9

Being a Better Writer & Speaker

Making Powerful Written & Oral Presentations

Questions I Would Like to Be Able to Answer

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Question: *How do I go about giving a speech?*

What's the Best Way to Write a Lousy Paper?

What are the ways to turn in a quickie term paper that may not get you an A grade but, you hope and pray, will allow you to skate by?

- ***No-effort papers: "All I want is just to meet the assignment deadline."*** Quite often students submit papers that show no thought and effort, just a rehash of conflicting ideas of different experts and scholars. Pasted together from various websites, they are often marked by superficial references, no book citations, outdated material, and unrelated pictures and graphs.
- ***Plagiarized papers: "I don't know enough about this subject to have any ideas."*** Plagiarism is when you rip off other writers' stuff, copying passages from other sources without crediting them. Most instructors have a sensitivity to plagiarism, but you could try and see if you can get away with it. And hope to escape the automatic F in the course and possible suspension from school if you're found out.
- ***Paper-mill papers: "I'd rather pay money than sweat this paper out myself."*** You buy a prewritten or custom-written paper from a paper mill (essay mill, or commercial writing service). Or you lift one from a fraternity-house file or a good buddy to pass off as your own. Problem: The paper may be just awful, or the instructor might suspect or recognize its source. Result: F in the course and expulsion from school. But hey, you're desperate.

9.1 What an Instructor Looks for in a Paper: Getting the Rubrics Right

QUESTION: How do I find out what my professor wants to see in a term paper?

The Big Picture

Instructors grade term papers according to scoring tools called *rubrics.* Four general criteria by which papers are evaluated are (1) *focus,* how well you fulfill the purpose of the assignment; (2) *organization,* how well you present your central idea; (3) *support,* how well you present evidence to support your idea; and (4) *effective language,* how well written your paper is.

The top skills employers seek in college graduates, as we stated in Chapter 5, are *written communication skills* (wanted by 82% of employers) and *oral communication skills* (by 85%).[1] We cover both in this chapter.

The kind of writing you will do in college is principally term papers. **A *term paper*, or research paper, is supposed to be a paper based on extensive research into a specific subject that includes proper documentation.**

Instructors often consider the term paper to be worth *50% of the course grade*—which is why you should give it your best effort, not just try to knock it out over a weekend.

What the Professor Wants: Writing to the Rubric

Writing a term paper begins with looking at the materials the instructor gives you to find out what he or she wants—the assessment guideline or *rubric.*

A *rubric* ("*roo*-brik") is a scoring tool that explicitly describes the performance expectations for an assignment.[2] An example of part of a rubric designed for essays and research papers in history is as follows:

Example of part of an instructor's rubric (standards) for grading a research paper in History[3]

Criteria	A (excellent)	B (good)
Overall impression	Essay directly addresses the main issue and adds new insight not derived from lectures and readings.	Essay competently addresses main issue, but does not add much new insight.
Argument	Essay makes a clear argument, lets the reader know the paper's intent.	An argument is present in the essay but must be ferreted out from the text.
Evidence	Essay provides compelling, accurate evidence that convinces the reader to accept the main argument.	Essay provides evidence to convince the reader of most aspects of the main argument but not all.

Criteria	C (needs improvement)	D (poor)	F
Overall impression	Essay tries to address main issue, but fails.	Essay doesn't address main issue.	P L A G I A R I S M
Argument	Essay tries but fails to make an argument.	Essay makes no attempt to make an argument.	
Evidence	Essay short on evidence to support the main argument, or is incomplete, incorrect, or oversimplified.	No evidence provided. Or too many factual mistakes, omissions, or oversimplifications exist.	

The specific rubric for your term paper may be attached to your writing assignment sheet. (If it's not, you should ask the professor what the standards are for grading on the paper.)

Typical criteria in a professor's rubric for grading a research paper include *focus, comprehensiveness, background information, integration of sources, audience adaptation, argument, organization, style,* and *mechanics.*[4]

Go through the writing assignment instructions handed out by your professor and highlight or underline the kinds of things she or he is looking for. Example:[5]

> *"Your paper must exhibit all of the following to receive a good grade: logical/systematic thought, specific evidence, reliable source material, clear analytical progression, organization, coherent argument, and concise communication.*
>
> *"Your argument cannot be based on your opinions alone, but must be bolstered with research from scholarly materials (books, journals, periodicals, professional websites, etc.) and must have a clear argument and line of logic."*

There may be other requirements, such as the number of pages (10 to 12, say) and the formatting (double-spacing and 1-inch page margins, for example).

Note all of these—*as well as the due date* for the paper.

Now you can take all these and *restate them in the form of a rubric*—a chart like that we showed above, with the various criteria, such as "Clear argument and line of logic" and "Research from scholarly materials." These are the criteria you must meet to earn an A.

Qualities Desired in Term Papers: Focus, Organization, Support, Effective Language

Beyond the rubrics specific to their discipline, when instructors grade term papers, they generally want to see . . .[6]

1. *focus—how well you fulfill the purpose of the assignment,*
2. *organization—how well you present your central idea,*
3. *support—how well you present evidence to back up your idea,*
4. *effective language—how well written the paper is.*

1. Focus: How Well Does Your Paper Fulfill the Purpose of the Assignment?

You need to be absolutely sure that *you understand the professor's instructions*—that you know what the purpose and the audience are for the paper.

