The St. Martin's Guide to Writing
excerpts
S should people with kidney disease be allowed to buy someone else’s extra kidney? Should Americans be required to show a special ID to vote? Should college athletes be paid to play? Should candy-flavored e-cigarettes be banned? Debates on issues like these are rampant in online chat rooms, workplaces, and college classrooms. Whether you want to participate in the debate or simply educate yourself, a good place to start is by researching and analyzing the opposing arguments. This kind of intellectual work is done by individuals at their home computers, by community and business leaders in public forums, by professors in academic journals and at conferences, and by students for class in reports, research projects, and oral presentations.
Unlike other *St. Martin’s Guide* chapters, this one does not focus on a single genre but instead presents four interrelated genres on a single controversial topic:

1. **Summary:** A concise recap of one source’s main ideas
2. **Annotated Bibliography:** A list of sources with summaries and commentaries exploring how each source could be used
3. **Report:** An informative introduction, explaining the topic’s importance and the controversy surrounding it
4. **Analysis of Opposing Arguments:** A perceptive examination of the values underlying two (or more) opposing points of view on the topic

These genres give you the opportunity to practice the fundamental thinking and composing processes of *analysis* and *synthesis* that are required throughout the college curriculum and in most kinds of workplace writing.

Analysis and synthesis are processes that go hand in hand. When you *analyze* what people have said and written about a controversial issue, you take it apart, focusing on important elements—for example, why the topic is significant, what makes it controversial, and what the different points of view on the topic are. When you *synthesize*, you forge connections, showing how different points of view relate to one another, perhaps demonstrating where they agree and disagree or where they fit into a broader framework.

In this chapter, the main purpose of your analysis and synthesis is *explanatory*: to help your audience understand a controversial topic as well as the different points of view and the values on which they are based. In Chapters 6–10, you enter the debate to argue for

- your own point of view on a topic (Chapter 6)
- an alternative solution to a problem (Chapter 7)
- your evaluation of some aspect of the topic (Chapter 8)
- the cause or effect you think is most likely (Chapter 9)
- your interpretation of a work of literature (Chapter 10)

The processes you will engage in for the writing projects in this chapter will be good preparation for writing a thoughtful argument, whether for a college course, for the wider community, or for an employer.

Each of the genres in this chapter—summary, annotated bibliography, report, and comparative analysis—can be used as an end in itself or as a stepping stone in a larger composing process. For example, consider the various purposes and audiences for a summary:

- You can use a summary to help you recall sources you’ve read and determine what’s important, help your audience decide if a text is worth reading, or demonstrate to an instructor that you have read and understood a source.
- You can combine a summary with additional summaries of other sources on a topic, notes about how each of the sources will be used, and bibliographic citations to create an annotated bibliography.
You can remix the summary, using it, perhaps, in a research report that succinctly describes what various sources have said on a topic, or in an analysis to provide readers with an overview of the topic before delving into what drives a controversy.

Because this chapter covers four genres, the Guides to Reading and Writing in this chapter look different from those in other chapters. Whereas other chapters typically include four reading selections illustrating variations on a single genre, the selections in this chapter illustrate the four different genres. Furthermore, whereas the selections in other chapters are written by different authors, all of the examples in this chapter were composed by the same writer, student Maya Gomez. As you read Gomez’s writing, you will see how each genre serves as a part of a multi-stage project. The Guide to Writing later in the chapter offers suggestions for composing each genre independently or as a part of your own multi-stage project.

**PRACTICING A GENRE**

### Analyzing Opposing Arguments

To get a sense of what’s involved in analyzing and synthesizing opposing arguments, get together with two or three students to explore how people typically argue about a topic.

**Part 1.** As a group, choose a controversial issue with which you are all familiar, such as whether there should be a community service requirement for graduation, whether college athletes should be paid, or whether a college education, like kindergarten through twelfth grade, should be free to everyone who qualifies.

Then make a list of several pro and con arguments people use to support their opposing views of the issue you’ve chosen. For example, a common argument is that student athletes should be paid because colleges gain financially from their hard work and expertise. A con argument against paying student athletes is that colleges already pay them indirectly through expensive coaching programs. (You do not need to have an opinion on this issue yourself; you simply need to recall or guess what others have said or would say.)

**Part 2.** Discuss what you learned about analyzing and synthesizing opposing arguments:

- Was it easier to think of the pro or the con arguments? How did considering who benefits or whose interests are being served help you think of the opposing arguments?

- Look back at the opposing arguments and try to identify the values driving them. How did you go about identifying an argument’s underlying values?
Analyzing Four Genres

As you read the selections in this chapter, you will see how one student, Maya Gomez, moves from summarizing a proposal to solve the shortage of kidneys for transplant, to creating an annotated bibliography of sources on the topic of the kidney shortage, to reporting on the topic, and finally to analyzing the basic values underlying the disagreement between the proponents of two opposing arguments.

- In the summary of “A Moral Market” (p. 178), Gomez recaps the main argument of Eric Posner’s proposal.
- In the annotated bibliography “Compensating Kidney Donors” (pp. 179–81), Gomez compiles a list of the sources she consulted, annotating each entry with a summary and a commentary on how she plans to use the source in her report or analysis essay.
- In the report “Possible Solutions to the Kidney Shortage” (pp. 181–86), Gomez introduces the broad topic of kidney transplantation, focusing on the kidney shortage and some of the controversial ideas for encouraging more people to donate their kidneys.
- In the analysis “Satel vs. the National Kidney Foundation: Should Kidney Donors Be Compensated?” (pp. 187–91) Gomez exposes to critical examination the basic values underlying the opposing positions taken by Sally Satel (pp. 225–28) and the National Kidney Foundation (pp. 220–21).

Examining how Maya Gomez summarizes, analyzes, and synthesizes diverse sources—and presents an array of information and different points of view clearly and impartially—will help you see how you can employ the same techniques when composing your own summary, annotated bibliography, report, or comparative analysis on a controversial topic.

Determine the writer’s purpose and audience.

