Many people use the term “essay” to mean any paper written for a class. In actuality, there are many different types of essays, each of which has a unique purpose, form, and style. We call these different types of essays “modes of discourse,” and they include expository, persuasive, and compare-contrast essays to name just a few.

This section of the Guide has a dual purpose. First, various types of essays are described and suggestions are included about how to approach each particular type of writing. Second, the sample essays are good tools for you to see how these different essays look in their final form. These are not templates (no essay can be a carbon copy of another even in form), but they will give you a good idea of what a final piece of writing for each mode of discourse looks like. It would be advantageous to critically analyze the form and content of each sample against the instruction for how to write each type of essay.
An expository essay explains something using facts rather than opinions. The purpose of this type of essay is to inform an audience about a subject. It is not intended to persuade or present an argument of any kind. Writing this type of essay is a good way to learn about all the different perspectives on a topic. Many students use the expository essay to explore a variety of topics, and do so in a wide range of formats, including “process” and “definition” essays.

WHO IS THE INTENDED AUDIENCE FOR AN EXPOSITORY ESSAY?
The audience for an expository essay is a general one, and can vary widely depending upon the topic chosen. Keeping this in mind, students should compose their essays to reach a broad selection of readers. A good rule of thumb to use is to assume the audience has no prior knowledge of the topic.

HOW DO I WRITE AN EXPOSITORY ESSAY?
The following steps can assist you in creating a cohesive, well-written expository essay that will inform the audience on the selected topic.

Choose an Essay Topic
Some essay topics that work well with expository writing include:

- How advertising works
• Challenges of disabled Internet users
• The life of a first-generation immigrant
• Internet personalities

Although choosing a topic can seem like a daunting task at first, there are some ways to simplify this process. Asking reflective questions can help determine what you want to write about. For example, consider the following questions:

• What topic interests me most?
• What do I want to learn as I write about this topic?
• What prior knowledge do I have about this topic?
• Have I conducted thorough research to provide concrete information to my audience?

**Conduct Research**

Once the topic has been determined, start researching early in the writing process so that your essay provides the audience with facts, statistics, direct quotes, and paraphrased passages. This will increase your credibility as you demonstrate the knowledge of the subject matter at hand. You can get the research process started in several different ways.

In today’s global society, students have access to a wider selection of sources than ever before, including online journal articles, reputable Web sites, online libraries, databases linked to the circulation desks at traditional libraries, and e-books. However, it can also be beneficial to take a trip to a public or college/university library to conduct research among the stacks since many sources are not yet in electronic form. Furthermore, librarians are often available to assist in the research process.

Checking out a broad spectrum of sources can give a writer additional ideas at the start of the writing process, and can assist in finding the most reliable information for an expository essay.
How can a writer find the best information possible? The following tips can start you on the right path to success as you research a topic to create a credible, informative expository essay:

**Note:** The Associated Press (AP) style guide (not to be confused with APA style) is a style used by many journalists who happen to write a great deal of expository pieces. The examples and tips for expository essays in this Guide refer to and use AP style.

- When writing using AP style, start an essay with as much concrete information as possible or an eye-catching anecdote or quote.
- If the purpose of the essay is to inform the audience on the consequences of sexual activity in adolescents, for example, use that topic as the search term when starting the research process. A variety of hits will most likely appear in an online database, Internet search engine, or library catalog database. At this time, enter other search terms to narrow the scope of the research and find the sources that best fit the information you need to cover in the expository essay. For example, instead of the broad topic of consequences of sexual activity in adolescents, enter terms such as teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and adolescents, and so forth to focus on specific issues associated with sexually active teens.
- Use a variety of source types to showcase different perspectives. Interviews with experts in the subject matter discussed within the essay, journal articles, Web sites, books, and electronic articles can all contain varied information to use in an expository essay.
- Once initial sources are gathered, it is time to start the prewriting process by brainstorming main points, specific details, and information to include in the expository essay. Choose one (or several) prewriting techniques to help you generate ideas:
- **Freewriting:** In a time period of about 5–10 minutes, write down all your thoughts related to the topic, even if some of them do not make it into the draft or final essay. Do not pay attention to spelling, grammar, or sentence structure. Instead, the goal here is to generate as many ideas as possible. For example:

  * Sex, teens, girls, boys, differences between the two, how old when sexual activity starts? Having a baby, get a disease, possibly life-threatening, scary, depressing, isolation, lose friends, might not finish school, stay with mom/dad of baby? Body issues in pregnant teens, loss of scholarships for college, terrified of pain associated with labor and delivery. What happens when the baby comes? Who will take care of it? Money? Job? Marriage? Dating? Loss of freedom...

- **Listing:** Using this simple, yet effective prewriting method, write down all the terms associated with the essay topic in a list form. Often, one idea sparks another one, and the list becomes longer and longer until it forms a solid base for the expository essay. This process is likely to produce key words/phrases to be used during the research process. For example:

  * Teenagers
  * Sex
  * Consequences
  * STDs
  * Pregnancy
  * Emotional repercussions
  * Educational consequences
  * Depression
- **Clustering**: This method allows writers to start with one central idea or term, and branch out using a diagram designed to expand on the initial idea. The main idea or topic is typically placed in a middle circle or bubble, and the supporting ideas branch off of that main idea into bubbles of their own, which can then branch off into subcategories or ideas.

After putting your ideas down on paper, an outline is a great way to organize those ideas. Outlines can serve as the framework for an expository essay. They clearly point out any items that need to be re-ordered or deleted and illustrate any areas that might need further clarification. For example:

**Paper Title**: Sexually Active Teens: Confusion, Challenges, and Consequences

**I. Introduction**
- A. Adolescence is a time of uncertainty and excitement.
- B. Sexual activity can add further complications.
- C. Working thesis statement: The consequences of becoming sexually active during adolescence can include pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and depression.

**II. Pregnancy**
- A. Health risks to babies born to teen mothers
- B. Educational consequences
- C. Financial burdens for teens and society

**III. Sexually Transmitted Diseases**
- A. Teens are at high risk for STDs.
- B. Teens account for a large part of 15 million STD yearly infections in the United States.
- C. Common STDs plaguing teens: Chlamydia, gonorrhea—these can cause more serious health issues
IV. Depression
   A. Sexually active teens are more likely to be depressed than nonsexually active counterparts.
   B. Both teen boys/girls can experience depression when sexually active.
   C. Age of first sexual experience and commitment of partner can contribute to depression.

V. Conclusion
   A. Teens must weigh consequences of sexual activity.
   B. Making an informed decision is best.
   C. Teens should be ready to face financial, emotional, and physical consequences when sexually active.

You can use an outline like this one to start each section of the expository essay, from the introduction, to elaborating on each main point throughout the essay, to the conclusion. The actual structure of the expository essay should follow the outline as you elaborate on the basic points within it to create an organized, cohesive final product. Keep in mind that the essay structure might change during the writing process and a great way to stay organized is to make changes to the outline as well.

Some revision will be necessary as you compose the final expository essay, so be sure to ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my essay informative? Remember, expository essays should be informative, not persuasive.
- Did the quotes and information I used throughout the assignment give the essay more depth and credibility?
- Did I include a lead paragraph that will capture my audience’s attention and inspire them to read more?
- Have I presented the information in a logical, easy-to-follow manner?
- Does the essay meet the assignment’s requirements?
Before submitting the final essay, revision and proofreading are necessary to catch any errors and make any necessary changes to the content. Both revision and proofreading can be personal, subjective processes, and what works well for one writer might not be a good fit for another. However, a few proven proofreading techniques can lead to successful revision in order to create an effective expository essay.

Reading your paper out loud will help you catch commonly missed errors; it also illustrates how the paper reads to your intended audience. If the paper does not flow well when you read it out loud, it is safe to assume your audience will have problems with it as well.

In addition, reading the paper out loud to someone else allows you to do a “test-run” with a trusted individual who will give honest feedback before you submit the paper for review by an instructor. Finally, walking away from the draft, taking a short break, and then returning to the work can help provide you with a fresh perspective, find additional errors, and possibly inspire a few new lines to make your essay shine. In the end, you will have an essay that you can be proud of.
Persuasive writing has the goal of convincing readers that a certain perspective is the desired one. A scholarly writer should persuade without showing any bias. Being neutral, or unbiased, means acknowledging various ways to look at any situation and avoiding extreme points of view. A good persuasive writer does not exclude or ignore the possibility of exceptions to that certain perspective.

Convincing readers about a perspective starts with informing. Then as a persuasive essay progresses, a writer tries to lessen the reader’s resistance to the essay’s point of view. This can be accomplished by using argumentative and persuasive techniques.

Argumentation and persuasion are sometimes considered the same, but they differ in certain ways. Argumentation involves the use of sound logic, reason, and objective statements. Persuasion, on the other hand, includes the use of dramatic, emotional, and motivational types of support for a particular point of view. Therefore, these two styles of writing work well in concert with each other.

For example, if a writer wants to convince readers about the existence of hunger in the United States, he or she would research facts, statistics, and expert reports. However, if the writer wants to motivate readers to take action to alleviate hunger, a dramatic illustration of a real-life case history about hungry children might be effective. Because readers crave rational arguments about a topic and the emotional connection to caring about a topic, argumentation and persuasion are often used together in the same essay.
Is persuasive writing used in professional and personal lives? Absolutely. In business, employees need to make persuasive proposals for projects, for better processes, or even for a raise. Asking for project approval requires an employee to think of what his or her manager (the audience) needs. The audience needs to know how the proposal benefits them and they have to be convinced of the project’s advantages. How does a persuasive business proposal do this? Business proposals normally include facts, figures, and other research about why something should be approved. In addition, a persuasive proposal addresses all possible objections and convinces readers that what is being proposed is beneficial overall. The persuasive mode of writing is useful to all writers professionally and academically.

**Important Things to Know About Persuasive Writing:**

- A writer can never persuade all readers!
- The steps in the writing process are the same as for other types of writing.
- Most writing styles or modes have persuasive elements.
- Be open to learning about different points of view on your topic.

**HOW TO APPROACH WRITING A PERSUASIVE ESSAY**

The main focus in writing a persuasive essay is the soundness of the argument. The evidence presented needs to be representative of the claims about the topic. For example, if you want to convince readers that a community church’s minister embezzled from the church, pre-
senting reliable evidence is critical because people will tend to believe a minister is a good, moral person. This is the skill of using sound logic.

Another approach to persuasive writing happens when the writer uses emotional power to convince readers. Consider commercials that use emotional appeals, such as a cute puppy or a sexy woman or man, to convince customers to buy certain products. In writing, persuasion is accomplished with evocative phrases such as in *this land of the free* or *jaws of the animal trap crush the bone*. By using dramatic phrases and evidence, the persuasive writer enables readers to envision whatever is being discussed. This is the skill of dramatic, emotional appeals.

A third approach to persuasive writing is inspiring readers to believe in what you say by using credible sources. How can writers truly expect the reading audience to accept what is stated in an essay? Using reliable research sources from experts who have good reputations through their education, experience, or life’s accomplishments encourages readers to be more receptive to the claims made in the essay. Quoting a holocaust survivor is more powerful than just quoting a young historian without that actual life experience, for example. Convince the reader that you, as a writer, are worth listening to throughout your essay. This is the skill of using the source’s or author’s credibility.