For instance, if the instructor says (as part of the grading rubric) "A grade = The essay directly addresses the main issue and adds new insight not derived from lectures and readings," that is what is meant by focus. (If you didn't add any new insights derived outside of lectures and so on, you're not completely satisfying this purpose.)

The audience, of course, is your instructor, so the words and tone must be appropriate—somewhat formal.

2. Organization: How Well Does Your Paper Present Your Central Idea?

An effective paper must express *a clear central idea*—make a claim, present a thesis, put forward an argument, answer a question. You need to be able to write this as a single sentence, such as a question you set out to answer. Examples:

> *"Do men or women launch start-up tech companies that are more successful?"*
>
> *"What happens to DUI (Driving Under the Influence) rates in states that recently legalized recreational marijuana use?"*
>
> *"What's the best way to dispose of radioactive waste?"*

3. Support: How Well Does Your Paper Present Evidence to Support Your Idea?

Your central idea, assertion, or argument "needs to be developed logically, coherently, and extensively, with specific and convincing supporting details," says one writer. "You need to make sure the evidence you use is accurate and from credible sources."[7]

Credible sources generally mean scholarly books and journals (such as *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*), respectable periodicals (such as the *New York Times*), and professional websites (such as The Institution of Environmental Sciences).

4. Effective Language: How Well Written Is Your Paper?

Your paper should, of course, be written for a college-level audience (the professor), with appropriate vocabulary and length of explanations.

It should follow a logical analytical progression, giving definitions and histories.

It should make your central point and support it with sufficient evidence.

It should state opposing arguments and show why they may not be correct.

It should cite research and quote and paraphrase experts, using the correct form in citations.

It should develop sentence structures accurately.

It should follow academic standards for neatness, grammar, and spelling.

Plagiarism & Paper Mills: Less Work but High Risk

So you're in a bind and don't feel you can write the assigned paper yourself? Is it time to take "shortcuts"—try to pass off other people's work as your own?

Lifting ideas created by others goes against the very nature of why you're supposed to be in college, which is to learn ways to meet challenges and expand your competence. Nevertheless, with the constant drumming of deadlines, the temptation is always there to plagiarize or pay for papers.

- **Plagiarism.** ***Plagiarism*** **is when you take another person's words or ideas and pass them off as your own,** such as copying passages from other sources without crediting them. It's certainly permissible to *quote* another writer's words, provided you use quotation marks, or *paraphrase* (restate) that writer's ideas, provided in both cases you name the source.

  Instructors are usually alert to the signs of plagiarism: The quality of the writing is inconsistent, the paper seems to exceed the student's research or writing capabilities, the paper contains complex or specialized vocabulary, the bibliography seems odd, and similar signs.[8]

  There are many ways for instructors to check suspicious work: run unusual phrases or sentences through a search engine like Google to see what comes up; use plagiarism checker software; or enlist companies such as turnitin.org, which monitors "billions of pages" of works found on the internet.

- **Paper-mill papers.** A ***paper mill*****, or** ***term paper mill*** **or** ***essay mill*****, is an essay writing service that makes prewritten or custom-written papers available to students and others, usually for a fee.** Papers are available on thousands of subjects.

  Are paper mills effective (in the sense that dishonest students get away with passing off fake papers)? In one experiment, a psychology and economics professor submitted a request for a 12-page custom-written paper to four paper mills (at fees ranging from $150 to $216 per paper).

  "What we got back from the mills," he wrote, "can best be described as gibberish. . . . Citations were sloppy. Reference lists contained outdated and unknown sources." Two of the papers were 35% to 39% copied from existing works.

  What about the writing quality? "Awful," he reported. "It's hard to believe that students purchasing such papers would ever do so again."[9]

9.2 Picking a Topic, Developing an Outline, Doing the Research

Question: How do I get started, and how do I get the material for my paper?

The Big Picture

The first steps are to pick a topic for the paper, then do some initial research and develop an outline, which consists of a beginning, middle, and end. Using 3 x 5 index cards or appropriate software, you then collect your information using books, periodicals, and references—both library and online sources. Index cards are organized as source cards, information cards, and idea cards.

Many students delay writing a term paper because it seems such a daunting task. "But it's important to get started *the exact same day* that the prof hands you the assignment," advises one website. "There's no time to waste."[10]

Picking a Paper Topic

As soon as you get your instructor's guidelines for the term paper, set a deadline for picking the topic. In your lecture notes, on a page by itself, write a big note to yourself:

**** DEADLINE: PICK TERM PAPER TOPIC BY TUESDAY NOON! ****

Also put this on your to-do list and in your weekly planner.

There are two criteria for picking a topic for the paper:

- *Pick a topic important to the instructor,* as expressed in his or her written guidelines or verbal instructions when giving the writing assignment.

- *Pick a topic interesting to you,* which you may find by looking at your lecture notes and textbook to see what ideas pop out.

By the time your self-imposed deadline arrives for choosing your topic, you should have three alternative ideas, expressed as questions. Examples:

"What diets are most effective for weight loss?"

"Does meditation prolong life in cancer patients?"

"Does wearing helmets reduce motorcycle injuries?"

Do a basic search in the library and online to make sure there are enough sources to support your subject. Are some of these questions too broad (diets) or too narrow (helmets)? You should now take your topic questions and show them or email them to the instructor. Ask . . .