The purposes a writer may have will differ, of course, depending on the genre in which he or she is composing and who the intended audience is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>If the intended audience is . . .</th>
<th>then the purpose is likely to be . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>• a reader interested in the topic</td>
<td>• to get a sense of what the source says</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a writer who has read the source him- or herself</td>
<td>• to identify and record the source’s main ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• an instructor who will evaluate the writer’s work</td>
<td>• to demonstrate understanding by presenting a clear, concise, and accurate description of the source’s main ideas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Assess the genres’ basic features.

As you read the summary, annotated bibliography, report, and analysis in this chapter, consider how the author, Maya Gomez, incorporates the basic features of each genre. You will find that the different genres share some basic features, but may not demonstrate the features in the same way.

### AN INFORMATIVE EXPLANATION

To be effective, writing in all four of the genres needs to provide an informative explanation, although each goes about doing so in a slightly different way. A summary need only capture the main idea of a source concisely and accurately, answering the question: What does the source say about the topic?

An annotated bibliography expands on that summary to analyze how useful potential sources might be, given the writer’s purpose and audience. An annotated bibliography not only answers the question What does the source say about the topic? but also How might each source be useful to the writer? How might sources be related? and What bibliographical information will be needed to cite the source for an academic writing project?
## Analyzing Four Genres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An Informative Explanation</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Annotated Bibliography</th>
<th>Report</th>
<th>Comparative Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyzes the source's main ideas</td>
<td>Analyzes sources’ main ideas and usefulness</td>
<td>Analyzes the topic, its significance, and disagreements</td>
<td>Analyzes the opposing arguments to identify the underlying values at the crux of their disagreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Clear, Logical Organization</td>
<td>Includes a thesis statement to identify the source’s main idea</td>
<td>Includes topic sentences identifying the source’s main idea and how it might be used</td>
<td>Includes a thesis statement and topic sentences</td>
<td>Includes transitions to signal logical connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes a formal citation for each source</td>
<td>Identifies author and provides credentials in summary of each source</td>
<td>Identifies author of each source, providing credentials in text in a signal phrase or identifying source in a parenthetical citation</td>
<td>May use other types of cues, such as repetition of key terms and synonyms, headings, and a forecast of subtopics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smooth Integration of Sources</td>
<td>Uses a signal phrase to identify author’s credentials, title, and source information</td>
<td>Identifies author and provides credentials in summary of each source</td>
<td>Identifies author of each source, providing credentials in text in a signal phrase or identifying source in a parenthetical citation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate Explanatory Strategies</td>
<td>Describes source’s main ideas</td>
<td>Includes a formal citation for each source in works-cited list</td>
<td>Identifies author of each source, providing credentials in text in a signal phrase or identifying source in a parenthetical citation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A report analyzes sources further to determine where they stand on the topic. It synthesizes sources to determine where they overlap and diverge, and to categorize information or ideas, so readers readily identify the main issues and conflicts. A report answers the questions *What is the topic? Why is it controversial?* and *What are the main opinions on the topic?*
A comparative analysis focuses on two (or more) sources to identify the positions the different writers hold and probe below the surface to determine what drives their positions apart. It answers the questions What is the crux of the disagreement? What values, priorities, interests, or fears drive the disagreement on the topic?

**A CLEAR, LOGICAL ORGANIZATION**

Similarly, all four genres must be clearly and logically organized. Summaries rely on transitional words and phrases (such as because or therefore) to make the relationships among sentences clear for readers. Since each summary is only a paragraph long, more cueing devices are unnecessary. The annotations in an annotated bibliography also rely mainly on transitional words and phrases to link sentences, but they may also repeat key terms (or their synonyms) to make clear how sources relate to one another.

Longer writing projects, like reports and analyses, use a full array of strategies. For example, in addition to transitional words and phrases and repetition of key terms and synonyms, Gomez’s report includes a thesis statement with a forecast of the subtopics, headings to introduce each subsection, and a topic sentence to state each section’s main idea:

**THESIS**

This report will survey an array of ideas that have been proposed to encourage people to donate their kidneys, including changing to an opt-out system of organ donation after death, facilitating paired kidney exchanges, reducing financial disincentives, and offering incentives. (par. 3)

**HEADING**

Change from Opt-In to Opt-Out Organ Donation after Death

**TOPIC SENTENCE**

There has been some discussion about changing from an opt-in system that requires a signed pledge to donate organs after death to an opt-out system that presumes consent. (par. 4)

**SMOOTH INTEGRATION OF SOURCES**

Summaries, annotated bibliographies, reports, and comparative analyses all smoothly integrate sources. A summary is very brief, so it makes sense that it would identify the source in the opening sentence, incorporating the author’s name and the title of the selection (and perhaps the author’s credentials and publication information) in a signal phrase: “In his article ‘A Moral Market,’ published by Slate in 2014, law professor Eric Posner proposes . . .” (Gomez, p. 178).

Because each entry in an annotated bibliography begins with a formal citation, its summary section need not repeat the title and publication information, although it typically begins with the author’s name and credentials: “In this article, law professor Eric Posner proposes . . .” (Gomez, p. 181).

Reports and analyses, both longer writing projects for an academic audience, include a formal citation in a works-cited list and also identify the source of quotations,
paraphrases, or summaries as well as visual maternal in in-text citations—a combination of signal phrases and parenthetical citations corresponding to the works-cited list. Consider these examples:

**QUOTATION**  The key passage of NOTA prohibiting compensation states that “it shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly acquire, receive, or otherwise transfer any human organ for valuable consideration for use in human transplantation” (Sec. 301a). (Report, par. 7; Analysis, par. 2)

**PARAPHRASE**  As Sigrid Fry-Revere explains in a 2014 CNN op-ed, potential donors like her have been turned down by transplant centers because they cannot afford the estimated $10,000 needed to pay their own expenses. . . (“Why”). (Report, par. 10)

**SUMMARY**  . . . a number of states have already passed legislation to reduce the burden on living donors (“Financing”). (Report, par. 10)

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**APPROPRIATE EXPLANATORY STRATEGIES**

Both summaries and annotated bibliographies briefly describe the source’s main idea. They also narrate the source’s moves: Does the source argue a position? State a claim? Concede or refute opposing views?