**SUPPORTING PERSUASIVE CLAIMS**

Evidence is not just statistics. Evidence includes expert opinions, anecdotes, illustrative examples, facts, survey results, details, reasons, or an interview with a person who knows a lot about the topic. The evidence should answer the questions: *Who says this is true? Why should I care?*

In order to present convincing evidence, a writer is responsible for finding and analyzing information. That evidence becomes dramatic and emotionally compelling when it paints a vivid picture of an aspect of the topic being discussed, like the suffering of an abused child.
The most important item about presenting evidence in a persuasive essay is that it must be documented to give credit to the author or organization that stated it. (For proper citation guidelines, refer to Chapter 12, Basic Citation Guidelines, pp. 121–142, as well as use an official citation guide.)

**ROGERIAN STRATEGY**

The Rogerian strategy creates goodwill to answer opposing points of view early in a persuasive discussion. This strategy is named after a prominent psychologist, Carl Rogers, who believed that part of the job of a writer was to reduce conflict instead of trying to be the winner of the debate.

Making readers angry by threatening their beliefs is counterproductive to the success of your persuasive essay. When people feel threatened, they naturally shut down and don't want to listen, so try to avoid alienating readers by offering only one side of a story. Instead, find some common ground between your perspective and the perspectives of others. When you acknowledge that other points of view exist, you are respecting the reader, thus creating common ground. This decreases the chance for conflict and encourages the reader to listen and be open to the supporting evidence presented in your essay.

**Example**: The topic is sex education in schools. Using the Rogerian strategy, a writer acknowledges the opposing point of view right away about parents handling sex education at home in private. For instance: *Although sex education should be the prerogative of parents of teens, many parents fear this conversation and never talk about sex.* At this point, statistics could be discussed showing how many teens never learn about sex in the home environment. The threat felt by readers who believe in private sex education has been lessened. Respect has been demonstrated for the opposition.

When writers share what they have in common with those who hold a different opinion, more often than not, the reader gains respect for the writer. Consequently, the reader becomes more open to listen-
Persuasive essays should be written to the writer's perspective, and the reading audience becomes more receptive to the writer's perspective. The following are suggested strategies for planning and writing a persuasive essay.

**Plan for Writing a Persuasive Essay**

1. **Introduction**
   - Describe problem
   - Get attention
   - Surprise readers
   - Suggest benefits
   - Ask questions

2. **Body paragraphs**
   - Keep building interest
   - Acknowledge opposition
   - Lessen resistance to your point of view
   - Prove the value of your perspective
   - Present evidence
   - Quote experts

3. **Closing and conclusion**
   - Tell readers what actions to take
   - Show respect
   - Reveal new synthesized knowledge
   - Look at the future of the issue
No matter the topic or the situation, the purpose of compare and contrast remains the same: to highlight significant similarities and differences between various concepts, things, or ideas. People use compare-contrast evaluations to make both everyday and life-changing decisions—for example, which restaurant to eat at this weekend, the next car to buy, which movie was the funniest one of the summer, where to vacation this year, or the best place to live and raise a family. In any of these situations, the decision makers are comparing (considering the similarities) and contrasting (thinking about the differences) their options before arriving at a conclusion.

Compare and contrast is also a well-known method in academic writing because it forces the writer to think critically, make connections, demonstrate relationships, and allow for a deeper understanding and analysis of the issues. This type of essay can be used within many fields and subjects; for example, consider the following situations:

- A medical professional who spends time explaining various treatment options for a patient
- A business manager who puts together a report describing three ways to reduce employee turnover
A professional in the criminal justice field who considers all the factors of a particular solution before creating an action plan

In all of these real-life examples, each person would need to consider and discuss how the various alternatives for treatment, reducing employee turnover, and implementing a particular solution compare (are similar to each other) and contrast (are different from one another).

GETTING STARTED
The major difference between daily decisions and a well-written compare-contrast essay, of course, is that an essay requires analysis of information and the use of reliable, academic sources to support the main points of the assignment. To do this, highlight significant patterns and variations between the items being compared and/or contrasted. Even before writing the essay, you can follow these steps to get started:

1. Research and locate various perspectives on the essay topic.
2. Look for themes (repeated ideas), significant information, and differences.
3. Organize the themes or significant information into a chart or Venn diagram (see Figure 23.1).
4. Consider what features of the chart or Venn diagram are most important and relevant to the assignment.
5. Write an initial thesis statement.
6. Begin outlining or drafting the essay.

For an example of step 3, consider one student’s paper about the similarities and differences between nursing and bottle-feeding. A simple Venn diagram uses circles to represent connections, relationships, and overlapping commonalities and can work well during the initial stages of the writing process, as shown in Figure 23.1.
Figure 23.1: Compare-Contrast Venn Diagram

This same information could also be written out in a chart, as shown in Table 23.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 23.1 SAMPLE CHART OF COMPARE AND CONTRAST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADVANTAGES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURSING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fights infection (ear, lower respiratory) in baby</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May fight allergies, asthma, diabetes in baby</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 23.1 SAMPLE CHART OF COMPARE AND CONTRAST [continued]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADVANTAGES</th>
<th>DISADVANTAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURSING</td>
<td>FORMULA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier for babies to digest</td>
<td>Mothers do not need to watch diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full of helpful antibodies</td>
<td>More scheduling flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for baby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience (supply and</td>
<td>No privacy needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural temperature)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burns calories in mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May decrease risk of certain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cancers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May lower risk of high blood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pressure and cardiovascular</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After organizing the diagram or chart (and before drafting the essay), look through the information for significant patterns that relate to the assignment. These patterns will depend on whether the purpose of the task is to inform or persuade the reader because compare-contrast essays can be used for either intention. In an infor-
compare and contrast the similarities and differences by focusing on unusual or significant features about the items being discussed in order to explain a concept or phenomenon for the reader. For example: *Dr. Smith suggested that violence spreads like a virus. This proposed a new way of reducing gang-related crime compared with previous theories on violent crime.* This statement implies that you should include extensive information in the essay not only on Dr. Smith’s findings, but also on how Dr. Smith’s findings compare and contrast from other theories on violent crime.

On the other hand, for a persuasive assignment, use similarities and differences to highlight a particular choice, option, or feature over others—all while trying to convince the reader to agree with that decision. For example, consider the business manager mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. This manager’s written report to a superior might begin like this:

> As many have noticed, OG, Inc. has been experiencing some heavy employee turnover that is causing productivity and morale issues for our remaining staff. Some of the most reasonable solutions for reducing turnover and helping OG remain competitive are to (a) increase wages to the industry standard, (b) authorize employees to work from home one day per week, or (c) allow employees more flexibility in their weekly schedules. Based on various factors, such as cost, disruption to company mission, ease of implementation, and employee feedback, it is recommended that OG pursue the second option and allow employees to work from home one day per week.

This report is trying to persuade the manager’s boss to agree with this perspective. Therefore, you would expect the rest of the manager’s report to focus on how the three options are similar to (compare) and different from (contrast) each other based on the criteria mentioned—
cost, possible disruption of company mission, ease of implementation, and feedback—all while highlighting why the second option is the best choice.

THE TWO FORMATS
Regardless of whether the essay is informative, persuasive, or otherwise, any compare-contrast essay is usually organized into two formats:

- **Block**: All of the points about item 1 are covered before moving on to item 2, then on to item 3, and so on.
- **Point-by-point**: The similarities and differences of each *element* from items 1, 2, 3, and so on are explained before moving on to the next element.

As an illustration of the two formats, consider another example where a student decided to write about the effects of common college student behaviors (procrastination and binge drinking) on stress, productivity, and relationships with others. This topic could be organized into either block or point-by-point format:

### Block
- **A.** Procrastination
  - a. Stress
  - b. Productivity
  - c. Relationships
- **B.** Binge drinking
  - a. Stress
  - b. Productivity
  - c. Relationships

### Point-by-point
- **A.** Stress
  - a. Procrastination
  - b. Binge drinking
- **B.** Productivity
  - a. Procrastination
  - b. Binge drinking
- **C.** Relationships
  - a. Procrastination
  - b. Binge drinking
Notice that the first example is considered block format because the student covers all of the information (impact on stress, productivity, and relationships) about procrastination (item 1) before moving onto binge drinking (item 2). However, as shown here, the student could also organize the essay around each of the points mentioned about procrastination and binge drinking—in this case, the impact on stress, productivity, and relationships. This changes the format to point-by-point because the student compares and contrasts how both items (procrastination and binge drinking) impact that particular point (i.e., stress) before moving on to the next.

Comparing and contrasting can also be written as a single paragraph instead of strictly paragraph by paragraph. For example:

Most researchers believe that procrastination has mostly negative consequences. Several studies, including one by Tice and Baumeister (1997), found that procrastinators got lower grades and had higher levels of stress and illness. Businesses are also becoming increasingly aware of the productivity costs of procrastination (“DePaul,” 2007). Some argue that procrastination can have benefits, though, as Chu and Choi (2005) say that not all procrastinators are lazy and undisciplined. However, even if other researchers, such as Tice and Bannister (1997), have conceded that procrastinators may be right when they say they work best under pressure, most studies have focused on the negative effects of procrastination.

Within this one paragraph, the student compared and contrasted some of the negatives (lower grades, higher levels of stress and illness, productivity costs) with some of the positives (procrastination does not mean laziness, some work best under pressure) based on research that has been done on procrastination. Depending on the assignment, the student might need to spend more time in follow-
ing paragraphs on each of the previous points (effects on grades, stress, illness, business productivity), but this demonstrates that the act of comparing and contrasting a concept does not need to be strictly organized into separate paragraphs based on similar chunks of information.

The most important factor in deciding on a compare-contrast format, though, is the purpose of the assignment. This is because there are advantages and disadvantages to both organizational models. The main advantage of block format is that readers are less likely to get lost in the details of the items (because there is a strict separation between each item of the essay), but the biggest disadvantage with block format is that it can be harder for the reader to make the appropriate connections between the items being compared. In addition, the second block of information tends to get more emphasis than the first one, which can be an advantage or a disadvantage, depending on the focus of the essay. To minimize these issues, the writer could add a paragraph before the conclusion that links the different points together.

THESIS STATEMENTS AND TRANSITIONS

When writing a thesis for a compare-contrast essay, it can be easy to fall into a standard statement, such as Item 1 and item 2 are similar in more ways than they are different. Instead, when writing a thesis for this type of essay, give a more specific idea of the similarities and differences that will be discussed. The thesis statement will also have a different focus depending on whether it is an informative or persuasive essay.