"Do you think any of these topics are important enough to be worth exploring in a term paper?"

"Do you think the topic is too broad or too narrow in scope?"

The answers will help you satisfy the instructor's criteria for the paper. In addition, he or she may be able to suggest books and other resources that will help you in your research.

Doing Initial Research & Developing an Outline

The next phase consists of doing initial research and developing an outline. If it took you 1 week to decide on a topic, it should take you another week to do this second task. Here, too, you should write a big note to yourself (and also put it on your weekly calendar and to-do list):

**** DEADLINE: CHECK OUT RESEARCH FOR TERM PAPER BY WEDNESDAY 5 p.m.! ****

The idea here is to satisfy yourself about two things:

- *Is enough material available to you so that you can adequately research your paper?*
- *Do you have a rough idea of the direction your paper will take?*

Finding out whether there is enough research material available need not take long—perhaps a half hour in the college library. The idea is to look in a handful of places to get a sense of the research material available to you. Here are two possibilities:

- **Online catalog.** Look under the subject listing in the library's online catalog to see what books exist on your topic. Look up some call letters for relevant titles, then visit the shelves and see what books you can find.
- **Guide to periodicals.** Magazines and journals are apt to be more up to date than books. Check the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* to see what articles are available in your topic area. Jot down the names of the periodicals, then check with the reference librarian to see if they are available.

While you're doing your first research, you should also do a preliminary outline, which will (1) save you time later and (2) provide you with a general road map. You can always change the outline later. But if you set out without one, you may waste time before you get a sense of direction.

Take a sheet of paper and write *OUTLINE #1* across the top. Then fill in the following three parts—*I. Beginning, II. Middle, and III. End.*

I. BEGINNING—the introduction

The beginning, or introduction, describes the one or two main questions your paper will try to answer. In the final paper, the beginning will be one or two paragraphs.

Examples: "Is global warming already doing damage?" "What kinds of harm has global warming done during the past 25 years?"

II. MIDDLE—the body

The middle or body of the outline describes some specific questions your paper will try to answer. These detailed questions help you answer the main questions.

Examples: "What health effects has global warming had in recent times?" "What is the evidence that global warming is making sea levels rise?" "How have increased temperatures affected food production?" "Have changes in the earth's atmosphere affected people's incomes?" And so on.

III. END—the conclusion

You won't know the end or conclusion, of course, until you've done the research and answered your questions. For now, *just state that you will write a conclusion based on your answers.*

Here are some techniques for developing your outline:

- **Write questions on index cards.** Get a stack of 3 x 5 index cards or cut sheets of notepaper into quarters. On each card or quarter-page, write a question you want to answer about your topic. *Write as many questions as you can think of, both general and detailed.*
- **Organize index cards into categories.** Now sort your 3 x 5 index cards into stacks by category. One stack might contain a few general questions that will make up your introduction; the others could be categorized according to the body of the outline.

  What categories might you have? Some stacks may be of similar kinds of questions. Some might be advantages and disadvantages, causes and effects, or comparisons and contrasts. Do whatever kind of grouping seems sensible to you.
- **Write out your outline.** Copy the categories and questions into the outline form shown above. You now have a road map to follow to begin your research.

After developing your outline, show it or email it to your instructor. He or she will be able to determine at a glance whether you seem to be headed in the right direction.

Note: You may find software more useful than 3 x 5 index cards for collecting and organizing research notes. Several research note–taking apps for laptops and smartphones are described in the box below.[11]

Ticket To Success

Some Useful Research Note–Taking Apps

We described several apps for taking lecture notes in a *Ticket to Success* box in Chapter 6. Some of these can also be helpful for taking research notes.

What you hope such an app will do is help you "store all of the ideas, bits of inspiration, notes, quotes, takeaways from the books I read, and more," as writer Shawn Blanc expresses it.

Good notes systems enable you to group notes in a visual way; provide spaces to write down comments, questions, direct quotes, and paraphrasing; and give a way to record the source so you can find it again.

Among the many notes and research apps available are the following:

- **Evernote, Microsoft OneNote, Simplenote.** All were discussed in Chapter 6. They are free for basic features.
- **Other free apps.** Also mentioned in Chapter 6 were Apple Notes, Bear, Box Notes, and Google Keep.
- **Others worth looking at, many of them free.** These include Day One, EndNote, Mendeley, Paper, SomNote, Keep it, Ulysses, and Zotero.

Doing Your Research—Using the Library

The next phase consists of doing your research, which usually means making use of the library.

"The *library!"* you may say. "Why bother when there's the internet?"

For students who grew up with the World Wide Web, the idea of using the library just seems like too much effort. Yet if you don't know advanced web-searching techniques, a simple online search for, say, information about the planet Mars can produce tens of thousands of hits. It may take around an hour and a half to find something online that could quickly be found in a library. What's in a library is standardized and well organized, whereas what's on the web is often overwhelming, unstandardized, and chaotic.

If you have not had a formal orientation to the library, whether on videotape or through an actual tour, now is the time. If possible, do it before you're under a tight deadline for a research paper so you won't have to do your research under panic conditions. Some institutions offer a credit course in how to use the library.

A survey of library offerings appears in the following box.

Ticket To Success

Finding Your Way around the Library

Particularly at a large university, you may find the library is a lot larger than those you're accustomed to. Indeed, there may be several libraries on campus, plus access to libraries elsewhere. The most important one for first-year students is the central library, the principal library on campus.