A report or analysis goes further, using a variety of writing strategies. For example, Maya Gomez employs

- **definition** to provide an explanation for a concept:

  “Valuable consideration” is a term used in law to refer to in-kind exchange or monetary value. (Report, par. 7)

- **classification** to group ideas or information into categories:

  . . . an array of ideas . . . have been proposed to encourage people to donate their kidneys, including changing to an opt-out system . . . , facilitating paired kidney exchanges, reducing financial disincentives, and offering incentives. (Report, par. 3)

- **comparison and contrast** to point out similarities and differences:

  Satel’s disagreement with the NKF is essentially about morality. Or rather, it is about what she sees as the NKF’s moral absolutism in what she assumes is “a morally pluralistic society” (par. 21). (Analysis, par. 7)

- **cause-effect** to explain what motivates a writer (in this instance, the NKF) to hold one position rather than another:

  If the act of giving is tainted, for example by self-interest rather than selflessness, then the gift itself becomes unacceptable. (Analysis, par. 5)
Maya Gomez  Summary: “A Moral Market”

AS A FIRST-YEAR college student, Maya Gomez began a multi-stage project by writing a summary of one of her sources, “A Moral Market” by Eric Posner. Your instructor may ask you to read “A Moral Market” (pp. 302–5) so you can judge how effectively Gomez summarizes the article.

Gomez’s instructor gave the class four requirements:
1. summarize the source’s main ideas and arguments, leaving out the details,
2. present the source accurately and impartially,
3. keep the summary brief (four to six sentences), and
4. avoid quoting the source (except for occasional key words).

(Other instructors may have different requirements.)

To compose the summary, Gomez used the Ways In activity “How do I write a summary?” (pp. 197–99), in the Guide to Writing later in this chapter.

As you read,
• consider why Gomez begins with information about the source’s publication and its author.
• ask yourself whether you get a clear picture of the source’s argument from reading the summary.

In his article “A Moral Market,” published by Slate in 2014, law professor Eric Posner proposes a solution to the kidney shortage. He argues that, unlike the unpopular proposal to sell kidneys, his proposal for an “altruism exchange” would be politically acceptable because it is based on altruism, not the profit motive. He supports this argument by analyzing the public enthusiasm for the Norwood Act, which shows that people do not object to a kidney being exchanged for something of value; rather, they object to the donor profiting from such an exchange. Therefore, Posner proposes that a donor should be rewarded with an organ transplant (for someone other than the donor) or with a monetary donation to the donor’s preferred charity.
Maya Gomez  

**Annotated Bibliography: Compensating Kidney Donors**

MAYA GOMEZ compiled an annotated bibliography to keep track of the research she was doing for her kidney donor compensation project. Below is a brief excerpt from her bibliography, showing entries for three of her sources. (We include these particular entries because the sources are reprinted in this book, so you can compare Gomez’s summaries to the sources themselves.) Note that Gomez titled her bibliography, but did not add an introduction indicating its purpose and scope because she did not intend for it to be read by anyone other than her instructor and herself. (See Chapter 20, p. 608, to see what an introduction to an annotated bibliography might look like.) As she read each source, Gomez used the Ways In activities “How do I write a summary?” (pp. 197–99) and “How do I draft a commentary for an annotated bibliography?” (pp. 199–200).

Notice that each entry in the annotated bibliography has three parts:

1. the MLA style citation (later used in the works-cited lists for the Report and Analysis essays)
2. a summary of the source’s main ideas and argument
3. a commentary reflecting on how the source might be used in a report or analysis

As you read,

- think about how Gomez indicates which part of her annotation is the summary and which is the commentary. Why is distinguishing between these two parts important for an annotated bibliography?
- notice that, following her professor’s instructions, Gomez reused the summary of Eric Posner’s “A Moral Market” that she had turned in for a grade (see p. 178). Why do you think her professor judged that recycling her work in this context would be acceptable and not be considered self-plagiarism? (If you are not sure whether reusing or remixing your own writing will be acceptable for a particular assignment, be sure to ask your instructor.)


Economists Becker and Elías argue for a straightforward but highly controversial proposal to solve the kidney shortage by paying people to donate their extra kidney for transplantation. To demonstrate the dire need for kidneys to transplant, they cite statistics, illustrated by a graph showing the difference between the numbers on the waiting list and the low, flat rate of transplant surgeries. They use their own research to refute the alternative solution that changing from informed to implied consent for
Analyzing and Synthesizing Opposing Arguments

Deceased donors would reduce the shortage. They also refute objections that payment would not solve the problem, that it is immoral, that it would exploit the poor, and that it would reduce altruistic donations. On the issue of morality (the main criticism made by opponents of compensation), Becker and Elías compare the immorality of paying for kidneys to the immorality of dooming “thousands” on the waiting list to death.

I could use this proposal as an example of a radical or extreme solution, but one offered by Becker, a Nobel Prize–winning economist at the University of Chicago, and Elías, a professor of economics at a university in Argentina. Becker and Elías have the authority to carry off a proposal this bold. Their proposal also stands in sharp contrast to the NKF’s opposition to financial compensation and Eric Posner’s compromise. I’ll certainly use it in my report.


This NKF position statement claims that the prohibition against financial incentives in the National Organ Transplant Act (NOTA) should not be removed. It presents a concise summary of the main arguments against payment: paying for body parts devalues human life, paying would be coercive and exploitative, and paying wouldn’t be effective in eliminating the shortage and might discourage altruistic donors. After acknowledging that other organizations support pilot studies to see whether payment would help, the NKF asserts its opposition to pilot studies, arguing that, once done, paying for kidneys cannot be undone. The statement concludes by repeating the NKF’s commitment to working to solve the problem through improved public relations and professional practices, but not by paying for kidneys.