- **Informative essay:** The thesis should give an idea of the various perspectives:
  
  There are various advantages and disadvantages to both nursing and bottle-feeding. Because of this, it is up to the mother to decide what works best for her and the baby.
● **Persuasive essay:** The thesis needs to choose an item or position over another:

*Due to factors such as cost, comfort, and scheduling, nursing is a better option for new mothers.*

In addition to the thesis statement, another focus should be on the transition words and phrases between items. As with most transitions, they can help the reader fully understand the organization of an essay. The following transitions are the most popular ones used when attempting to compare and/or contrast:

- **Compare:** *Like, similar to, also, similarly, in the same way, likewise, again, compared to, in like manner*

- **Contrast:** *Unlike, in contrast, contrasted with, on the contrary, however, on the other hand, although, yet, even though, nevertheless, conversely, at the same time, regardless, despite, while, some people argue*

Finally, when assigned a compare-contrast essay, be sure to carefully read and understand the assignment directions. Remember that when an assignment asks for this type of essay, the instructor usually wants students to mention both sides—the similarities and the differences. However, when some instructors ask students to compare, they want students to focus on the similarities, and when other instructors use the word compare, they want students to discuss both likenesses and differences. In addition, some instructors might only ask for contrasting opinions. So, even if the assignment asks for a comparison or a contrast analysis (or both), always ask the instructor for clarity.
Although we might think of the phrase *being critical* to mean pointing out problems with something or attacking someone or that person’s ideas, that is not necessarily the goal of critical or evaluative writing. Even though writing that evaluates a concept, idea, or argument analyzes the line of reasoning, evidence, or conclusions another author has presented, that evaluation might, in fact, find that the author’s argument is strong and that the facts and evidence are well presented. Writing that is considered *critical* might not negatively criticize something at all—instead, it takes a careful, analytical look at the ideas being presented. The ultimate goal of critical and evaluative writing is to evaluate, analyze, assess, and appraise.

Evaluation is actually a common part of our everyday lives. We are all familiar with the movie reviews found in newspapers and magazines—many people use them to decide if a movie is worth seeing. When we see a movie, we might talk about whether or not we liked the story line, how good (or bad) the actors were, and maybe even how the setting or dialogue had an effect on us. We may agree or disagree with the person who wrote the movie review. A book review or restaurant critique is very similar.

Another example of where evaluation takes place is at work. Managers often evaluate how well employees are doing their jobs, assessing whether they come to work on time, whether they are able to work
independently or need direct supervision, and whether their work is accurate, timely, and well done. That assessment will be important when it comes to improving the company itself as well as providing employees with the guidance they need to be more successful.

Newspaper and journal articles are often evaluative as well. For example, an article may assess a particular government program such as the No Child Left Behind Act, or the recent “bail-out” programs providing emergency funds to major investment firms. By reading these articles that evaluate the effectiveness of these programs, you not only become more informed about the subject itself, but your decisions regarding who or what to vote for in upcoming elections might be swayed as well. The more critical information you can gather on a subject the better informed you will be to make important decisions. Furthermore, assessments like these have the potential to help governing bodies determine whether such programs need to be continued, revised, or completely halted. In other words, critical or evaluative thinking and writing is very beneficial to everyone.

**WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON TYPES OF CRITICAL ESSAYS?**

One of the most common types of critical essays students might be asked to write is the essay that assesses an article or book that someone else has published. For example, an essay might critically assess or evaluate the conclusions of a famous author made in a book that argues how the recent economic crisis in America was caused by a combination of excessive consumer spending and lax requirements for money lending. The critical essay would identify the author’s thesis or argument, analyze the line of reasoning, assess whether the evidence and information presented justify the author’s conclusion, and explore whether the author’s argument is logical and reasonable. The essay might analyze gaps in reasoning, explore contradictory evidence that questions the author’s conclusions, and assess whether the writer’s research is strong and up to date.
Another type of critical or evaluative essay students might be asked to write is one in which they assess the main point, theme, or argument in an original work of literature after reading a novel or poem. Students would carefully analyze the meaning of the work and how that meaning is conveyed. The essay would identify the author’s theme or main idea and explore how the author conveys his or her ideas through writing style, images, metaphors, and other literary devices.

**IS A CRITICAL ESSAY JUST A STATEMENT OF MY OPINION?**

Although all critical or evaluative writing begins with your responses to the idea, argument, or piece of writing you are analyzing, you should be very careful not to confuse opinion and argument. When you evaluate an idea, argument, or piece of writing, think about the need to explain and prove that your position is valid. Food critics don’t just say a restaurant is “bad.” Instead, they talk or write about the quality of the food, service, and ambiance of the restaurant. Book reviewers don’t just state “I like this book” and stop there. They objectively analyze the book to support whatever position they are taking. In other words, critical essays are much like persuasive writing—they begin with a position about the subject being evaluated and then defend that thesis with objective analysis and evidence.

**HOW DO I WRITE A CRITICAL OR EVALUATIVE ESSAY?**

As with any writing exercise, a logical approach is the strongest method for tackling a writing assignment. Although each writer might approach writing a critical essay differently, having a specific plan and following effective guidelines will help most writers to succeed in writing an effective critical essay:

1. Begin by reading the article, book, poem, or essay you are analyzing critically. Read it once. Then read it again, highlight-
ing main ideas, subordinate ideas, and supporting details that the writer uses to defend or clarify ideas. Writing a critique of a movie or restaurant will involve a different process (e.g., visiting the restaurant more than once, sampling the food, looking carefully at the way the restaurant operates), but it will still involve thinking critically and analyzing the issue being addressed.

2. Use prewriting strategies like freewriting and brainstorming to generate ideas about your chosen issue.

3. Establish a main point or position—what is the main point you want to convey to your audience? Making abstract statements like “this is a good book” might not be helpful since the general term, good, is a very difficult position to objectively prove. On the other hand, a critical essay that argues that a book about the American economy is poorly researched and does not consider current economic theory, says something far more concrete and is easier to prove.

4. Consider what others have said. Researching what experts in the field have already written about your topic will help you learn more about the issues and help you formulate a stronger argument.

5. Defend your position or argument by using specific information from the original work. Analyze the research, evidence, arguments, and conclusions found in the original work and show how the author’s position is (or is not) valid. What leads you to this conclusion? What specific evidence is weak or outdated? What outside research on the subject has not been considered? What other facts or ideas have not been taken into consideration, and how does this omission affect the quality of the work being analyzed? At the same time, what evidence is strong and well supported? What important issues have been effectively considered and thoroughly analyzed?
A GENERAL ORGANIZATION PLAN FOR A CRITICAL ESSAY

In general, most critical essays follow a basic summary/analysis or summary/response format emphasizing the actual analysis, critique, or response. One effective way to organize your critical essay is to follow the three steps below.

1. **Summarize.** Begin with a brief but specific summary of the article, book, or creative work being analyzed. Refer to the author and title and the author’s main point or idea. Summarize the general line of reasoning of this article, book, or creative work.

2. **Establish a position.** Once the summary is created, establish the point being made about these ideas.

3. **Analyze.** The body paragraphs of the critical essay will analyze the work and make a point about it, rather than simply summarizing what has been read. Provide evidence to support and defend the critique.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CRITICAL ESSAY

To help you write a successful critical essay, there are a number of other points to consider. It is useful to review this list as you begin working on your first draft, and then return to this list when you go back to revise your essay.

1. In general, avoid first person. Many restaurant critiques successfully employ first person, for example *I had a horrible experience at The Bountiful Kitchen last week*. However, most academic essays that are critical or evaluative avoid first person and use third person instead. Instead of writing *I think that Tom Brown’s argument in his article “Stop the Bailouts” is weak*, write *Tom Brown’s argument in his article “Stop the Bailouts” fails to*
consider the dire consequences that would have occurred had the administration not provided funds to banks and auto companies.

2. Be objective, analytical, and critical. Avoid basing arguments on opinion or feelings rather than facts, and be sure to support your thoughts carefully with reliable sources.

3. Avoid trying to address every issue raised by the work you are analyzing. It is impossible to analyze every aspect of a novel, article, or even a movie.

4. Cite any source information used. This includes quotations, paraphrased or summarized ideas, and facts taken from any source. Cite all sources with both in-text citations and full citations in a references or works cited page.
Close your eyes. Let scenes from the day replay in your mind: the hint of vanilla in your morning coffee, your cat’s soft fur against your ankles, the cherry polish on a friend’s nails.

These vivid, mental pictures are called *imagery* when you capture them in writing. Descriptive essays use imagery to create an experience for the reader by incorporating the five senses (sight, smell, sound, touch, taste) and fresh diction (word choice). These elements come together through the level of detail in your writing. Detail is used to capture nuances, peculiarities, and everydayness of the ordinary and extraordinary. It is what makes a person, place, thing or event stand out—and anything or anyone can stand out when you take the time to notice what makes it work. The words you choose and the way you choose to string them together gives your descriptive essay its character.

**ELEMENTS OF THE DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY**

*Concrete language* engages the five senses to create colorful descriptions. Try describing a grandmother’s wool coat using the five senses. There are many questions you could ask yourself as you brainstorm what makes the wool coat so remarkable (or unremarkable).

- **Sight:** What color is it? Are there any holes? Are the tags still on it?
- **Smell:** Can you smell moth balls? Grandma’s perfume? Or nothing at all?
Sound: This one is a little tricky. Does the zipper make a sound? Does the coat swish as Grandma walks?

Touch: Is it scratchy? Rough? Smooth?

Taste: Skip this one (unless you are really adventurous). Not all of the five senses apply in every case.

Review your answers to these questions and decide which ones really make Grandma’s coat special. Beyond the sensory experiences, you can reveal further characteristics to readers through writing options often used in creative writing, such as poetry and fiction.

**Figurative language** compares one thing with another in a not-so-typical way. Here are some tools for your figurative language toolkit:

- A *metaphor* is a figure of speech that compares two things that are not alike.
  
  *The mosquito is the syringe of the insect world, sucking blood wherever it goes.*

- A *simile* is a figure of speech that makes comparisons using the words *like* or *as*.
  
  *My grandmother’s wool coat scratches my arm like sandpaper against unrelenting wood.*
  
  *My sister is as mean as the witch from the Wizard of Oz.*

- *Personification* gives the characteristics of a person to an object.
  
  *The limbs of the old dogwood tree snapped in the wind, leaving it sad and bare.*

- *Alliteration* creates a rhythm by repeating the beginning sound of two or more words that follow each other.
  
  *The tiny tot tiptoed across the tight rope.*

- *Hyperbole* is an overt exaggeration.
  
  *I plan to sleep for a thousand years because I am so tired.*
• **Onomatopoeia** uses a word to mimic a sound that something makes.

  *When I work in my garden, I am often greeted by a frog’s ribbit.*

Choose these options based on what will most clearly convey the physical and emotional conditions to the audience, without overdoing the use of creative language so much that your reader becomes confused or burdened with the descriptions. Specific word choices can also serve to provide thought-provoking and insightful descriptions.

**THE THREE “A”S**

To add to your descriptions, use adjectives, action words, and adverbs. *Adjectives* describe a person, place, or thing, and help add detail to your writing.

No adjective: the peacock’s feathers

Adjective: the peacock’s *emerald* feathers

The adjective, *emerald*, provides the color of the feathers. If you are not satisfied with your adjective or need some more options, use a thesaurus to help you find the appropriate synonym—a word that is similar in meaning to another word.