The central library has several parts:

- **Main section.** The main section includes six parts:
  1. The desk where you check books out
  2. The catalog (card or computerized) listing books
  3. A reference section, with dictionaries, encyclopedias, and directories, and indexes to periodicals

(continued)

4. A periodicals section displaying current newspapers, magazines, and journals
5. A section (perhaps called the "stacks") housing books
6. A section housing back issues of periodicals, often on microfilm

- **Other sections.** In addition, the central library usually has some special sections:
  1. A media center, or section containing audiotapes and videotapes
  2. A section for reserve books set aside by instructors for certain courses
  3. A vertical file containing pamphlets on special topics
  4. A government documents section
- **Other services—study areas and machines.** Most campus libraries also provide study areas. Indeed, because the whole purpose of the library is to enable students to do serious work, there are relatively few distractions.
- Finally, there may be several machines available for your use: terminals for accessing websites and online databases, photocopiers, machines for reading microfilm and microfiche (materials on film), terminals for accessing databases, and machines for accessing audiotapes and videotapes.

How to Find What You Want: E-resources, Books, Periodicals, & Reference Materials

The principal resource—the trained navigators, as it were—are the *librarians.* Don't hesitate to ask for their help. That's what they're there for. They can tell you if the library has what you need and show you how to get started. Librarians are also the people to hunt up when you have exhausted other resources. They may refer

you to special sources within the library or to different libraries on or off campus.[12]

Among the principal resources librarians will direct you to are e-resources (electronic research materials), books, periodicals, and reference materials.

- **E-resources.** Start with the e-reserves that the professor has listed, which will be found on the college library's webpage and pertain to the particular course you're taking. Then look for more general scholarly sources (such as InfoTrac, OneFile, LexisNexis Academic, and ProQuest).[13] Librarians can show you other kinds of electronic resources.
- **Books.** Books may be found on open shelves in the main section of the library. In some places, they may also be in the "stacks," requiring a library page or runner to go get them. Or they may be in special libraries located elsewhere on campus, such as those attached to the business school or the law school.

  Or they may be available by means of ***interlibrary loan*, a service that enables you to borrow books from other libraries.** Allow extra time—several days or even weeks—and perhaps expect to pay a small fee when obtaining a book through interlibrary loan.

  To find a book, you will probably use a *CD-ROM catalog* or *online computerized catalog.* Instructions for use may appear on the machines themselves, or you can seek the help of a librarian. In both cases, you can use key words to look for books appropriate to your research.

  In addition, you can use *Books in Print,* an annual reference work that is organized by title, author, and subject, to find books in your area of research, although they won't necessarily be in your school's library.

Most schools' libraries use the Library of Congress system of call numbers and letters. Get the call numbers from the computerized catalog, then use a map of the library to find the appropriate shelves. Once you've found your book, look at other books in the general vicinity to see if they could be useful.

- **Periodicals.** You can see what general newspapers, magazines, and journals are available by simply looking at the open shelves in the periodicals reading room. A list of the library's holdings in periodicals should also be available at the main desk. Some avenues for finding articles in the research area you're interested in appear below.

Ticket To Success

How to Find What You Want in Newspapers, Magazines, & Journals

- **Newspaper indexes.** In the United States, the newspapers available in many campus libraries, either in print or online form, are the *New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today,* and *Washington Post.* Some newspapers print indexes that list information about the articles appearing in their pages. Examples are the *New York Times Index* and the *Wall Street Journal Index.*
- **Magazine indexes.** The index for the 100 or so most general magazines, many of which are probably available in your library, is the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature.* This lists articles appearing in such well-known magazines as *Time, Newsweek, Reader's Digest,* and *Psychology Today.*

(continued)

Other indexes, available in printed, microfilm, or CD-ROM form, are *NewsBank, InfoTrac,* and *Medline.*

- **Journal indexes and abstracts.** Journals are specialized magazines, and their articles are listed in specialized indexes and databases. Examples range from *Applied Science & Technology Index* to *Social Sciences Citation Index.*

  In addition, there are indexes called abstracts, which present paragraphs summarizing articles along with bibliographical information about them. Examples range from *Biological Abstracts to Sociological Abstracts* to *PsycINFO.*

- **Dictionaries, thesauruses, style books.** Need to look up specialized terms for your paper? The reference section of the library has not only standard dictionaries but also specialized dictionaries for technical subjects, such as *Webster's New World Dictionary of Computer Terms.*

  In addition, you may find a thesaurus helpful in your writing. **A *thesaurus* lists synonyms, or words with similar meanings.** This is a great resource when you can't think of the exact word you want when writing. Many computers now come with a thesaurus built in.

  Finally, there are various style books for helping you do footnotes and bibliographies, such as *The Chicago Manual of Style.*

- **Encyclopedias, almanacs, handbooks.** No doubt the library has various kinds of standard encyclopedias. Examples range from *Cyclopedia of World Authors* to *The Wellness Encyclopedia.*

  There are also all kinds of specialized almanacs, handbooks, and other reference sources, such as *The Business Writer's Handbook.*

- **Government literature.** The most prolific publisher in the world is the United States government. To find out publications pertinent to your subject, look in the *Catalog of U.S. Government Publications (GPO Monthly Catalog)* and *PAIS* (Public Affairs Information Service) *Index.*
- **Computer networks.** Many libraries subscribe to computerized information networks, such as ProQuest®, ERIC, ORBIT, and BSR. Directories and guides exist to help you learn to use these services. Examples are *Directory of Online Databases, Encyclopedia of Information Systems and Services,* and *Guide to the Use of Libraries and Information Sources.*
- **Other libraries.** In big universities, various departments and schools often have their own libraries. Thus, the libraries of, say, the business school or medical school will have material that the main library does not.