I think I will use the NKF position statement as the voice of the status quo. Note that it was written in 2003 and hasn’t been changed since, even though NOTA has been amended several times to allow paired kidney exchanges and to limit disincentives. I could compare the NKF statement to Becker and Elías’s recent proposal, “Cash for Kidneys.” Or I could compare it to Satel’s op-ed, “When Altruism Isn’t Moral.” Using Satel’s critique of the current altruism-only policy would enable me to contrast the NKF’s moral values argument.
In this article, law professor Eric Posner proposes a solution to the kidney shortage. He argues that, unlike the unpopular proposal to sell kidneys, his proposal for an “altruism exchange” would be politically acceptable because it is based on altruism, not the profit motive. He supports this argument by analyzing the public enthusiasm for the Norwood Act, which shows that people do not object to a kidney being exchanged for something of value; rather, they object to the donor profiting from such an exchange. Therefore, Posner proposes that a donor should be rewarded with an organ transplant (for someone other than the donor) or with a monetary donation to the donor’s preferred charity.

If I focus my comparative analysis on the morality of altruism, I could use Satel as a critique of Posner. Is Posner’s altruism-exchange proposal really different from the NKF-supported altruism-only transplant policy? Satel critiques an altruism-only transplant policy because it forces everyone to follow the same view of morality. (What’s the opposite of moral pluralism?)

Maya Gomez

Report: Possible Solutions to the Kidney Shortage

FOR THIS REPORT—the third writing project in the sequence—Maya Gomez builds on the research she did on kidney transplantation, exploring the problem of the kidney shortage and solutions that have been tried or proposed. She synthesized information and ideas from sources, categorizing them into three topics. As she composed her report, Gomez relied on her annotated bibliography together with quotations she had included in notes and annotations she had made on copies of her sources.

As you read,

* consider why Gomez begins her report with an anecdote about the Herrick brothers.
* notice that Gomez includes two graphs and headings. What do you think they contribute to the report?
* answer the questions in the margins. Your instructor may ask you to post to a class blog or discussion board or bring your responses to class.

If your instructor has asked you to compose a report, turn to the Guide to Writing for help choosing a topic, finding sources, synthesizing information from those sources, and composing a report. Use the Starting Points chart (pp. 193–95) to locate the sections you need.
The “first successful kidney transplant” took place in 1954 when Ronald Herrick donated one of his kidneys to his identical twin Richard, who was dying of kidney disease (National Kidney Foundation, “Milestones”). Richard and Ronald’s successful tandem surgery was an historic event ushering in the era of kidney transplantation.

Today, kidney transplantation has become routine. Because of improvements in blood and tissue typing, together with the development of powerful immunosuppressant drugs, it is no longer necessary for an identical twin or even a relative to make the donation. As long as the donor and recipient are compatible, kidneys can be transplanted from strangers as well as relatives, from living as well as deceased donors.

Nevertheless, the shortage of kidneys has gotten worse, not better. According to the National Kidney Foundation (NKF), more than 120,000 people with End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) are on the U.S. transplant waiting list, with “nearly 3,000 new patients” joining the list every month and an estimated 12 patients dying every day waiting for a kidney (“Organ Donation”). As Fig. 1 below shows, the number of people with kidney disease has risen dramatically during recent decades.

Even though the number of donated kidneys has doubled, the gap between the number of people on the waiting list and the number of transplantations performed has widened.

![Fig. 1. The Gap Continues to Widen. Data from United States. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration. Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network. HRSA, 1 May 2015. Web. 1 May 2015.](figure_data:hrsa.gov)
widened because of the scarcity of available kidneys. Clearly, the number of donated kidneys falls far short of the number needed. This report will survey an array of ideas that have been proposed to encourage people to donate their kidneys, including changing to an opt-out system of organ donation after death, facilitating paired kidney exchanges, reducing financial disincentives, and offering incentives.

Change from Opt-In to Opt-Out Donation after Death

There has been some discussion about changing from an opt-in system that requires a signed pledge to donate organs after death to an opt-out system that presumes consent. But no action has been taken. Currently, two-thirds of the kidneys used for transplant typically come from someone who has recently died. For example, in 2013, a little more than 11,000 of the nearly 17,000 kidney transplants in the U.S. were from deceased donors (National Kidney Foundation, “Organ Donation”).

Those who oppose changing to an opt-out system object either because they don’t trust the state not to abuse its power (for example, they fear that the state would order organs to be taken from patients who would not otherwise die), or because they fear medical personnel would make a mistake (for example, that organs would be taken from those who were wrongly considered dead). In contrast, advocates of changing to an opt-out system favor it because they think it would help close the gap between supply and demand. A recent international study “found that countries using opt-out systems had higher total numbers of kidneys donated” than countries with opt-in systems (McIntosh). Nonetheless, economists Becker and Elias argue that the increase in donated kidneys would not be “large enough to eliminate the sizable shortfall in the supply of organs in the U.S.” (par. 10). So, although changing to an opt-out system would help, it would not be enough, by itself, to solve the kidney shortage.

Facilitate Paired Kidney Exchanges

Unlike the question of whether to change to an opt-out donation system, the question of whether the law should be changed to permit paired kidney exchanges was met with quick action. In 2007, the Charlie W. Norwood Living Organ Donation Act was passed unanimously to amend the 1984 National Organ Transplant Act (NOTA) that established U.S. transplant policy and outlawed any form of compensation for organ donors.

The key passage of NOTA prohibiting compensation states that “it shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly acquire, receive, or otherwise transfer any human organ for valuable consideration for use in human transplantation” (Sec. 301a). “Valuable
"consideration" is a term used in law to refer to in-kind exchange or monetary value. A paired kidney exchange essentially trades a biologically incompatible kidney, usually donated by a family member, for a compatible one donated by a stranger. Legalizing paired exchanges enabled relatives to save the life of a loved one even when their kidneys are not compatible. As Fig. 2 shows, most living donor kidneys come from direct donations or paired exchanges from relatives.

Advances in computer matching have also made possible long chains of paired kidney exchanges. Unfortunately, however, the total number of living donor transplants, including those from paired kidney exchanges, is relatively low and has been declining in recent years. Research suggests that the decline may be due largely to the financial crisis of 2007 that led to housing foreclosures and high unemployment, making the financial disincentives to donating an even greater hardship for many people (Rodrique, Schold, and Mandelbrot).