*Action words* or verbs describe a doer’s action. A strong action word can intensify the language and sometimes replace unnecessary words. Try not to use too many *be* verbs (*am, is, are, was, were, been*). They can dull down a descriptive essay if overused.

She *is running* across the finish line.

Revision: She *sprints* across the finish line.

*Sprints* replaces two words—*is* and *running*—and lets the reader know *how* she is running. In the first sentence, she could have been running...
fast or slow or somewhere in between; the revision lets the reader know she is moving fast.

*Adverbs* end in *–ly* and describe verbs. Although they provide additional information, they do not always reveal enough.

John *awkwardly* tumbled from the ladder.

Although this is better than simply writing *John tumbled from the ladder*, more can be done. Describe what makes the fall awkward.

Revision: John’s arms waved like propellers as he tumbled from the ladder.

The revision offers a mental picture of John’s fall.

**WHAT TO AVOID**

Try to forget every cliché (trite, worn-out, overused expressions) you have ever heard. They have a way of inserting themselves into writing because people use them all the time in conversation. Plus, some are more subtle than others, so you might not even realize you are using one. Take a fresh approach in your writing. Use your own words to express the ideas behind these clichés.

That roach is going to *kick the bucket* when I zap it with this spray.

Revision: That roach will *no longer terrorize my household* when I zap it with this spray.

*Kick the bucket* means to die. The first sentence is redundant because it is obvious that the roach will die when it is sprayed. The revision replaces the cliché with a new phrase, not just a synonym for the word *die*. It reveals more about the situation involving this nasty insect and what will happen upon its demise.
HOW TO APPROACH THE DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY

Consider the following suggestions when beginning a descriptive essay:

- **Select a Topic:** Decide on a person, place, thing, or event you would like to describe to your audience. It could be something or someone that has a lot of personal significance to your life. It could be something that intrigues you about society or the world. Your topic should be one that you believe is worth illustrating through vivid detail and language.

- **Brainstorm:** After you have selected a topic, it is time to decide what to say about it. Here are some brainstorming methods to consider:
  1. Make a list of the five senses and how your topic relates to each sense.
  2. Do one of the traditional brainstorming methods, such as freewriting, outlining, or bubbling.
  3. Make a list of ways your topic affects you emotionally.

- **Draft the Essay:** Starting writing is often the hardest part of the process! A descriptive essay is not metaphor after metaphor and adjective after adjective. You do not want your essay to become so flowery and ornate that the audience misses your message. Use a mix of concrete and figurative language to help you create memorable mental pictures.

- **Revise the Essay:** As you begin revising your initial work on the essay, consider the following suggestions:
  1. Look for *be* verbs that can be replaced with strong action words or phrases.
  2. Look for bland sentences that lack detail. These might be supershort sentences or wordy sentences that are redundant. Perhaps an adjective, metaphor, or something else is needed to make it pop.
3. Look for opportunities to incorporate the five senses. For example, did you describe the smell of the ocean but forget to describe how the sand feels under your feet?

4. Get rid of superfluous descriptions. Did you use a metaphor because it made a difference in the sentence or just for the sake of using a metaphor?
Although there are many types of essays, the cause-effect analysis is used often to analyze and interpret data and other facts. Understanding the causes that result in a particular consequence or the effects (or even possible effects) of a particular action can serve to make you a better writer—and a better citizen in your community.

Though cause-effect analysis might seem to suggest that both causes and effects are explored in this type of essay, in truth, effective drafts of a cause-effect analysis should generally focus on either the causes or effects. For instance, if your professor asks you to write an essay on why Microsoft® chose to introduce a new version of the Windows operating system so soon after Vista® was released, the professor is asking you to explore the causes—the reasons why Microsoft® made this decision. On the other hand, if your instructor asks you to discuss the implications of a charting method used by nurses, you should write an essay on the effects of the method.

In classes in your major, you use different terminology; similarly, different types of essays use different vocabulary. Knowing the language associated with this type of writing, as shown in Table 26.1, will help you write the type of essay that your instructor is looking for.
Table 26.1 LANGUAGE USED IN CAUSE-EFFECT WRITING

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THE THESIS STATEMENT

All thesis statements should contain a narrowed topic and an attitude toward the topic. In a cause-effect analysis, this attitude should express something about the causes or effects of the narrowed topic. For instance, if you were writing about relying on technology, you might narrow that topic to overrelying on technology; the idea of overrelying also expresses your attitude toward the topic in that the word suggests that you are opposed to relying on technology more than necessary.

If the paper will focus on causes, your thesis will explore the reasons why people rely too heavily on technology. For instance,

Americans have come to rely too heavily on technological advances because their lives have become too hectic, their reputations rely on such advances, and their work mandates that they use new technology.
On the other hand, if you intend to explore the effects, your thesis statement might go something like this:

*Americans’ excessive reliance on technology is damaging personal relationships rather than improving them.*

Though the second thesis statement does not reference three specific points to be explored, it is still an effective thesis because we know that the paper will explore the reliance on technology in relation to personal relationships—not other types of relationships or other negative outcomes.

After carefully developing your thesis, you can begin outlining and drafting your essay, ending with careful revision and proofreading. Be sure that the language you use in the essay accurately captures your overall goal of either writing about causes or effects.
The following sample essays demonstrate the different modes of discourse described and explained previously in this section. Each essay uses a different style of citation to give you the chance to see how citation styles vary and are used in formal academic writing. Take time to critically evaluate each piece of writing for its audience, clarity, and effectiveness. The following citation styles are used in the examples:

- Expository—Associated Press (AP)
- Persuasive—Modern Language Association (MLA)
- Compare-Contrast—American Psychological Association (APA)
- Critical or Evaluative—Chicago Manual of Style (CMS)
- Descriptive—No style used
- Cause-Effect Analysis—Bluebook

**EXPOSITORY ESSAYS**

The following expository essays are written using the style guide for the Associated Press. It is a guide for journalists, mostly. The style is intended to give writers guidelines for writing in a journalistic or popular media style where quotes are separated from other text in order to emphasize them, and in-text citations are written in such a way that they are integrated into the text and not supplemental like some of the other styles you will see.

In the first sample essay, you will see annotations that comment on the essay itself as well as the style used. See if you can identify the same or similar items in the second essay.
Innovative Strategies of Effective Educators

Nancy Smith, a veteran third-grade teacher in the Orland Park, IL, school district, knows a few things about effective teaching. This Golden Apple Award winner has been using a variety of techniques in her classrooms during her 20-year career that are designed to create a safe, intellectually stimulating atmosphere that motivates her students to achieve academic excellence.

Smith states, “In my experience, qualities of effective educators can include, but are certainly not limited to, excellent classroom management, the ability to foster a motivational climate within the classroom, and the necessary skills to encourage high academic engagement in students.”

Educators must manage a variety of elements in their classrooms to create an intellectually stimulating yet structured atmosphere for their students, including classroom management. A study done by the National Council on Education includes four essential elements of effective classroom management:
• Know what you want and what you don’t want.
• Show and tell your students what you want.
• When you get what you want, acknowledge (not praise) it.
• When you get something else, act quickly and appropriately.

Some other aspects of classroom management that are no less important than these points include how instructors set up their classrooms, establishing concrete examples of the behaviors they expect from students, and providing a firm, easily understood reward/consequence system that focuses on student behavior and on work responsibilities.

Sam McGuire, principal of the West School in Chicago, takes the concept of a reward/consequence system one step further by bringing it to the students’ level as well:

“When students are involved in the planning of a reward and consequence plan in their classroom, they are more likely to adhere to these rules. They feel a sense of belonging and ownership when they are included in the process itself.”

Specific classroom rewards can include longer recess time, an invitation to eat lunch with the teacher, listening to CDs, and playing games. Older students might be inspired to exhibit good behavior if they are allowed to sit with friends during class instead of in assigned seating, are given a parking spot close to the school doors if they drive to school, and, like their younger counterparts, are allowed to listen to CDs during reading or other open class times. Just as students can benefit from earning rewards for good behavior,
they must also adhere to a set of classroom consequences designed to curb less-than-desirable behavior.

Joe Ornelas, author of the best-selling book, “Educating America’s Children,” outlines a list of important elements teachers must keep in mind when developing consistent consequences for their students:

- Educators must show a clear connection between the tasks their students complete and the grades they eventually earn.
- Although students must realize that there are consequences for their behavior, educators must also realize that frequent punishment is counterproductive and will not bring about the desired behavior or results.
- Teachers should consider milder punishments for infractions rather than more severe ones as the former is more likely to elicit desirable behavior from students than the latter.
- Poor behavior is less likely to recur if a student makes a commitment to avoid the action and to engage in more desirable behaviors.
- Keeping a consequence system simple is best. Very often, a verbal warning will suffice for a first offense, a call or note home will help to rectify a second offense, while any further issues might have to be resolved by bringing in help from the school administration.

No matter the age level of the students, common themes exist that can help create an intellectually stimulating classroom atmosphere. Main themes are discussed by Emily Erickson, who has a doctorate in education and is a professor of education at City College. They include:

- Obvious enthusiasm from the instructor
- Relevant course material
- Organization of the course
Erickson also asserts there are a variety of techniques teachers can use to motivate students to want to learn; however, one theme remains constant: involving students as active participants in their own learning process rather than relegating them to the sidelines.

“I maintain that we all learn better by doing. This does not just apply to students as we are a hands-on society as a whole, but students in particular can benefit from active questioning techniques, asking them to explain the concept rather than having it explained to them, and providing them with activities that allow them to engage in active rather than passive learning.”

Additional methods teachers can use to encourage students to become active learners include:

- Providing timely, thoughtful feedback.
- Creating opportunities for success by designing engaging assignments that are neither too difficult nor too simple in content.
- Assisting students in discovering meaning in all course material.
- Fostering an open, dynamic learning atmosphere.
- Helping students feel they are valued members of a learning community.

There is no one-size-fits-all formula teachers can apply in engaging their students to ultimately create a dynamic learning experience; in fact, some students will find meaningful
learning even if their teacher does not create an engaging classroom atmosphere. However, most students do need some type of strong support to succeed in, and out, of the classroom.

**Consequences of Sexually Active Teens**

Julie H. is a 15-year-old girl on the brink of a new adventure. She is a sophomore in high school, plays the flute in the school band, is involved in the drama club, and although she might seem like one of the last girls to deliver this news, she is also five months pregnant. She is having the baby, a decision that is supported by her parents, but her life is forever changed. The consequences some adolescents like Julie face when they decide to become sexually active can include pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and depression.

One obvious consequence teens face when they become sexually active is pregnancy. Pregnancy at any age can be taxing on the body and spirit; however, adding in a third factor—lack of maturity in most adolescents—can create a disastrous combination. According to Brenda Smith, author of “The Many Consequences of Teen Pregnancy,” the risks associated with teenage pregnancy can be severe.

Smith states, “Pregnant teens are prone to giving birth to premature babies, struggling with depression, and experiencing socioeconomic and economic hardships.”

