). At an astonishingly young age, he truly showed great musical talent in both of these things. While it may be hard to imagine, his interest in music may have begun even earlier. "In infancy Chopin was always strangely moved when listening to his mother or eldest sister playing the piano" (Plantinga & Hendley, 2018, "Life," para. 1). Many children show some response to music in their infancy. This early sensitivity may have helped his early desire to create and perform. It is clear that he was musically gifted very early in life.

## **Example: Body Paragraph (Revised for Unity)**

Chopin was a musical prodigy. While many people are aware of the great pieces he wrote, not as many people are aware of how young he was when he began his musical career. Chopin published one of his first pieces at the age of seven and one year later performed in a public concert (Plantinga & Hendley, 2018). At an astonishingly young age, he truly showed great musical talent in both of these things. While it may be hard to imagine, his interest in music may have begun even earlier. "In infancy Chopin was always strangely moved when listening to his mother or eldest sister playing the piano" (Plantinga & Hendley, 2018, "Life," para. 1). ~~Many children show some response to music in their infancy.~~ This early sensitivity may have helped his early desire to create and perform. It is clear that he was musically gifted very early in life.

## **Exercise: Revise for unity**

*Read the paragraphs. Cross out sentences that are not connected to the topic sentence.*

1. The aftermath of an earthquake is more dangerous than the earthquake itself. When an earthquake occurs, the shaking causes problems with existing buildings and construction (United States Geologic Survey, n.d.). For example, gas lines may break because the ground around them shifts, and broken gas lines are extremely dangerous to people. Gas lines smell terrible when they are broken. Other dangers after an earthquake include landslides and tsunamis. The sudden energy of the earthquake sends either land or water moving, and anything in the path can be destroyed (USGS, n.d.). Earthquakes can have more energy than hurricanes. Tidal waves from tsunamis can swallow entire countries in the Pacific. When compared to the dangers directly associated with the earthquake, we can see that the aftermath is also important to be prepared for.
2. One cause of pollution is huge factories. In the factories we produce thousands and thousands of different things for humanity. The biggest factories are in the food, petroleum, forest, auto, and pharmacy industries. Factories burn coal, petroleum, and wood. Having many factories would not be a problem if they used different energy. The problem is that no matter what kind of combustible material we are talking about, all of them pollute our air. They also are difficult forms of energy to replace so we will have less fuel in the future. Pollution has been a part of earth even millions of years ago but not the amount of contamination that we now observe. The Earth's ozone layer has started to thin because of the monumental measure of harmful substances in the air. The factories emit into the air harmful chemicals, and every single one of these substances is poisoning the air. Huge factories are in some ways useful for humans but also harmful to the environment and pollute the air.

# Cohesion

Writing has cohesion when the ideas logically flow from one to the next. Writing paragraphs that have good sequencing will help your readers understand your ideas more clearly. Sometimes you will have a clear order that relates to time. Sometimes the order is more flexible and there is not one perfect way to sequence the sentences.

## 1 Exercise: Identify logical order of sentences

*Each of these sentences combine to make a paragraph. On a piece of paper, write a number for each sentence A-E to show a logical order for sequencing the supporting sentences.*

Topic Sentence: Robots are becoming more advanced with advances in technology.

- A. NASA has robots in space that "are performing tasks with sub-millimeter precision" (National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 2015, para. 3).
- B. Today's robots are very powerful.
- C. On the other hand, the robots of twenty years ago were not able to do as much or make such exact movements.
- D. In addition to being powerful, today's robots are also very precise.
- E. Robots in the United Kingdom, for example, were strong enough to harvest five tons of barley from a farm run by robots last year (Pultarova, 2017).

Conclusion Sentence: With the amazing advances we have seen recently, it is very likely that robots will continue to improve and become capable of doing even more.

## 2 Exercise: Insert a sentence

*The underlined numbers represent places that the bolded sentence could be inserted into the paragraph. Choose the most logical place to insert the bolded sentence below.*

1 Everyone experiences stress. 2 Some of these causes include health, relationships, life changes, and conflicts between your beliefs and your values ("Causes of Stress," 2018). 3 Regardless of the cause, everyone should understand stress because they will have to know how to handle it. 4

**Even though all people have different lives and circumstances, stress is universal because it has so many different causes.**

### 3 Exercise: Identify misplaced sentences

*Read the original paragraph. Identify the sentences that seem to be out of place. Then compare the original to the revised version.*

Original:

The skin is one of the most important lines of protection that the human body has against infection. If a germ makes it past the skin, the body has several mechanisms in place to destroy it. For example, the body uses white blood cells to find and destroy germs that enter the body ("Components of the Immune System," 2015). These mechanisms don't always work quickly enough to prevent people from becoming sick, but they do begin fighting the bacteria or virus and help people recover. In order to become infected, either bacteria or viruses have to enter the body. The skin prevents this from happening most of the time, as we encounter thousands—if not millions—of germs every day. Thus, the skin is one of the best ways to protect the body from germs because it blocks the majority of them.

Revision:

The skin is one of the most important lines of protection that the human body has against infection. In order to become infected, either bacteria or viruses have to enter the body. The skin prevents this from happening most of the time, as we encounter thousands—if not millions—of germs every day. If a germ makes it past the skin, the body has several mechanisms in place to destroy it. For example, the body uses white blood cells to find and destroy germs that enter the body ("Components of the Immune System," 2015). These mechanisms don't always work quickly enough to prevent people from becoming sick, but they do begin fighting the bacteria or virus and help people recover. Thus, the skin is one of the best ways to protect the body from germs because it blocks the majority of them.