**Remove Disincentives**

Most stakeholders agree that it’s a good idea to remove at least some of the disincentives to donation, such as travel expenses to the transplant center. The National Kidney Foundation, one of the most conservative advocacy groups, had been adamantly opposed to financial compensation of any kind since 2002 (“Financial”). But in 2009,
when the waiting list reached 100,000, the NKF announced that it planned to work with Congress to craft legislation that will address all the barriers to donation (“Organ Shortage”). The NKF’s “End the Wait!” campaign supports reimbursing living donors “for all expenses involved in the donation, including lost wages” and also subsidizing donors’ “state-of-the-art medical care” and “life insurance coverage” (“Organ Shortage”).

According to Transplant Living, a service of the nonprofit organization UNOS, a number of states have already passed legislation to reduce the burden on living donors (“Financing”). Congress has also passed two laws: the “Organ Donor Leave Act” (1999), which gives federal employees who donate kidneys paid leave, and the “Organ Donation and Recovery Improvement Act” (2004), which reimburses travel and living expenses for low-income organ donors who qualify for a grant (United States, “Selected”). However, most potential donors do not benefit from these laws.

Offer Incentives

The idea that money should be offered, not just to counter the financial costs associated with donating, but also as an incentive to encourage donors, is the most controversial of all the proposals that have been considered. In 2014, the thirtieth anniversary of NOTA, debate heated up on financial incentives. A radical proposal, aptly titled “Cash for Kidneys,” was published in the Wall Street Journal by two respected economists, Julio Elías and Nobel Laureate Gary Becker, who argue that the only way to “close the gap between the demand and supply of kidneys” is to pay people for their kidneys.

For the NKF and other opponents of financial compensation, the Becker and Elías proposal to pay for kidneys recalls the 1983 proposal by Dr. Barry Jacobs to buy kidneys from healthy poor people in Third World countries and sell them to Americans (Sullivan). It was Jacobs’ plan that led to NOTA’s strict prohibition against compensation in the first place. And, as we have seen, although Congress has been willing to modify NOTA to permit paired kidney exchanges and reimburse some donor expenses, it has staunchly resisted any substantial change to the valuable consideration clause.

The main arguments against financial compensation — the immorality of treating body parts as commodities and using poor people’s kidneys as spare parts for the rich — have not changed since NOTA was passed (see Gomez). What has changed in the last thirty years, however, is that the kidney shortage has grown to crisis proportions and that desperate people have found ways around the law by means of transplant tourism and the illegal organ trade. But as Sally Satel, herself a kidney transplant recipient,
acknowledges in “The Case for Compensating Kidney Donors”: “It is easy to condemn the black market and the patients who patronize it. But you can’t fault people for trying to save their own lives” (par. 9).

Works Cited


Gomez Analysis: Satel vs. the National Kidney Foundation

Maya Gomez Analysis: Satel vs. the National Kidney Foundation: Should Kidney Donors Be Compensated?

FOR THIS ANALYSIS, Maya Gomez compares two reading selections: the National Kidney Foundation’s policy statement “Financial Incentives for Organ Donation” (pp. 220–21) and Sally Satel’s op-ed “When Altruism Isn’t Moral” (pp. 225–28). From her earlier research, Gomez learned that the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) plays a central role as defender of the status quo, resisting proposals to compensate donors and even opposing a pilot study to see whether financial compensation would encourage donors. To contrast with this position, she selected an article by Sally Satel, an outspoken opponent of the NKF’s altruism-only policy.

As you will see, Gomez’s comparative analysis builds on her report. Whereas her report gives a brief history of kidney transplantation and introduces the main arguments in the debate, her analysis zeroes in on the pivotal disagreement between the NKF and Satel about moral values—in particular, the virtue of altruism.

Because this was the fourth part of an assignment sequence, Gomez’s instructor told the class that remixing their own words and ideas without citation (which could be seen as self-plagiarism) would be acceptable in this context. You will see that Gomez recycles whole sentences from her report, especially in the opening paragraphs. If you write a comparative analysis of your own, you will want to clarify your instructor’s expectations regarding the recycling of your own language and ideas from your other projects.

As you read,

• notice how Gomez introduces the two documents and sets up the analysis comparing their underlying values.

• answer the questions in the margins. Your instructor may ask you to post to a class blog or discussion board or bring your responses to class.

According to the National Kidney Foundation (NKF), more than 120,000 people are on the U.S. transplant waiting list, with “nearly 3,000 new patients” joining the list every month and an estimated 12 patients dying every day while waiting for a kidney (“Organ Donation”). The NKF, the nation’s foremost nonprofit advocacy group for kidney disease patients, bemoans the worsening kidney shortage and “advocates for ways to increase the supply of organs for transplantation” (“Policy”). However, the NKF Web site also claims responsibility for the current U.S. transplant policy that outlaws financial compensation for organ donors—a ban seen by many as the major obstacle to reducing the kidney shortage.
In fact, the NKF claims it played a central leadership role not only in drafting the National Organ Transplant Act (NOTA) but also in getting the law passed through its impressive lobbying power (“History”). The key passage of NOTA prohibiting compensation states that “it shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly acquire, receive, or otherwise transfer any human organ for valuable consideration for use in human transplantation” (Sec. 301a). Although the law has been modified to permit kidney exchanges and remove several disincentives to donation (see Gomez), the “valuable consideration” clause has been defended by the NKF. At the same time, it has been criticized by proponents of alternative solutions to the kidney shortage.

One of the most vocal critics of NOTA’s prohibition against compensating donors, and of the NKF’s advocacy in particular, is Sally Satel, M.D. A prolific author, Satel has written extensively about transplant policy for distinguished venues such as the New York Times, Washington Post, and Wall Street Journal. She edited the book When Altruism Isn’t Enough: The Case for Compensating Organ Donors. She is also a lecturer in psychiatry at the Yale University Medical School and a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank “committed to expanding liberty, increasing individual opportunity and strengthening free enterprise.” And she is a kidney transplant recipient.