A recent poll conducted by The National Center for Teenage Pregnancy indicates that recent years, 2008–2009, have seen a rise in the number of teenage pregnancies, from 30 out of 1,000 teens to 50 out of 1,000 teens reporting pregnancies. In addition
to this increase, the results of the poll also show that 25 percent of pregnant teens have another child within one or two years of their first.

What do these statistics mean for pregnant teens? Brenda Frank, director of the Chicago chapter of Planned Parenthood, paints a bleak future for many pregnant teens:

“Teen mothers typically miss out on the educational benefits experienced by their classmates as only about one-third of teenage mothers graduate from high school. In addition to not completing high school, teen mothers are susceptible to getting involved with drugs and alcohol, struggle with poverty in part due to low earning potential of their babies’ fathers, and are more susceptible to contract a sexually transmitted disease than more mature mothers.”

Frank goes on to explain that the issues surrounding teen pregnancy are not limited to teen mothers. Rather, teen fathers also share a big portion of the burden, as does society as a whole. Yearly, teen pregnancies cost nearly $8 billion total in lost tax revenues, public assistance, child health care and involvement with the criminal justice system.

Dr. Peter Young, professor of psychology at Illinois University, brings up perhaps a less obvious but no less disturbing consequence of early sexual activity—depression:

“Sexually active teens do not necessarily succumb to depression, but there is evidence that shows the age by which a teen first becomes sexually active as well as the type of partner he or she chooses can cause depression in some teenagers.”

Both teenage boys and girls can experience symptoms of depression as well as think suicidal thoughts when they first have sex before age 16 for girls and age 15 for boys. In addition, if an adolescent relationship ends quickly after a sexual encounter, or is not emotionally fulfilling, teens are more likely to go through an extended period of depression or contemplate suicide.
Responsible, informed decisions can be made by investigating the physical, emotional and socioeconomic effects associated with sexual activity during the teen years. A lot of information is readily available to teens and taking advantage of this information very well might save them from experiencing the issues discussed here before they are emotionally, physically and financially ready to do so.

PERSUASIVE ESSAYS
The following two persuasive essays are written using the Modern Language Association (MLA) style for citation. This style was developed for use in scholarly publications and is still used in many academic settings. MLA uses the author's last name and page number as the general format for parenthetical citations. If no author is provided, the title of the article, enclosed in quotation marks, is used. The page number is part of every citation whether it is a paraphrase or quotation. If no page number is available, look for paragraph numbers as is sometimes used in electronic publications. If there is no paragraph number, you simply use the author’s last name or title of the work for the citation.

In the first sample essay, you will see annotations that comment on the essay itself as well as the style used. See if you can identify the same or similar items in the second essay.
Homelessness Is Not Hopeless

Debbie is a homeless teenager living in a shelter and attending an alternative high school every day with the hope of graduating, going to college, and becoming a lawyer to help other young adults like herself. In the course of one typical day, this homeless teen has to hide her clothes so no one will steal them, and ride a bus to arrive late for high school. Debbie also visits with her social worker at his office to deal with her mother’s issues of mental health, alcoholism, and series of abusive boyfriends. The end of this homeless teen’s day consists of picking up a job application, a trip to the grocery store for chips and candy bars, then back to the shelter by almost 8:00 at night. If she does not fill out seven job applications a week, she will get kicked out of the shelter’s program (Massey 13). Needless to say, life without a home to go to every night is chaotic and stressful. Often hidden from society’s view, homelessness affects all economic, social, and ethnic populations in the United States. It is a difficult situation to overcome not only on a personal level, but on a national level as well.

The problem of homelessness is often concealed from society’s public view because of where the homeless find shelter and, in some cases, the authorities’ actions to

In this essay, the introductory paragraph is using a narrative or description of what it is like for a person to be homeless. It is acceptable to borrow information for the description or narrative. Just be sure to paraphrase and cite the source where the story came from.

The narrative is used as a way to introduce the subject in the essay.

The thesis does not contain a citation because it should be an original idea of your own based on the research you’ve conducted on the topic.

Thesis statement. Notice there are several key points to this thesis: (1) homelessness is often concealed from the public; (2) it crosses all social and ethnic strata of the United States; and (3) it is personal and national issue that must be resolved.

Addresses the first key point of the thesis.
chase them away in some communities. Shelter from the elements of rain or snow when living on the streets might be found under trees, bushes, highway underpasses, or in abandoned vehicles. An archaeological study of homeless encampments by a professor of anthropology and his student, who had been homeless herself at one time, reported that the ingenuity of these temporary shelters is because homeless people see uses in items most of us would pass by (Albert 43). Examples of shelters from that study were an “insulated abandoned truck, lean-tos, and windbreakers sewn together” (Albert 43). Passing by on the way to their jobs, the general public would probably not see these camouflaged shelters.

Furthermore, the homeless population is less visible because some community authorities chase them across one city boundary to another. In San Dante, the Society for Civil Rights alleged in a lawsuit against the police department that raids of makeshift homeless shelters were “purely and simply” trying “to compel the homeless people to move out—out of the community, out of the town, and out of sight and mind” (“SCR Sues” C1). How can authorities continue to throw out another human being’s clothes, blankets, photos of loved ones, and medications? The fight against homelessness must do more than sweep the issue and its ugliness under the rug; it has to be a fight that squarely deals with the issues that bring about homelessness in the first place.

One of those issues is the economy. The economy has a direct effect on homelessness in this nation. In an article titled “Recovering from Homelessness,” it is asserted that the economic recession has led to a tremendous increase in job loss, foreclosure, or eviction (Hancock and Church 2). Also, according to the National Homelessness Society, the main cause of homeless-
ness is expensive housing. In an interview with the U.S. homelessness director, Paul Matato, foreclosures have climbed over a million, more than 5 million have lost their jobs, and “the number of people being thrown on to the streets is shocking” (“Three Questions” 1). These are obvious economic symptoms of a poor economy.

Homelessness not only crosses all economic lines, but it rears its ugly head with the elderly, too. Communities have organized volunteers to count the homeless and interview them in attempts to identify their ages, family situations, or class level (Farley A3). Finding out who the homeless are belies the normal census-taking techniques used throughout neighborhoods of houses. In a three-year series for the Bay Valley Courier, during which he spent time living among the homeless to better understand the problems of this complex issue, Farley, a news reporter, explored the issue of homelessness in grave detail. In his series, he discussed a long-term study conducted by a professor, Joan Hammer, from Tappan State College, which discovered that the median age of homeless people is older (50 years) than recently perceived by the public (A3). To illustrate this older population of homeless individuals, consider the community of Mackay, California, where downtown people were recently discussing a well-known transient Irma in her sixties. “Irma was beloved for her erratic but ultimately endearing personality that many said added vibrancy to the community. She was found dead in a lot the day following a cold snap when overnight temperatures reached a low of 17 degrees” (Smith D12). Farley also discovered that some homeless simply do not admit that they are homeless, do not try to get services offered, avoid shelters, and may only become homeless from time to time (A3).
Furthermore, there is a noticeably large number of minorities who experience homelessness. The demographic makeup of homeless populations varies from state to state, but nationally 40% are African-Americans, 11% are Hispanic, 8% are Native American, and an even smaller percentage is Asian (“Who is Homeless” 1). This source also reports that veterans are approximately one-third of the single male homeless persons. Essentially, the homeless population represents a cross section of our society today in this nation. How can any organization or agency meet the needs of all those homeless individuals?

The tremendous challenge facing this nation now in responding to the problem of homelessness is where to find funding for housing, employment, life skills, and substance abuse counseling in this era of program cuts. Hancock and Church trace the beginnings of our current problem to the “breaking up of governmental housing assistance programs over the past four decades to low income people” (2). Breaking the cycle and “ending homelessness for good just cannot occur unless a person has a real place to live and counseling” (Hancock and Church 2). The nation responds to this by budgeting $1.4 billion for the Emergency Shelter program (“Three Questions” 2). But it is important to ask if federal funding is going to resolve this problem. What happens when federal funding ceases? Furthermore, doesn’t the issue of homelessness deserve more than a budgetary reaction? Certainly education can help some of the homeless population, but this issue is also a problem at the national level for those populations that simply cannot help themselves like the elderly and mentally ill. There has
to be more that we as a nation can do besides throw money at the problem.

Ultimately, without an address or phone number to put on a job application, or no beds at the shelter, this devastated feeling of being homeless constantly makes a person feel like society does not care. The next generation of youth is at risk, so our country needs to intervene, prevent, and enable success for young and older homeless to obtain a stable life and a good education.

**Works Cited**


What Goes in Your Mouth Affects Your Health

Here in the United States, many people are fighting a battle against obesity. The Center for Healthy Living (CHL) states that “obesity is an issue for heart disease, some cancer types, and type 2 diabetes” (Chase 352). According to this study, over 32 states have an obesity rate of 30% or more through 2008. Even more alarming is the rate of childhood obesity that has doubled and tripled in various age levels over the past 25 years (Chase 352). The question that the public must respond to is: What can be done about this epidemic of obesity? The fight against obesity can be won through increased activity especially for children, better eating habits, and personal support.

Strategic health plans to fight obesity in this country need to focus on all ages, but particularly the younger generation. Andrew Chase, the director of Communities That Care, asserts that “childhood obesity is considered rampant in the United States” (Chase 352). More exercise is one of the simplest forms of correcting this problem. Merely walking for at least one-half hour each day will lower the risk of diabetes by 33 to 39% (“Preventing Health Problems” 56). And “just 2.5 hours of exercise a week will almost eliminate type 2 diabetes, reduce heart attacks by one-third, and prevent 285,000 deaths from heart disease” (Chase 352). It makes sense that a good strategy for making changes to one’s lifestyle is to set small attainable goals and to educate young people about health and wellness.

At one school, children walk around the playground to music before classes start, and instead of recess playtime after lunch, the school reversed the schedule to exercise first. In this way, the students are hungrier and do not throw out as much food during lunchtime. Some added benefits include parents joining their children on the morning walks, teachers noticing fewer discipline problems, and students paying better attention (Johnson 82). Students are learning that being active is healthy. Although increased activity obviously
stimulates one’s appetite, the nutrition of the average person needs to be improved as well.

Both the kind of food eaten and the amount eaten influence weight. Some studies have tried to point the blame at lack of access to healthier types of foods. For example, “researchers have found increased access to supermarkets offering fresh fruits and vegetables in White neighborhoods when compared to those of Black and Hispanic” (Pickles 23). Other studies have attempted to blame the amount of commercials about unhealthy foods (Townsend 78). However, it’s interesting to note that now some commercials boast that breakfast cereals have whole grains, yogurt has fiber, and certain juices provide daily requirements for vegetables. Society seems to be building awareness about better diets and nutrition. Celebrities discuss their vegetarianism or veganism with pride. For instance, WAGN anchorwoman Nancy Lapinsky was asked about her vegan diet (no meat or dairy products) by reporter Trendy Pickles, who wondered how well her diet travels. Ms. Lapinsky talked about tofu burritos, soy lattes, and vegan muffins that seem to be available almost anywhere she goes (Pickles 28).