Collecting Information: 3 x 5 Index Cards

Some materials (principally books) you'll be able to check out and have access to at your usual writing desk. However, most libraries won't let you take out magazines, encyclopedias, and general reference materials. Thus, you'll need to be able to take notes in the library.

Traditional 3 x 5 index cards are useful because you can write one idea on each card, then later sort the cards as you please. Index cards should be used in three ways—as source cards, information cards, and idea cards.

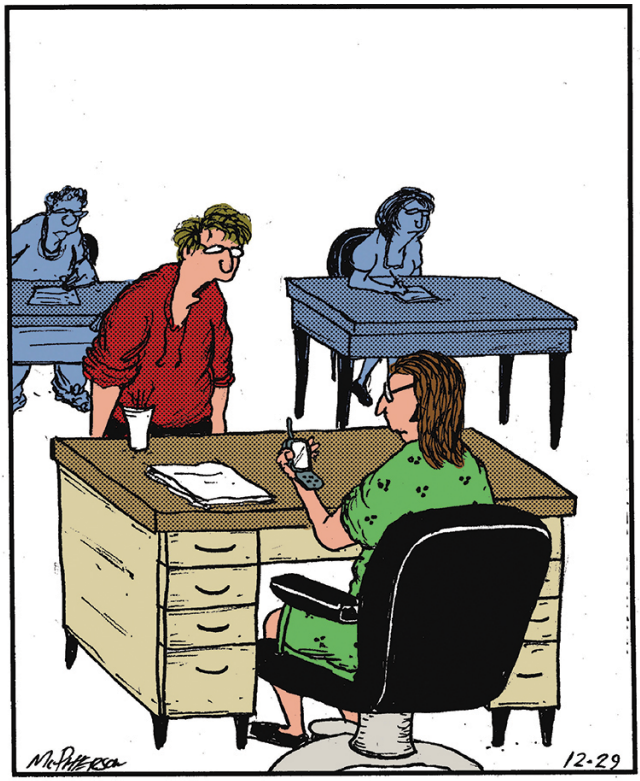
- **Source cards.** Use *source cards* to keep track of bibliographical information. At the time you're looking up your sources, you can jot down the call letters on these cards. Specifically:
  1. For each *journal article:* Write down the author's last and first name, title of article, title of journal, month and year, volume and issue number, and page numbers.

2. For each *book:* Write down the author's (or editor's) name, book title, edition, city and state of publication, name of publisher, year of publication (listed on the copyright page), and pages you referred to, if necessary.

Later, when you type your references, you'll be able to arrange these source cards in alphabetical order by authors' last names.

- **Information cards.** Use *information cards* to copy down information and quotations. This is the actual research material you will use. The card will have three areas:
  1. *Source abbreviation:* At the top of each card, put an abbreviated version of the source, including the page number. (Example: "Williams 2017, p. 23." If you have two 2017 Williams references, label them *a* and *b.)* If you use more than one card for a single source, number the cards.
  2. *Information:* In the lower part of the card, write the information. If it's a direct quote, enclose it in quotation marks.
  3. *Key-word zone:* Reserve the top right corner of the card as a "key-word zone." In this area, put one or two key words that will tie the card to a place on your outline. (Example: "Sea level rise.") The key word can also tie the card to a new subject, if it is not on the outline.
- **Idea cards.** Use *idea cards* to jot down ideas that occur to you. To make sure you don't mix them up with information cards, write "IDEA #1," "IDEA #2," and so on, at the top.

To keep the cards organized, keep them in three separate stacks, each wrapped in a rubber band.



"My computer's hard drive crashed, so I text-messaged you my term paper."

(www.CartoonStock.com)

9.3 Writing, Rewriting, & Finalizing the Paper

QUESTION: What do I have to do to produce a first draft, and what do I do after that?

The Big Picture

After you've done all the research, you sort your notes, revise the outline, and settle on a thesis statement and working title. You then write sections of the first draft in this order: middle, beginning, and end. During the writing, you try to follow guidelines for good writing. After letting the draft sit, you revise, finalize, and proofread the paper.

The research phase may have taken a lot of work, but now it's time to put it all together. Allow plenty of time: A first draft of a major paper may take more than one day. Also, before you begin writing, reread the instructor's directions regarding the paper.

Whatever kind of writing environment suits you, the main thing is that it *help you avoid distractions.* You may also need room to spread out your research materials, even use the floor. If you write in longhand or use a laptop or tablet, a table in the library may do.

Some instructors accept handwritten papers, but most don't. Thus, you should type your paper (or have someone else type it), using a word processor.

Don't forget to give the paper a title page, including your name. And it will impress your instructor a bit more if you put the paper in cardboard covers.

Sorting Your Notes & Revising Your Outline

In gathering your information, you may have been following the questions that appeared on your preliminary outline. However, the very process of doing research may turn up some new questions and areas that you hadn't thought of. Thus, your source materials may contain information that suggests some changes to the outline.