### 4 Exercise: Revise for cohesion

*Revise the paragraph for cohesion.*

The languages spoken in Haiti and the Dominican Republic are one evidence of their distinct cultures. On one side of the island, they speak French, while on the other side they speak Spanish. Interestingly, both of these languages were imported, and they are both "...the result of centuries of European colonization and numerous power struggles" (Silver, 2010, para. 3). The indigenous people of the island originally spoke Taino. However, France and Spain both established colonies, bringing their languages with them. There are a few words of Taino that remained in Spanish like huracán (tornado) and maíz (corn) (Reichard, 2017). Due to these new influences, most of the native Taino language was conquered. Both sides of the island are certainly distinct because they now have different languages.

## Cohesive Devices

One way to improve the cohesion of your writing is by using cohesive devices properly. There are many types of cohesive devices: pronouns, adjectives, determiners, prepositions, conjunctions,

repeated words, transition words, etc.

Some cohesive devices show certain relationships between ideas, like showing contrast or a cause/effect relationship.

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### **Showing Addition**

Another	<b>Another</b> reason to use public transportation is that it is reliable.
Also	Public transportation is <b>also</b> reliable.
Besides	<b>Besides</b> being efficient, public transportation is reliable.
In addition	<b>In addition</b> to being efficient, public transportation is reliable.
First, second, etc.	<b>Second</b> , public transportation is reliable.

### **Showing Similarity**

Both	The two sports share <b>both</b> a wide fan base and a name.
Likewise	The two sports share a wide fan base. <b>Likewise</b> , they share a name.
Similarly	The two sports share a wide fan base. <b>Similarly</b> , they share a name.

### **Showing Contrast**

However	RNA is able to leave the nucleus of the cell. <b>However</b> , DNA isn't.
In contrast	RNA is able to leave the nucleus of the cell. <b>In contrast</b> , DNA isn't.
On the other hand	RNA is able to leave the nucleus of the cell. <b>On the other hand</b> , DNA isn't.
Whereas	<b>Whereas</b> RNA is able to leave the nucleus of the cell, DNA isn't.
Yet	RNA is able to leave the nucleus of the cell, <b>yet</b> DNA isn't.

### **Show Cause/Effect**

Thus	Excessive stress weakens the body, <b>thus</b> making it easier to get sick.
As a consequence	Excessive stress weakens the body. <b>As a consequence</b> , stress makes it easier to get sick.
Therefore	Excessive stress weakens the body. <b>Therefore</b> , stress makes it easier to get sick.
As a result	Excessive stress weakens the body. <b>As a result</b> , stress makes it easier to get sick.
Consequently	Excessive stress weakens the body. <b>Consequently</b> , stress makes it easier to get sick.

### **Giving Examples**

An example of	Squats are <b>an example of</b> exercises that strengthen our muscles
For instance	Many exercises strengthen our muscles. <b>For instance</b> , squats are an exercise that improve muscle strength in your legs.
To illustrate	Many exercises strengthen our muscles. <b>To illustrate</b> , consider how your muscles are strengthened when you do an exercise like squats.

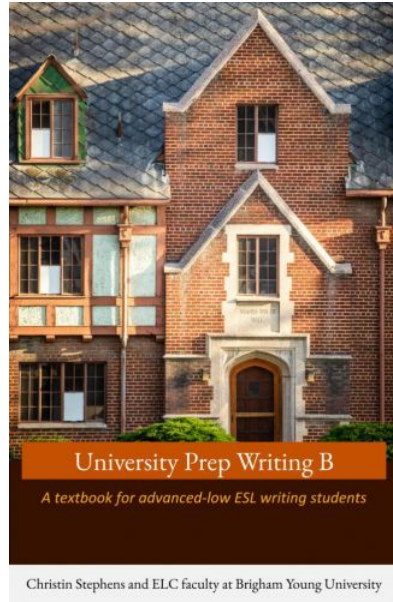
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## 5 Exercise: Identify connectors

1. *The following research comes from an article by Peri (2018). If you wanted to include all of this research in a body paragraph, what kind of cohesive device could you use?*
  1. Sleep plays a critical role in thinking and learning.
  2. Lack of sleep impairs attention, alertness, concentration, reasoning, and problem solving.
  3. Various sleep cycles play a role in "consolidating" memories in the mind.
  4. If you don't get enough sleep, you won't be able to remember what you learned.
2. *The following research comes from an article by DiSalvo (2017). If you wanted to include all of this research in a body paragraph, what kind of cohesive device could you use?*
  1. Controlling your breathing calms your
  2. Breathing regulates your blood
  3. Counting breaths taps into the brain's emotional control regions.
  4. The rhythm of your breathing affects
  5. Controlled breathing may boost the immune
3. *The following research comes from an article by Jacobs (2017). If you wanted to include all of this research in a body paragraph, what kind of cohesive devices could you use?*
  1. To give someone a business card, a Japanese business person will hold the card with two hands as she passes the card to the costumer. The card should be studied and discussed as part of the conversation.
  2. When an American business person passes a business card to another person, they do not hold it with two hands, and they may not even have a card with them. Many millennials prefer to have business contacts go to their LinkedIn Failure to present a business card is not offensive in American culture.







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