According to registered dietician Olivia Berkoff, a vegetarian youth is much less likely to become obese or get type 2 diabetes later in life. It is advantageous to eat more vegetables and studies have demonstrated that this type of diet lowers the risk of heart disease and cancer (Townsend 79). Food editor Debra Smith believes that young people need exposure to real food and cooking experiences in order to “gain an appreciation of what real flavor and taste are about” (Smith 1). On the other hand, if people cannot conceive of meals without meat, a simple idea would be to try to eat just one meal per week without meat. “At least one meal a week without any meat might lower your saturated fat by 15%, which could be equivalent to noteworthy improvements in your weight and heart health” (Whitney 46). Ultimately, what someone eats is an individual choice and the motivation to improve diet must come from within. Fighting
obesity with increased exercise and better eating habits requires more than motivation and resolve. Many experts maintain that the key to successful change is the support one receives from those around them (Downey 70).

Former Food and Obesity Association (FOA) commissioner Kipler talks of support as an additional fundamental element of “surrounding yourself with persons who share your focus on losing weight” (Whitney 46). Who should support a person wanting to make changes in the way he or she eats and exercises? The experts say not only family and friends, but also schools, places of work, church families, and communities, too. By telling people what the person is trying to do, the support to effectively change habits should be offered. Chauncey Steimer, director of the Center for Nutritionally Smart Weight Maintenance at Gottmacher Health System, suggests that obese people need and deserve the support of their doctors, too. Steimer also states that doctors could help patients set achievable weight-loss goals and invite them to come into the office for weight checks at no charge (Townsend 80). For obese adults, workplace health programs are a worthwhile investment too. After all, many people spend most of their day at work. These programs offer an opportunity for employees to get exercise and receive nutrition and weight management counseling in the workplace. In addition, fewer sick days are used when employees have access to these programs (“Better Health Classes” 24).

Many issues about obesity are connected to behaviors that need to be changed, so any good solution will involve comprehensive strategies that encourage more exercise, eating better whole foods, and support from the surrounding community. Communities can support farmers’ markets to bring the consumer and the growers together, support biking and walking, and urge educating the people about exercise and nutrition through schools and park and recreation programs.
The compare-contrast essays that follow use the American Psychological Association (APA) style for citation. This style is used generally in some academic environments, but also in professional settings for social sciences and science disciplines. Like MLA, APA uses the author last name for in-text citations, but instead of the page number appearing in every citation, the year of publication is given. Generally, for the disciplines that use this style, current information is valued over historical information unless the piece is using a historical perspective. Page numbers, however, are part of parenthetical citations when they follow a direct quotation. Page numbers are not needed for
paraphrases. Like MLA, when an author is not provided, the title of the article, enclosed in quotation marks, takes the place of the author.

In the first sample essay, you will see annotations that comment on the essay itself as well as the style used. See if you can identify the same or similar items in the second essay.

**The Good Instructor Recipe**

Talking about the qualities of a good instructor is like creating a recipe. This is because, like a crowd-pleasing dish, a good teacher is made up of necessary ingredients (in this case, characteristics) that all come together to create a positive experience for students. Experts in the area of teaching and learning could suggest many possible characteristics to include in the recipe for a “Good Instructor.” Some of these characteristics are quantifiable—for example, number of years of experience, number of years of higher education, number of different classes taught, or a type of certification—whereas others are much more difficult to measure, such as enthusiasm for course material, amount of self-reflection, or ability to plan on both a short-term and long-term basis ("The importance," 2009). However, no matter how many possible ingredients are available when creating the “Good Instructor” recipe, there are three that stand out as the most important: use of various teaching strategies, adaptability of the course...
material, and connection with students. Every instructor in every classroom needs these three qualities to achieve maximum student success.

Within the last 50 years, the rules and expectations of education have changed, which has also forced the role of an instructor to evolve. One of the biggest changes has been regarding teaching strategies. It used to be that classes (whether at the high school or college level) were organized around a lecture, which is just one type of teaching strategy. Back then, students were expected to sit and ingest a teacher’s presentation, but now, the focus of education is shifting to address what stimulates students and makes them want to learn. Because of this, there has been a push for instructors to be more creative and interactive with their teaching strategies and lessons (Dole & Brown, 2008). Having been a student for the last 20 years myself, this is definitely a welcome change because it prevents student boredom. As many other college students can agree, listening to an instructor talk for hours day after day causes the brain to go numb. During this type of situation, students’ eyes glaze over, and it is difficult for them to stop checking the clock, thinking, “When will this class finally be done?” The best instructors know to mix a variety of things into the course—lecture, discussion, group activities—to keep students interested in the class. In addition, the more interested the students are, the more they will learn from the class (Owens, 2005).
Another benefit to different teaching strategies is that this characteristic can also help meet the needs of various students. Not all people learn in the same way, which means that not all people should be taught in the same way either. Some students learn best by reading, others by listening, some by doing, and even others by a mix of those. In a study of 5,000 college students from various schools, 45% of surveyed students answered that they prefer to learn by performing a hands-on activity (also known as kinesthetic learning). In that same survey, 30% of students answered that they learned best by listening to the information (auditory learning), 10% chose to learn from reading something (visual learning), and the rest (15%) liked learning through a mix of the three (Raymond, Carlson, Norris, & Miles, 2007). Based on these statistics, any instructor who relies only on a daily lecture is not going to meet the needs of all those students who need to learn by reading the text or completing a hands-on activity. Of course, the same survey may end up with different results from a different set of colleges or universities, but it still demonstrates the need for instructors to meet a variety of learning styles, which is done best through the use of different teaching strategies. As stated in an article by Matthew Owens (2005), professor and educational researcher at Evans University, “Any instructor who steps foot in the classroom these days owes it to his/her students to show up each and every day with a new plan, a fresh start, an innovative strategy, or a creative way of tackling the students’ needs and levels of learning” (p. 27). Therefore, the more an instructor mixes up the daily life in a classroom, the more it will benefit a majority of students.

The second necessary teaching quality—adaptability—is part of the recipe because it helps the day-to-day classroom procedures and issues run a bit smoother. As explained in the article “Today’s Teachers” (n.d.), “teacher prepara-
tion classes are pushing one major skill over anything else: flexibility” (para. 7). If a group of students needs to spend more time on a particular concept, or if one student is dragging the rest of a class in a different direction, a flexible instructor can better handle those surprise changes without a lot of disruption (Dole & Brown, 2008). As explained by Clarence Holmes (2005) in his book In the Classroom: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly:

Some of the best instructors seem to have teaching in their blood. They seem to know instinctively how to best modify each class to best suit the needs of that particular day, even if it means ignoring the original lesson plans. They seem to know exactly what will best motivate their students to learn in spite of everything else pulling the students away from the material. But, even if some of the best instructors can make it seem instinctual, this is a skill that can be practiced. It involves thinking about the course as a whole, and most importantly, accepting flexibility within the course content. (p. 5)

As Holmes mentions, the best teachers know or learn how to adapt the course material so that students do not feel like they are moving through a course that has merely been boxed up and performed the exact same way semester after semester.

The third necessary teaching quality is connection with students, and its importance stems from the movement toward student-centered education. Compared with having an instructor who makes the classroom instruction come alive, instructors who reach out to students and show they care about each student’s ability to learn also inspires all students to do their individual best. Students need to
feel like the instructor cares about them as people in order to want to invest their time in the course, and “sometimes the loudest way to reach students is through the quietest moments, those moments where the teacher connects with them emotionally, not logically or intellectually” (Dole & Brown, 2008, p. 29). As explained in this quote, an instructor who shows respect and warmth for students—and tries to understand them as people, not just students—can have a huge impact.

Another way to look at these teaching qualities is to think about what happens when they are not a part of the classroom. Ignoring the power of various teaching strategies, adaptability, and a connection can have disastrous results. Most importantly, it can discourage students from attending class. When thinking about it, this has a fairly easy explanation—a few interesting surprises and variations here and there can inspire students to keep showing up each week when sometimes the snooze button is more appealing than an 8 o’clock class. It can also cause students to lose motivation for the material. In a recent study, Raymond, Carlson, Norris, and Miles (2007) analyzed four years of student evaluations from various colleges and universities, and they found that students tend to respond negatively to inflexible teachers. In fact, inflexibility rated second (being unprepared was number one) in the top-five common reasons for low instructor evaluations—a whopping 35% of students who gave an instructor a low rating did so due to the inflexibility with the class. Dole & Brown (2008) performed a very similar study and found that when students were asked what a quality teacher means to them, most students said it was having a teacher who cares. Forty-seven percent of the students chose this option, followed by teaching skills (31%), content knowledge (18%), and dedication to teaching (4%). Therefore, most students recognize that it makes a big difference whether instructors make a connection and show that they care.

This result from Dole and Brown’s study (2008) is partly due to the fact that inflexibility and reliance on one type of teaching
strategy makes students feel like the instructor is moving through the material without regard for the students. When students begin to feel as though they are not an integral part of the course, it makes them stop concentrating on the class and think to themselves, “This instructor is just going to follow the course outline no matter how much we are struggling, so why bother studying? What’s the use?” Of course, there are classes where there is not much chance to change things as the course progresses, usually due to timing. Furthermore, beginning instructors sometimes have a greater need to stick to the course outline because they might not be as familiar with the information. However, inflexibility can cause the course to become formulaic and uninteresting (Owens, 2005).

Some critics argue that having a connection with students can cause more problems than benefits in the classroom by blurring the boundaries between the instructor and the students. Some also say that it can cause students to think that the instructor is more responsible for their education than the students themselves. In addition, not all students want or need an instructor who goes out of the way to get to know them—many students are self-motivated or just want to blend into the rest of the class (“Today’s teachers,” n.d.). Though these concerns are valid, instructors can avoid these issues by setting clear expectations and requiring students to be responsible for their learning. Just because the instructor cares about the students does not mean that the relationship of authority changes, that the instructor should befriend the students, or that it is up to the instructor to do the work for the students. Instructors can, and should, still expect students to be active participants in the learning process.

Everyone can remember that one instructor who inspired him or her to challenge prior beliefs, dream bigger than what seemed possible, and examine the sense of duty people have for one another as human beings on the same planet.
This did not necessarily depend upon decades of experience or a library of content knowledge. Instead, it is important to focus on the instructor’s willingness to use various teaching strategies, ability to adapt, and ability to connect with students. As with any recipe, other elements can come and go, but no matter what, these are the three ingredients that hold the mix together. Omitting them could be a recipe for classroom disaster.

References
Fifty years ago, this type of transaction—e-mail collaboration on a project from two completely different areas of the country—would never have happened between two college students. However, huge technological changes in the last two decades have made this a reality. Because of this, online education has become a new choice for many students. At some schools, enrollment in online classes has increased by 200 to 400% (Berry, 2010). This means that when deciding to pursue an educational degree, students need to be aware of how online classes have updated the twenty-first-century classroom.