Here's what to do:

- **Sort your source material.** Keeping your eye on the key words in the upper right corner of your 3 x 5 index cards or other source material, sort the information into piles. *Each pile should gather together information relating to a similar question or topic.* Now move the piles into the order or sequence in which you will discuss the material, according to your preliminary outline.
- **Revise your outline.** The piles may suggest some changes in the order of your outline. Thus, you should now take a fresh sheet of paper, write *OUTLINE #2* at the top, and redo the questions or categories.

By now you will be able to write answers to some or all of your questions. *As you rework the outline, write answers to the questions you have listed.* Refer to the sources of your information as you write.

For example, suppose you have the question "Is climate change hurting us now?" You might write . . .

> *"The Lancet report: 46% increase in number of weather-related disasters from 2000 to 2016. Increase in dengue fever worldwide. 5.3% fall in labor productivity in world's rural areas since 2000. Worsening allergies in United States—longer exposure to ragweed pollen in 2016 compared with 1990 (Lancet Countdown)."*

Resequence the topics so that they seem to follow logically, with one building on another.

- **Write a thesis statement and working title.** When you get done with reworking and answering questions in *II. Middle* of your outline, go back up to *I. Beginning.* Revise the main question or questions into a thesis statement. **A *thesis statement* is a concise sentence that defines the purpose of your paper.** For example, your original main questions were "Is climate change affecting us today?" and "Is

the weather different from what it used to be?" These might now become your thesis statement:

"Though many people believe that climate change is a future threat, research shows that it is actually having a huge impact on us right now."

The thesis statement will in turn suggest a working title. A *working title* is a tentative title for your paper. Thus, you might put down on your outline: Working title: "Is Climate Change Already Affecting Us Now, Not Just in the Future?"

Writing Your First Draft

The first draft has one major purpose: *to get your ideas down on paper.*

This is not the stage to worry about doing a clever introduction or choosing the right words or making transitions between ideas. Nor should you concern yourself about correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Simply write as though you were telling your findings to a friend.

It's important not to be too judgmental about your writing at this point. Your main task is to get from a blank page to a page with *something* on it that you can refine later.

Proceed as follows:

- **Write the middle.** Skip the beginning, letting your thesis statement be the introduction for now. Instead, follow Outline #2 for *II. Middle* to write the body of your paper, using your information cards to flesh it out.

  Set down your answers or ideas one after the other, without worrying too much about logical transitions between them. Use your own voice, not some imagined "scholarly" tone.

  Follow some of the writing suggestions mentioned in the next section, "Some Writing Tips."

- **Write the beginning.** When you have finished setting down the answers to all the questions in the middle, go back and do *I. Beginning.* By starting with the middle, you'll avoid the hang-up of trying to get your paper off the ground or of writing an elegant lead.

  Also, having done the middle, you'll have a solid idea, of course, of what your paper is about. You'll know, for instance, which questions and answers are the most important. These may be different from the questions you asked before you did your research.

  Now you'll be able to write the introduction with some confidence. An example might be:

  "Some people believe that climate change doesn't exist. Others say its impact lies in the future. I will argue that it is inflicting overwhelming damage right now. It is affecting our weather, our shorelines, our health, and many other matters. This paper will examine some of those present-day effects."

- **Write the end.** Finally, you write *III. End.* The end is the conclusion. It does not include any new facts or examples. It provides just the general answer or answers to the main question or questions raised in the beginning. This is the answer you've arrived at by exploring the questions in the middle section. It's possible, of course, that your conclusion will be incomplete or tentative. It's all right to state that further research is needed.

  An example of the end of a paper might be as follows:

  "As we have seen, despite the belief of some people that climate change does not exist or that it will affect us mostly in the far future, the evidence is plain that it is having catastrophic effects right now. From 2000

to 2016, there has been a 46% increase in the number of weather-related disasers. Rising temperatures have led to a 5.3% fall in labor productivity in rural areas. Warming has increased the spread of dengue fever throughout the world and worsened allergies in the United States. Rising sea levels threaten many port cities. We are long past the point where we can afford to delay action on this worldwide calamity."

Some Writing Tips

In writing the first draft of the middle, or body, of the paper, you should try to get something down that you can revise and polish later. Thus, don't worry too much if this initial version seems choppy; that's why a first draft is called a "rough" draft.

As you write, try to follow these guidelines:

- **Make your point and give support for it.** The point you want to make is the answer to each question. (For example, your question might be "What effects has climate change already had on human health?") In your writing, this answer will become a statement. Example:

  "Climate change has had worldwide health effects, the result of heat waves, heat stress, air pollution, and other matters."

  Then support the statement with evidence, data, statistics, examples, and quotations. Example:

  "'The delayed response to climate change over the past 25 years has jeopardized human life and livelihoods,' says a report by the British medical journal The Lancet. *The report claims that climate change has been affecting the spread of infectious diseases, exposing millions to heat waves and air pollution and severely reducing labor productivity." (Then footnote the source.)*

- **Quote experts.** It makes your statements or arguments much more convincing when you can buttress them with brief quotes from experts.

Quoting authorities also can make your paper much more interesting and readable to the instructor. One caution, however: Don't overdo it with the quotations. Keep them brief.

You can also *paraphrase* experts—restate what they said, using your own words—to give variety to your writing. Just remember to use proper citations even when paraphrasing.