In a 2009 op-ed, Satel gave vent to her disappointment in the NKF, accusing the group of trying “to sabotage any attempt to explore the possibility of rewarding organ donors,” and even misrepresenting a study of donor motivation (“National”).

This essay compares the underlying values driving the arguments in the NKF position statement “Financial Incentives for Organ Donation” and Satel’s article “When Altruism Isn’t Moral.” Their views are diametrically opposed. Whereas the NKF defends the status quo and urges retention of the valuable consideration clause, Satel deplores the “woeful inadequacy of our nation’s transplant policy” and proposes “rewards” to “encourage more living and posthumous donation” (pars. 5, 6). The basis of their disagreement is the proper role of altruism. The NKF emphatically endorses the current “altruistic system” (par. 5). Satel, in contrast, argues that current policy is failing precisely because it is an “altruism-only system” (par. 13).

Altruism, according to Satel, is “the guiding narrative of the transplant establishment,” its underlying ideology or value system (par 5.). The NKF would agree with Satel’s description of current policy requiring that “organs should be a ‘gift of
Gomez: Analysis: Satel vs. the National Kidney Foundation

Gomez

life” and donating should be “an act of selfless generosity” (Satel, par. 5). In using the phrase, “altruistic gift of life,” the NKF statement makes explicit the connection between the act of giving and what is being given (par. 2). If the act of giving is tainted, for example by self-interest rather than selflessness, then the gift itself becomes unacceptable. That is why, in the anecdote that Satel uses to begin her article, the transplant surgeons need to be convinced that Matt Thompson, the potential donor, “was donating his kidney for the right reasons” — namely, for purely altruistic reasons (pars. 1-2).

Satel’s disagreement with the NKF is essentially about morality. Or rather, it is about what she sees as the NKF’s moral absolutism in what she assumes is “a morally pluralistic society” (par. 21). The NKF statement represents a worldview in which there are certain moral truths about which it is assumed everyone agrees. Examples of moral certainty in the NKF policy statement include the claims that “payment for organs is wrong” and “inconsistent with our values as a society” (pars. 6, 2).

We can see the NKF’s and Satel’s opposing views of morality played out in their arguments about the commodification of human organs. The NKF statement explains what is wrong with treating the human body as a commodity: “Any attempt to assign a monetary value to the human body, or body parts, either arbitrarily, or through market forces, diminishes human dignity” (par. 2). This argument is based on the belief that the human body is not something to be treated as “property” to be bought and sold (par. 2). Rather, it is sacred, made in God’s image.

Satel refutes the commodification argument in a number of ways. For example, she points out that commodifying body parts has a long legal tradition from Hammurabi to current personal injury law (par. 19). She also questions the cause-effect reasoning that commodifying body parts is necessarily dehumanizing: “There is little reason to believe — nor tangible evidence to suggest — that these practices depreciate human worth or undermine human dignity in any way” (par. 19). But her main argument is about how we evaluate “the goodness of an act” (par. 18), in other words, our moral reasoning.

Satel critiques the NKF’s way of assessing moral value by arguing that its moral logic relies on “false choice” reasoning. She summarizes NKF’s thinking this way: “Giving a kidney ‘for free’ is noble but accepting compensation is illegitimate” (par. 11). This distinction between altruistic gift giving and receiving a reward hinges on the idea that
inserting a reward into the exchange commercializes it and damages the act’s moral purity. Satel quotes Kieran Healy, a professor at Duke University studying economic sociology, to describe the either/or dilemma that framing the debate around altruism creates: “the debate is cast as one in which existing relations of selfless, altruistic exchange are threatened with replacement by market-based, for-profit alternatives” (par. 11).

In other words, Satel thinks the NKF sets up a false choice between selflessness and self-interest. In contrast to the NKF, Satel believes that mixed motives probably drive most gift giving. For example, she suggests several self-interested motives that may be involved in giving the “gift of life” — such as offering “an organ as an act of redemption,” “a way to elicit praise and social acceptance,” or “a way to avoid the shame and guilt of allowing a relative to suffer needlessly and perhaps even die” (par. 13).

Purity of motivation plays a key role for the NKF in evaluating “the goodness of an act.” But for Satel, what appears to matter most is that the act has the potential to save a human life. For her, it doesn’t matter if the donor gains materially, earns enhanced social status, or just gets a “‘warm glow’ of self-satisfaction “from performing acts of charity” (par. 16). Instead of “remuneration” crowding out “generosity” (par. 15), as critics of financial compensation like the National Kidney Foundation claim, Satel argues that the opposite is true: the combination of payment with the opportunity to do good could offer a real solution to “increase the pool of transplantable organs” (par. 18).
Analysis: Satel vs. the National Kidney Foundation

Works Cited


In this chapter, you saw how writing in one genre (the summary, for example) could be remixed to become part of a writing project in another genre (the annotated bibliography or report). This writing could also be remixed in another medium: It could be delivered in a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation. Or it could be remixed with a persuasive purpose to become a position argument or a proposal. Maya Gomez decided to remix information she learned while conducting research for her report, presenting that information as a timeline to provide interested readers with a history of kidney transplantation they could understand at a glance.

In the next section of this chapter, we ask you to craft one or more of the genres in this chapter—a summary, annotated bibliography, report, or analysis. Once you have composed a text, consider remixing it in another genre or medium, with another purpose, or for another audience.