Online classes dramatically changed the interaction between instructors and students—and even between students and students. For centuries, students in traditional courses have traveled (sometimes long distances) to meet with the instructor. In many cases, this even required students to move out of state to live near the college,
which causes traditional classes to be made up of people who currently live in the same geographical area. The traditional class is then structured around that face-to-face interaction with the instructor and other students (Boyd & Patterson, 2007). However, online classes now bring the information and the instructor to the student. For online students, their instructors and peers are other people from around the nation (or even the world!) that they might never meet. This is a huge difference! With a traditional class, if a student does not know what the instructor looks like, it probably means the student has not been to class enough. But with online students, their success is not dependent upon face-to-face interaction. According to Nancy Bell, president of the National Accreditation of Online Education, “Some students prefer face-to-face interaction—and need that type of accountability—but it doesn’t mean that student isn’t prepared for an online class. With the proper tools, even the most hesitant student can feel successful” (as cited in Martin, 2008, p. 15). Many schools these days even provide extra support for online students to help bridge the face-to-face gap.

Online classes also altered how courses are delivered and structured. Traditional courses, especially for college students, tend to be broken up into three to four one-hour class sessions or one four-hour session per week. Each course usually lasts around 12 to 16 weeks, and the content is delivered through lecture, discussion, and in-class activities (“The differences,” n.d.). Outside of class, students are responsible for completing homework assigned in class. Assessments (i.e., how the teacher determines if each student has met the course requirements) tend to be given in the form of written essays, timed closed-book tests, and group projects. Online classes—which vary in length from 6 to 16 weeks per class—still provide the same content as a traditional course, but students have to depend upon a different format to learn. Instead of coming to a classroom and taking notes from a lecture, online students are expected to learn the information by reading an online book, participating in an online Discussion Board, or even collaborating with
others (via the phone, e-mail, etc.) to put together a response to an assignment. Assessments still have a similar structure for online classes—usually performed through a written essay, timed test, or group project—but again, students get to that end result a bit differently (Boyd & Patterson, 2007).

In addition, because of the change in interaction and course delivery, another major change between online and traditional classes is time/task management. In traditional courses, the timing of students’ outside work depends on the class schedule. This means that students usually need to bring their work to class (or submit it beforehand), so the time they have to complete their homework is based upon when each class meets. For example, if a student has a class that meets Tuesday and Thursday mornings, students have from Tuesday to Thursday (or Thursday to Tuesday) to finish the assigned homework. In addition to the homework, part of a student’s grade depends upon participation in the class, which means coming to—and participating in—class (“Education today,” 2009). But with online courses, there tends to be much more flexibility when it comes to time/task management. Though there are still due dates for homework and assignments, students can submit the homework at any time up until the due date. This is one of the major advantages for online students. As explained by Roger Martin (2008), who has taught online classes for more than a decade:

Participating in an online class discussion might mean submitting a short post at 3:00 a.m. on a Tuesday night or 7:00 a.m. on a Saturday, whereas students in a traditional course don’t have that type of flexibility to choose when they complete some of the deadlines. (p. 16)

In addition, it seems as though many students appreciate the chance to participate in class, sitting around and wearing pajamas in the comfort of their own home. In a nationwide survey of students
who have taken an online class for the first time, 60% of them said they would take another online class—and for most of them, it was due to the flexibility with their time (Berry, 2010). However, one thing to consider is that even with these differences in time/task management, most students should expect to spend the same amount of time on the course.

Now, instead of using location or prestige to pick a school, students have the opportunity to choose based on the style and format of learning they prefer. There are plenty of advantages and disadvantages either way, but it is very likely that a new student’s first conversation with a classmate could be via chat room instead of in the classroom.

References
The differences between on-campus and online classes. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://american_online_education.com/differences/docID723895585
CRITICAL OR EVALUATIVE ESSAYS

CMS, like MLA and APA, is a style used in some academic settings. The use of this style, shown in the following two essays, is also extended to those who write for magazines and in corporate settings. One thing in particular to note about this style is that in-text citations are in the form of footnotes, which can be cross-referenced on the bibliography page.

In the first sample essay, you will see annotations that comment on the essay itself as well as the style used. See if you can identify the same or similar items in the second essay.

A Critical Review of the “Emotions of Leadership”

In his article, “The Emotions of Leadership,” author Thomas Brown discusses the nature of leadership, particularly the difficulties of making strong, effective decisions when, as he notes, we are human and thus emotional and not always objective. Brown argues that to be an effective leader, one must not only admit to being emotional but also embrace the fact that people often make decisions based upon emotions, rather than reason and evidence. Embracing this fact will, he says, allow leaders to navigate the difficulties of making decisions and ultimately create stronger decision-making skills.

Although Brown’s argument is generally reasonable, it fails to provide a sound set of guidelines for following and learning from our emotions and does not consider current leadership theory that proves that objective decision making is more effective than emotion-based decision making.

One particular strength in Brown’s argument is that he effectively analyzes the psychology of leadership and the dangers of bottling up one’s emotions. Referencing Kevin Smith’s study of managers in 10 major corporations, Brown provides solid evidence that some of the strongest and most effective leaders are able to deal with the stress and anxiety associated with management positions by not suppressing their emotions. He cites specific evidence showing that managers who do suppress their emotions are more likely to ultimately suffer devastating health problems and may, in fact, appear, in the eyes of their employees, to be cold and uncaring. He further strengthens his conclusions by analyzing the value of being honest with employees and keeping an open line of communication with employees. Williams and Overstreet have already proven in their research that managers who do not keep open and honest communication lines with their employees will simply not succeed because their employees feel they cannot trust these managers and do not, therefore, feel invested in working hard for these managers.

Brown’s article is also potentially valuable for its exploration of important lessons that managers must learn, in order to become effective communicators. For this to happen, Brown argues, they must do the following:

- Accept that leadership involves emotional experiences.
- Prepare themselves for this fact.
- Take care of themselves emotionally.
- Become emotionally mature.

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● Understand their expressions.
● Learn not to panic.

This seems to be a logical strategy for managers to follow; however, Brown’s argument does not consider counterarguments, including those presented by leadership expert Dee Floyd, whose seminal management text concludes that managers are effective only when they objectively observe, base their decisions on logic, reason, and precedent, and remove their personal biases and emotions from decision making processes.4

Furthermore, several other weaknesses prevent Brown’s argument from achieving its ultimate goal, which is to help managers to become stronger communicators. Brown does not, for example, provide strategies that will help managers to communicate effectively with what he calls “high maintenance” employees or employees who the manager is friends with. The writer also does not explore methods for creating an open communications environment, nor does Brown provide concrete examples that would support his conclusion that managers must “follow their own hearts, all the while making and standing behind tough decisions and never looking back.”

Ultimately, “The Emotions of Leadership” would be stronger if it considered the equally important role of the objective, reason-based manager, or considered that a manager can be successful with a combination of emotion and reason. Brown’s desire is to help managers learn to be more effective, and in many ways his article helps them to accomplish that, but also in other ways, he fails to lead managers to fully understand the power of their emotions.

Friend or Foe: Facebook

We’ve all heard the adage that “first impressions count.” Now, imagine a place where first impressions hinge on the most flattering snapshot. Then imagine creating instant friendships with a simple movement of one’s hand. This land of superficial plenty actually lies right before our eyes. We indulge in fabricating the best version of ourselves and watch as it takes form on the computer screen. Sites like Twitter and Facebook continue to gain popularity and threaten a loss of real human connection and sense of self. As a participant in the social networking scheme, I by no means wish to eliminate these sites, or judge those who are loyal to them. However, I believe in the importance of questioning and exploring the effects on our generation. Dr. Michelle Yon, a Cambridge University neurologist, believes our generation functions on the need for “constant proof that they exist and matter.”¹ The problems go beyond simple narcis-

¹ Michelle Yon, Our Virtual Selves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 41.
sism; they extend to the realm of mental and physical health. Social networking sites have infiltrated our lives, fostering a generation focused on rapid results, superficial relationships, and a lack of solid self-identity.

The youth of this generation constantly seek to define themselves on the Internet. However, we present and highlight only fragments of our being. An example includes a site like Facebook, which includes a personal profile and photos, allowing users to list interests and images. Friends, acquaintances, and strangers alike use these profiles to create images or ideas of other Facebook users, based on what the user chooses to highlight. Critics of these social networking sites worry that this can create misunderstandings and conflict (at best) because this virtual realization of ourselves and others allows people to create false realities and images of themselves.\(^2\) The line between ourselves in the real world and the impression of ourselves online continues to blur as we use social networking sites for the sole purpose of being known. We constantly seek for the approval of others and wish to create the illusion that our lives are more profound than the next person’s. We attempt to elevate our existence by announcing our daily queries on Twitter or Facebook, creating the image of sheer excitement and action in our lives. Are we ever being true to others? Above that, are we being true to ourselves?

The criticism of social networking sites does not rest solely in their existence, but the lack of responsibility and awareness in dealing with our real lives. Creating our ideal selves online requires little effort; we can make ourselves seem smarter by listing philosophical novels we have “read”; we can “become” happy by posting photos at parties; and we can demonstrate

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\(^2\) Ibid.
how highly successful we are simply by what we choose to announce to the cyberworld. However, according to many who study this online world, the images we create online hardly ever translate truthfully to the real world. Taking action and realizing our goals and expectations proves to be harder in real time, requiring sincere self-examination. The Internet can aid in pursuing our passions and discovering new bits of knowledge that strengthen our sense of self, but it cannot be the sole source. As human beings, we must learn to feel and connect with others in a real way; otherwise, what is there to differentiate the human race from robots?

Many argue that sites like Twitter and Facebook help to enrich our lives by allowing people to connect with a diverse group of people, without geographical limitations. However, just how real are these connections? Professor Joseph B. Random at Auburn University refers to it as impression management, whereby users of these social networks construct an image on the Internet, highlighting only their best qualities. Human beings tend to omit and calculatingly rewrite or revise aspects of their personality and daily life, creating connections with others based solely on traits people wish to reveal. User profiles present the users’ interests and hobbies to create a sense of connection between users; however, these profiles fail to illuminate the person’s actual character in real life. Social networking sites further fuel our loyalty to fabricated impressions of people, while steering attention away from the networks existing outside of the computer screen. Psychologists worry that this leads to a complete undermining of our ability to understand each other in real life and has the potential to destroy our social skills. Conversational exchanges on the Internet provide relief from social awkwardness and the other “negative” aspects of real interaction. The transmission of messages on these sites allows for a more


5 Yon, Our Virtual Selves, 55.
composed and constructed response, avoiding chances of appearing socially incompetent.

Although we might also try to impress others in person, carrying a face-to-face dialogue with another human being still proves to hold greater health benefits. Those in the medical field worry about the mental and physical repercussions of social networking. Gener-ally, “the more social we are, the more we have active involvement with other people, the healthier we are physically and emotionally.” Elevated health risks correlate to our time spent on these virtual social networks and can be attributed to the hours of inactivity from sitting in front of the computer and a sense of isolation that brings about depression. Even though networking sites appear to create a sense of community, it fails to cure the ills of isolation in our daily lives.