- **Avoid irrelevancies.** Don't think you have to use all your research. That is, don't feel you have to try to impress your instructor by showing how much work you've done in your investigation. Just say what you need to say. Avoid piling on lots of irrelevant information, which will only distract and irritate your reader.
- **Give the source of your data and examples.** Your instructor will want to know where you got your supporting information. Thus, be sure to provide sources. These can be expressed with precision on the final draft, following the particular footnote and bibliography ("works cited") style you've been instructed to use (guidelines may be found online and in the library). For your first draft, put some sort of shorthand for your sources.

  For instance, at the end of a sentence about climate change's effect on hurricanes, you could provide the author and page for the source in parentheses. Example: "'Sea-level rise tripled the odds of Hurricane Sandy's flood level in 2012' (Diffenbaugh 2017, p. 10)."
- **Jot down ideas.** As you proceed through the first draft, jot down any ideas that come to you that don't immediately seem to fit anywhere. You may find a place for them later.
- **Take breaks.** Professional writers find that physical activity gives the mind a rest and triggers new ideas. The brain needs to disengage. Take short breaks to relax. Go get a snack, stroll down the corridor,

take a walk outside, or otherwise move your body a bit. Take a pen and paper with you and jot down thoughts.

Letting the Draft Sit—Then Revising, Finalizing, & Proofreading Your Paper

Many students write papers right up against their deadlines. It's far, far better, however, if you can get the first draft done early and let it sit in a drawer for a day or so. This will allow you to come back and revise it with a fresh perspective.

How much time should revising take? One suggestion is this: Everything up to now should have taken half your total time, and this last phase—revising, finalizing, and proofreading—should take the other half of your time. This rule shows the importance that is attached to revision.

The steps to take in revision are as follows:

- Read the paper aloud or get someone else to read it.
- Delete irrelevant material.
- Write transitions and do any reorganizing.
- Fine-tune and polish.
- Type the paper (if your draft was handwritten) and proofread it.

Also keep in mind that whereas at the beginning of the term-paper process, you needed to do creative thinking, now you need to do critical, or analytical, thinking.

Read Aloud or Have Someone Else Read the Drafts of Your Paper

It's hard for us to spot our own mistakes, particularly during a silent reading. To better catch these, try the following:

- **Read your draft aloud to yourself.** If you read aloud what you've written, whether first draft or revised draft, you'll be able to spot missing words, awkward usage, and missing details.

- **Get feedback from another person.** By having a friend, family member, or the instructor read any of your drafts, you can get the help of an "editor." (You can offer to read friends' papers in exchange.) Any additional feedback can be valuable.

  SPECIAL NOTE: Don't take the criticism personally. If your readers say your paper is "illogical" or "vague," they are not implying you're stupid. When people criticize your draft, they are not criticizing you as a human being. Moreover, remember you don't have to do what they say. You're looking for suggestions, not commandments.

Delete Irrelevant Material, Write Transitions, & Do Any Reorganizing

The best way to start the revision is to take a pencil and start crossing out words. Like a filmmaker cutting scenes so a movie won't run too long and bore the audience, you should cut your paper to its essentials.

This is what editors call "blue penciling." Strive for conciseness and brevity. As a mental guideline, imagine someone writing "Repetitious!" or "Redundant!" or "Wordy!" in the margin. Be ruthless. First cut unnecessary sections, pages, and paragraphs. Then cut unnecessary sentences, phrases, and words. Cut even your best ideas and phrases—those gems you're proud of—if they don't move the essay along and advance your case.

You may have written the first draft fairly rapidly and not given much thought to making transitions—logical connections—between thoughts. You may also have deleted such connections when you blue-penciled material above. Now's the time to make sure the reader is able to move logically from one of your ideas to another.

You may well discover while doing this that your paper needs to be reorganized, that your outline isn't working right. There are two ways to handle this:

1. **Low-tech reorganizing—scissors and glue.** You can use scissors to cut up your paper, then move the cut-up sections around. Use glue (paste) or transparent

tape to attach the sections to blank pieces of paper. This activity is known as "cutting and pasting."

2. **High-tech reorganizing—word processing.** The same kind of resequencing can be done electronically with a word processing program by using the "cut" and "paste" functions. You use the "cut" command on selected text. Then you go to another location in the document and use the "paste" command to transfer that highlighted section to the new location.

Fine-Tuning, Polishing, Proofreading, & Last Draft

Now you need to take a pencil and do a final edit to make sure everything reads well. Some suggestions appear in the box below.

Ticket To Success

Getting Close Enough to Perfect: "What Do I Have to Do in the Final Steps to Try to Get an A?"

- **Have a thesis statement.** Make sure the introduction to the paper has a thesis statement that says what the main point of your paper is.
- **Guide the reader.** Tell the reader what you're going to do. Introduce each change in topic. Connect topics by writing transitions.
- **Present supporting data.** Make sure you have enough examples, quotations, and data to support your assertions.
- **Don't be wordy.** Don't be infatuated with the exuberance and prolixity of your own verbosity. Don't use big words when short ones will do. Delete unnecessary words.

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- **Check grammar and spelling.** Check your paper for grammatical mistakes. Also check for spelling. Look up words you're not sure about.
- **Follow correct style for documentation.** Follow the instructor's directions, if any, for documenting your sources. The humanities, for example, follow the style developed by the Modern Language Association. The social sciences follow the style developed by the American Psychological Association. Guidebooks are available in the campus bookstore or at the library.