**REVIEW**

Remixing Information from Your Research

### Timeline of Kidney Transplantation

- **1954**: Becker & Elías call for compensating kidney donors.
- **1954**: The FDA approves use of the immunosuppressant cyclosporine in humans ("Overcoming").
- **1960**: Ronald Herrick successfully donates one of his kidneys to his identical twin (National Kidney Foundation, "Milestones").
- **1961**: Azathioprine, an immunosuppressant, is used, allowing a transplanted kidney to function for 21 months ("Transplant Living").
- **1968**: The Uniform Anatomical Gift Act passes, permitting those over 18 to sign a card allowing organ donation after death ("Embryo project").
- **1972**: The first successful kidney transplant between nonsiblings occurs. Azathioprine, an immunosuppressant, is used, allowing a transplanted kidney to function for 21 months ("Transplant Living").
- **1983**: The first successful kidney transplant occurs between siblings who are not twins ("Overcoming").
- **1984**: The Organ Donor Leave Act passes, granting federal employees time off to donate a kidney.
- **1999**: The NKF responds, arguing against pilot programs for financial incentives (Delmonico et al.).
- **2004**: The Organ Donation and Recovery Improvement Act passes, allowing reimbursement of travel and living expenses for low-income organ donors (United States, "Selected").
- **2004**: The Uniform Anatomical Gift Act passes, permitting those over 18 to sign a card allowing organ donation after death ("Embryo project").
- **2007**: The Uniform Anatomical Gift Act passes, allowing paired kidney exchanges.
- **2013**: The first successful kidney transplant between nonsiblings occurs.
- **2014**: 300 nephrologists, surgeons, and religious leaders call for a pilot study on offering compensation.
- **2014**: The NKF responds, arguing against pilot programs for financial incentives (Delmonico et al.).

### CONSIDER YOUR RHETORICAL SITUATION

**Purpose:** The purpose of your report is to inform readers about a controversial topic, and the purpose of your analysis was to help readers understand opposing views on the topic. What would your purpose be if you were to remix your report or analysis in another genre or medium? Would you want to persuade readers instead of informing them, for example?

**Audience:** The audience for your report or analysis is your instructor and other students in your class. Who would be the audience if you were to remix your report or analysis in another genre or medium? (For example, you could take a position on the debate and write an op-ed for your school’s online newspaper, so members of your school community would be your audience.)

**Genre and medium:** In this chapter, you may create a report or analysis essay. Both genres are academic and for each the medium is textual, delivered either in print or online. If you remix your project, what genre or medium would best help you achieve your purpose and reach your new audience?
The Writing Assignment

Your instructor may ask you to compose all or part of the following multi-stage project:

1. Summarize one or more sources on a controversial topic.
2. Compile an annotated bibliography on the topic.
3. Synthesize information from the articles you have read to write an informative report introducing the topic to your audience.
4. Analyze two (or more) articles that take conflicting positions on the topic, comparing and contrasting the values underlying the opposing positions.

This Guide to Writing is designed to help you compose your own summaries, annotated bibliography, report, and analysis, applying what you have learned from reading an example of each of these genres. This Starting Points chart will help you find answers to composing questions you might have. Use the chart to find the guidance you need, when you need it.

STARTING POINTS: COMPOSING A SUMMARY, ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY, REPORT, OR ANALYSIS

How do I find a topic to write about?
- Practicing a Genre: Analyzing Opposing Arguments (p. 172)
- Choose a controversial topic to write about. (pp. 195–96)
- Test Your Choice: Choosing a Topic (pp. 196–97)
- Conduct research to find sources. (p. 197)

How can I summarize my sources?
- Assess the genre’s basic features: An informative explanation. (pp. 175–76)
- Summary: “A Moral Market” (Maya Gomez) (p. 178)
- Summarize sources and annotate your working bibliography. (pp. 197–99)

How do I annotate sources for an annotated bibliography?
- Annotated Bibliography: Compensating Kidney Donors (Maya Gomez) (pp. 179–81)
- Summarize sources and annotate your working bibliography. (pp. 197–200)

(continued)
CHAPTER 5  Analyzing and Synthesizing Opposing Arguments

An Informative Explanation

- How can I cite my sources properly?
  - Chapter 24, Citing and Documenting Sources in MLA Style (pp. 644–73)
  - Chapter 25, Citing and Documenting Sources in APA Style (pp. 674–84)

- How do I interest my audience?
  - Determine the writer’s purpose and audience. (pp. 173–74)
  - Remix: Remixing Information from Your Report or Analysis (p. 192)
  - Test Your Choice: Choosing a Topic (pp. 196–97)
  - Analyze your audience. (p. 200)

- How can I focus my explanation?
  - Brainstorm subtopics for a report. (pp. 200–1)
  - Choose opposing argument essays to analyze. (p. 201)
  - Synthesize sources for a report or analysis. (pp. 201–2)
  - Analyze and compare the opposing argument essays. (pp. 202–3)
  - Draft a working thesis for your report or analysis. (p. 204)
  - Test Your Choice: Evaluating Your Analysis (p. 204)

A Clear, Logical Organization

- How do I organize a report or analysis?
  - Assess the genre’s basic features: A clear, logical organization. (p. 176)
  - Brainstorm subtopics for a report. (pp. 200–1)
  - Synthesize sources for a report or analysis. (pp. 201–2)
  - Analyze and compare the opposing argument essays. (pp. 202–3)
  - Test Your Choice: Evaluating Your Analysis (p. 204)
  - Draft a working thesis for your report or analysis. (p. 204)
  - Create an outline to organize your report or analysis effectively for your readers. (p. 205)
Writing a Draft: Invention, Research, Planning, and Composing

The activities in this section will help you choose a topic and find sources; compose summaries and commentaries for an annotated bibliography; analyze and synthesize your sources; report on the topic; and write an analysis comparing two opposing argument essays. Your writing in response to many of these activities can be used in rough drafts that you will be able to improve after receiving feedback from your classmates and instructor. Do the activities in any order that makes sense to you (and your instructor), and return to them as needed as you revise.

Choose a controversial topic to write about.

When choosing a topic to write about, keep in mind that it must be

- a controversial issue (one that people disagree about);
- a topic about which you can report impartially—you may already be interested in the topic and have a strong opinion about it, but you must be able to represent other views on the topic fairly;
a topic that you can research in the time you have and on which you are likely to find a range of opinions;

a topic that is likely to interest you and your readers.

You may already have a controversial topic in mind. (Or perhaps your instructor has already assigned you a topic.) If so, complete the activity Test Your Choice: Choosing a Topic below. If you do not, you could

- search for op-ed articles in newspapers and blogs, using LexisNexis Academic or other databases accessible through your college library;
- survey such Web sites as procon.org or controversialissues.org, or the Room for Debate page on the New York Times’s Web site (nytimes.com);
- revisit the topic you discussed in the Practicing a Genre activity (p. 172);
- glance at the reading selections in Chapters 6–9 to see whether any of the readings or topics mentioned there pique your interest. For example, consider using as one of your sources Noam Bramson’s opinion essay (pp. 242–44) in the debate about NIMBYism (NIMBY stands for “not in my back yard”) or Naomi Rose’s proposal on the topic of whether marine parks such as SeaWorld should continue to keep orcas in captivity (pp. 296–99).