Another frightening correlation exists between the rise of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism to our rising dependence on the Internet. Professor Blue further directs her concerns in the malleability of the human brain; her studies suggest that “technologies are actually de-evolving our brains into a less evolved state, where, like children, we are attracted by the bells and whistles of computer screens and cannot, as a result, see beyond the here and now or develop our attention spans.” Solid evidence for the link between ADHD, autism, and the Internet has yet to be established, although the relationship seems convincing. We can all relate to times when we mindlessly surf the Internet, looking for some type of relief to distract our minds from the reality of our mundane daily lives. It seldom occurs to us that we've been sitting in front of a glowing screen for hours on end, postponing events outside of the screen. Engaging in several different activities online provides excitement and satisfaction, an illusion of concrete action in developing oneself.

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6 Ibid, 77.
7 Random, The Loveliest Village, 144.
More years must pass before we will truly know the effects of our society’s extensive dependence on the Internet. However, early signs of this generation’s detachment from the real world reveal itself through increasing levels of isolation, violence, and narcissism. Most would rather stay within the confines of the Web than to read a book, play music, write, or go outside. If we can harness these negative aspects of the Internet and transform them in a way to create real connections and a truer self-understanding, then click away. Until then, we should be careful what we “believe” and whom we “friend.”

Bibliography


DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS

The following two short descriptive essays do not use a style guide because they are creative musings about personal observation. Descriptive essays can also rely on other sources for a variety of reasons, in which case a writer would use a formal citation guide to document any borrowed information.
Breakfast was impossible. So was lunch. And dinner had to wait until later. My stomach had no room for food because nervous energy seeped into every crevice. I could not eat until I made it through the ceremony.

I picture my high school graduation in a fuzzy dreamlike state. My classmates and I lined up in the wings of the civic center, anxiously watching for the signal to start marching. We adjusted our royal blue robes and mortarboards with orange tassels, proud to wear our school colors. The senior class president delivered a speech before an expansive crowd of proud family members in the darkened auditorium. The underclassmen I would leave behind blew into horns, releasing the majesty of “Pomp and Circumstance.” Thank God they were playing that old tune for me.

I was tired of the every day. I was well known, but not popular. I was a member of the clubs for brainy kids and kids who shied away from sports. National Honor Society president, flag corps captain, newspaper editor-in-chief, Beta Club do-gooder. I took advanced classes and came home by curfew. I wanted more, but I feared stepping out of those government-sanctioned bounds. It was too risky. I might fail if I tried something different.

Days, or maybe weeks, before my high school graduation, I cried silently in my room. Starting a new life was scary. My two closest friends, my sister, and I were heading to colleges in four different states. I did not know what was going to be waiting for me when I arrived. The several minutes I spent flushing out my emotions helped me put the period at the end of my high school career. I was a quiet kid tired of being quiet.

Graduation would set me free. With a flip of the tassel—that swift movement of my hand—something strange happened inside me. My cells electrified, charging across new boundaries. Those building 

In these two essays, make note of where the author uses her senses for detailed description.
blocks of life I had learned about in elementary school split eagerly, reproducing a new me. It was glorious chaos. After four years of the status quo, the silent, lost rebel claimed victory. I tossed my mortarboard into the air—but not too high—because I wanted to catch it and store it away in a time capsule. It would serve as proof of my new DNA.

It has been 13 years since I graduated from high school and a smile still spreads across my face when I think about that day. My heart still speeds up a little as if it is trying to keep up with my electrified cells. New labels have started to define me—career woman, newly single, auntie—but I am in control. My cells are at rest—for now.

Threads

Granddaddy liked to make piles. He took a glimpse down at his plaid shirt, spotted a wayward thread, squeezed it between his thumb and index finger, gave it a slight a tug and let it float onto a tiny mound on the floor. He worked with the diligence of a gardener, determined to have a perfectly pruned yard. My grandmother laid a white hand towel across his lap and told him to pick at that instead. He looked at her with disinterest and stopped picking altogether.

That is what Alzheimer’s did. Replaced his memory with strange habits. Alzheimer’s slithers through the brain like a fallen artist. It yanks apart fresh clay and clumps it into twisted tangles with no regard for the aesthetic. A beautiful brain—one worth displaying among the finest masterpieces—turns into something unrecognizable.

Before Granddaddy’s memory faded, he liked to work. He owned a barbershop and cut hair in the part of town called The Hill. I remember men sitting in barber chairs, my grandfather standing
behind them clippers in hand. But most of all, I remember black combs floating in the blue cleansing liquid as if they were being preserved for scientific research.

When Granddaddy was not cutting hair, he was across the street at the pool hall, which he also owned. My mom would occasionally take us by to say hello. It was always dark in there with the fluorescent lights over the pool tables casting a faint glow. It was not a place I wanted to stay more than a few minutes. They had beige walls with splotches of florescent green paint. They looked as if someone started painting and forgot about it, or maybe old paint was fading. I was never sure.

But I could not help but smile when I was there because my grandfather would always have a big smile when we walked into the door. We were clearly his favorite customers even though we were not going to buy anything.

I was proud that my grandfather owned two successful businesses. Maybe a beautiful brain can never really die. Maybe it just evolves.

My grandfather became nonverbal when the Alzheimer’s was really advanced. But there were times when he opened his mouth and looked like he was trying to tell us something. No sound would come out, but there was something in his eyes—a hint of understanding. Maybe those piles of threads were his mind’s way of staying beautiful. He had a goal and he intended to finish it.

CAUSE-EFFECT ANALYSIS
The following two analyses use the Bluebook style of citation. Bluebook is a citation style used for legal writing. It was developed so that it would make citing cases and other legal documentation easy to cross-reference with information required to look up legal documents.

In the first sample essay, you will see annotations that comment on the essay itself as well as the style used. See if you can identify the same or similar items in the second essay.
A Jury of One’s Peers

The right to remain silent, the right to keep and bear arms, the right to a jury of one’s peers: for many Americans these rights are taken as an undeniable part of our privileges as citizens, codified in constitutional amendments and legal decisions. Yet with respect to the right to a jury of one’s peers, the Sixth Amendment provides only for “an impartial jury.” U.S. Const. amend. VI. How to define “impartial” has long been argued by the courts, and the legal definition has evolved over time and continues to evolve in the present day. Specifically, the courts have looked to define impartiality in terms of a jury pool which reflects a cross-section of the community.

The notion of a jury of one’s peers stems from the Magna Carta (Cole & Smith, 2006), signed in 1215 by King John of England. The United States inherited the jury system and used it widely through the Colonial era. Nonetheless, who was allowed to serve on a jury was often quite narrow. Many states restricted potential jurors to white men, though in a notable exception in 17th and 18th century New England, Native Americans accused of a crime were allowed a jury “half native and half newcomer, so that the ways of both peoples might become part of the deliberations of the ‘triers of fact’” (Hoffer, 1998, p.68). In the state of Massachusetts, African-American men were first allowed to serve on juries in the 1860s. Women were not allowed to serve until 1950 (“The Massachusetts Jury System,” 2010).

Recent court decisions have further refined what constitutes an impartial jury. In Taylor v. Louisiana (1975), the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a Louisiana law which excluded women from jury service unless they had submitted to the court in writing a desire to serve.
on a jury. Taylor v. Louisiana, 419 U.S. 522 (1975). Similarly, in Duren v. Missouri (1979), the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a Missouri law which allowed women specifically to decline jury service with no explanation. Duren v. Missouri, 439 U.S. 357 (1979). In short, the court felt in both these cases that excluding half the population made a cross-section impossible, and thus failed to make the jury impartial.

The courts have also historically defined impartiality at the level of the jury pool, not the actual jury. In other words, the courts have allowed both prosecutors and defense attorneys leeway in their attempts to create a jury most sympathetic to their cause, arguing that with both sides pulling in different directions, the end result is fair. That said, potential jurors can no longer be excluded simply on the basis of race, religion, or sex.

That does not mean, however, that defendants are guaranteed a diverse jury. In 1993, Diapolis Smith, an African-American from Grand Rapids, Michigan, was found guilty of second-degree murder by an all-white jury. The jury pool of 100 contained only 3 African-Americans despite the fact that African-Americans made up 8% of the county’s population, and 18% of the city’s. In his appeal, Smith argued that the jury was not drawn from a fair cross-section of the community and thus violated his Sixth Amendment rights. In Berghuis v. Smith (2010), the U.S. Supreme Court held that Smith’s rights were not violated and the process by which the county formed the pool did not reflect a systematic exclusion of African-Americans. Berghuis v. Smith, 599 U.S. ___ (2010)

The Sixth Amendment provides Americans with many legal protections, including the right to a speedy and public trial, the right to know the charges against oneself, the right to confront one’s accusers, and the right to an attorney. It also guarantees the right to
an impartial jury, but as seen above, that does not necessarily mean a jury of one's peers.

References


*Duren v. Missouri*, 439 U.S. 357 (1979)


U.S. Const. amend. VI

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**Understanding the Current Health-care Crisis**

Kevin is a 45-year-old man whose heart has essentially worn itself out. Though he has worked all of his life, he had to stop working two years ago when the doctors could not determine what was causing his heart to deteriorate. His doctors recently informed him that another bypass will likely kill him, so he needs a heart transplant; however, Medicare will not cover this procedure because there is still no official diagnosis for his condition. His Social Security benefits are, of course, insufficient to pay for the procedure. Stories like Kevin’s have become all too common, yet few understand the reasons for the health-care crisis that has been the subject of many heated debates across the country.

The insurance companies are for-profit entities, and as such, they have a right to make a profit from their business. The issue for many Americans concerns the amount of profit these companies
are making. In 2007, health insurance companies showed a 383% increase in profit, which could be considered exorbitant even by big oil standards (Richards, 2008). Though health insurance is regulated by the government to some extent, it has been argued that the regulations on costs could be more stringent to drive costs down. Gomez v. GlobalNet, 324 U.S.233 (2001).

On the other hand, health insurers claim that their costs have to increase because of the high demand for technological advancements. Research and development carry a high price tag, and as such, the consumers (and the insurance companies) carry the burden. Harrison has pointed out that

the government recognizes that our society cannot spend excessive amounts of money to save all lives simply because we have the medical technology to do so. Adopting such a policy would be disastrous for any society, leading to injustice. Compassion would be sacrificed in the name of policy. (Harrison, 2006, p. 3)

The problem lies in developing a reasonable plan to address different situations fairly. We all agree that our lives and the lives of our loved ones are priceless, but we have to determine when society should see that life as priceless, too.

Because these excessive uses of the health-care system and the ensuing medical innovations have driven costs up, the ability to afford health insurance or even a doctor’s visit has been compromised. Due to this trend, too many people wait until they are more than just sick to see a doctor. Though there is some debate over how much is saved by preventative medicine, one can also say that many of the other concerns over who should have access to services can be effectively resolved through preventative medicine (Connor, 2008). The uninsured go to emergency rooms and often forego paying their high emergency room bills. Though the unpaid bills are a factor, the larger problem is the fact that these people are often
so sick that their illness is then covered by Medicare, adding to the taxpayers’ burden for health insurance.

Though many other issues contribute to the taxpayer burden and the insurance costs, to effectively develop a health-care program that will work for the majority of Americans, issues of who should receive which services and when those services should be administered must be addressed first. Otherwise, Americans may find themselves with a rising tax bill that they did not bargain for.

References