Now you put your essay into final typed form—and proofread it. With the hand-in deadline perhaps only hours away, it may be tempting not to proofread it. You may not only be supremely tired of the whole thing but not want to "mess it up" by making handwritten corrections. Proofread it anyway and hand-correct any errors. Then the instructor won't have any excuse to give you red ink circles for small spelling and grammar mistakes—the kind that can mark you down from, say, an A– to a B+.

Last step: Be sure to make and keep a copy. You may be able to expand on the subject in subsequent papers later.

9.4 Making an Oral Presentation: Speaking to a Room Full of People

QUESTION: How do I go about giving a speech?

The Big Picture

An oral presentation consists of a beginning that goes right to the point, a middle that expands on that, and an ending that repeats the middle points. You can reduce your nervousness through rehearsal, preparation, breathing, and self-talk.

The ability to speak to a room full of people is one of the greatest skills you can have. One study found that the top predictor of success and professional upward mobility is how much you enjoy public speaking and how effective you are at it.[14]

One professional speechwriter says a speech comprises just three simple rules:[15]

1. The beginning—tell them what you're going to say.
2. The middle—say it.
3. The end—tell them what you said.

With their fluctuating attention spans, listeners will remember the beginning and end more than the material in the middle. Thus, you need to put your emphasis on the introduction and conclusion.

1. The Introduction: Tell Them What You're Going to Say

The introduction should take 5% to 15% of your speaking time, and it should prepare the audience for the rest of the speech. Avoid jokes and such tired phrases as "I'm honored to be with you here today . . ." Because everything in your speech should be relevant; try to go right to the point. For example:

"Good afternoon. The subject of identity theft has received a lot of attention in the media. I intend to describe how our supposedly private credit, health, employment, and other records are vulnerable to theft by so-called identity thieves and how you can protect yourself."

2. The Middle: Say It

The main body of the speech takes up 75% to 90% of your time. Since your audience won't recall more than a few points of it, you need to decide what three or four points must be remembered.[17] Then cover them as succinctly as possible. Example:

"There are five ways the security of your supposedly private files can be compromised. The first way is . . ."

To hold people's attention during the middle, you should try changing the pace every 10 or 15 minutes by including appropriate humor, stories, analogies, examples, comparisons, personal testimony, and variation in tone of voice. You can even have activities and exercises that ask for the audience's involvement.

3. The End: Tell Them What You Said

The end might take 5% to 10% of your time. Many professional speakers consider the conclusion to be as important as the introduction, so don't drop the ball here. You need a strong wrap-up.

Use some sort of phrase that cues the audience you are heading into your wind-up. Examples:

"Let's review the main points we've covered. . . ."

"In conclusion, what CAN you do to protect against unauthorized invasion of your private files? I pointed out five main steps. One . . ."

Give some thought to the last thing you're going to say. It should be strongly upbeat, a call to action, a thought for the day, a little story, a quotation, or the like. Examples:

"I want to leave you with one last thought . . ."

"Finally, let me close by sharing something that happened to me. . . ."

"As Albert Einstein said, 'Imagination is more important than knowledge.'"

Then say "Thank you" and stop talking.

Calming Your Nerves: "I'd Rather Die Than Give a Speech!"

It may be true that the number one fear of most adults—even more than death—is speaking in public.[18]

Stage fright is *normal.* Every professional speaker and performer gets that feeling of weak knees, sweaty palms, and butterflies in the stomach. The best way to reduce this nervousness is through rehearsal and preparation—in other words, practice practice practice. See the box below.[19]

Ticket To Success

Reducing Your Nervousness: Rehearsing, Controlling Your Breathing, & Self-Talk

- **Write out the full text.** Write the full text of your speech, which will help you ingrain the speech in memory. Type it triple-spaced in enlarged letters on standard 8½ x 11 paper. Later you may reduce the full text to notes, as on 4 x 6 cards.
- **Read silently, read aloud.** Read the speech over several times silently, editing as you go along. Then read the speech several times aloud, using a loud voice. Time yourself so you won't run long.
- **Memorize the opening and practice it looking at a spot or in a mirror.** To heighten confidence, memorize a dynamite opening and practice it while standing in front of a mirror. Or practice it on video. Observe your gestures, expressions, and posture.

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- **During the speech, take deep breaths.** When we're nervous, we forget to breathe normally. During the speech, to control your breathing, try taking a deep breath and holding for 5 seconds, then doing a slow release and inhaling.
- **Use self-talk.** Your inner Voice of Judgment may be saying a lot of negative things. ("I'm going to look like a *fool.")* Try positive affirmations that are important to you: "I know what I know." "I'm glad I'm here." "I can do it!" Use self-talk to driect your thoughts to success.
- **Focus on the audience.** During your speech, focus on the audience. Maintain eye contact, shifting your attention among a few friendly faces in the room. When you look at people, the audience becomes less intimidating. If you see people talking among themselves, talk directly to them; this may impel them to stop.
- **Pace yourself and watch your time.** Try to stick to the timetable you set, looking at your watch (or phone) face up on the podium. Your instinct may be to rush through the speech and get it over with. However, your listeners will appreciate a pause from time to time.

Remember that it's better to end early than to run long. Because the conclusion is so important, you don't want to have to be rushed at the end.