Here are a few additional controversial topics to get you thinking:

- Voter ID laws: Are they needed to stop voter fraud, or are they a way to suppress voting by poor and ethnic minorities?
- E-cigarettes: Are they safe, or do they perpetuate nicotine addiction?
- School uniforms: Do school uniforms level the socioeconomic playing field or worsen socioeconomic divisions?

TEST YOUR CHOICE

Choosing a Topic

After you have made a provisional choice, ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I already know and think about the topic? Do I find it important and interesting enough to justify spending the time necessary to do the research and writing required?
- What are my readers likely to know about it? Will they have strong opinions, or will I need to show them why they should care about it? Will they be open to learning about different points of view on the topic?

Then get together with two or three other students to take turns trying out your topics with potential readers. Ask group members questions like the following:

- What, if anything, do you already know about the topic? What do you think are the main opposing points of view on it? Do you have an opinion about it?
- What basic values (such as freedom, equality, honesty, justice) seem to be involved in discussions of this topic?
What questions about the topic would you like answered? For example, would you like to know how it started or changed over time, who has been involved in discussions of the topic, and what interests they represent?

**Conduct research to find sources.**

Now that you have a tentative topic and a sense of your readers’ knowledge of it, along with their questions about it, use the research tips that follow to locate relevant sources:

- Search a database, such as Academic OneFile (InfoTrac) or Academic Search Complete (EBSCOHost).
- For topics likely to have been dealt with by a government agency, explore USA.gov, the U.S. government’s official Web portal, or conduct an Advanced Google search, limiting results to those with a .gov domain.
- Follow up on sources cited in the texts and Web sites you have looked at.

For each potential source you find,
1. add a citation to your working bibliography;
2. save a copy of the source or a line for further reference;
3. take notes or draft a summary as you read.

**Summarize sources and annotate your working bibliography.**

The following activities will be useful if you are writing a summary of a single source or compiling an annotated bibliography of several sources.

The length of the summary will depend on the length of your source, the reason you are writing the summary, and your readers’ expectations. Typically, one paragraph is sufficient to summarize a brief source for a stand-alone summary or an annotated bibliography, but consult your instructor if you are not sure.

### HOW DO I WRITE A SUMMARY?

1. **Highlight the **thesis** and main supporting ideas (reasons)** as you read the source. (You may have to reread it several times to distinguish the main points from the details.)
2. **Compose an outline** of the main ideas — using your own words.
3. **Put the source away and draft the summary from your outline.** (This can help you avoid inadvertent plagiarism and retain the order of your source’s ideas.)

   - Introduce the source in a **signal phrase** (author’s name plus a verb that captures the move the author is making, such as argues, supports, describes, and so forth)
on). For a summary, include publication information, like the title and date of publication, in the opening sentence.

- In his book/article/op-ed __________ [title] (date), X, a professor of __________ at School A, asserts/reports __________.

**EXAMPLE** In his article “A Moral Market,” published by *Slate* in 2014, law professor Eric Posner proposes . . . (Gomez, “Summary”)

- In a summary for an annotated bibliography, just include the author’s name and credentials; publication information will be included in the bibliographic citation:
- In this book/article/op-ed, X, professor of __________ at School A, asserts/reports __________.

**EXAMPLE** In this article, law professor Eric Posner proposes a solution to the kidney shortage. (Gomez, “Annotated Bibliography”)

- State the **thesis** in your own words.
  - X argues that the best way to solve the problem is to __________.
  - Professor X contradicts Dr. Y, explaining that __________.

**EXAMPLE** Economists Becker and Elías argue for a straightforward but highly controversial proposal to solve the kidney shortage problem by paying people to donate their extra kidney for transplantation. (“Annotated Bibliography”)

- List the main supporting ideas (or reasons) in the same order in which they appear in the source.
  - X responds to such criticisms as __________, __________, and __________.
  - X claims that __________. He also argues that __________.

**EXAMPLE** [Becker and Elías] also refute objections that payment would not solve the problem, that it is immoral, that it would exploit the poor, and that it would reduce altruistic donations. (“Annotated Bibliography”)

- Use **transitions** (such as *and, also, but, therefore*) and other cues (such as repeating key terms or using synonyms to refer to key terms) to show readers how the ideas relate to one another.
  - Although/Whereas/Unlike Dr. A’s position, Dr. B’s contention is that __________.

**EXAMPLE** [Posner] argues that, unlike the unpopular proposal to sell kidneys, his proposal for an “altruism exchange” would be politically acceptable because it is based on altruism, not the profit motive. (“Summary”)
4. **Check your draft summary against the source to make sure you have**
   - captured the author’s ideas accurately and succinctly.
   - avoided inserting your own ideas or opinions.
   - put key terms (such as “altruism exchange” in Gomez’s summary of Posner’s article) in quotation marks.
   - avoided borrowing other words or sentence patterns.

An annotated bibliography for a writing project not only includes a summary of each source, but also a commentary including

- your thoughts on how you might use the source in your report, analysis, or other project;
- your ideas about the relationships among your sources (the beginning of your synthesis); and
- perhaps an evaluation of each source’s **credibility** (authority).

Use the following guidelines and sentence strategies as a jumping-off point for drafting the commentary for the sources you include in your annotated bibliography. You can make the sentences you generate your own later, as you revise.

**HOW DO I DRAFT A COMMENTARY FOR AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY?**

1. **Explore how you could use the source in your project(s).**
   - I plan to use [title of article/book] to show [thought], [thought], and [thought].
   
   **EXAMPLE** I could use [Becker and Elías's] proposal as an example of a radical or extreme solution. . . . (Gomez, “Annotated Bibliography”)

2. **Make connections among your sources.**
   - X is like/unlike Y in that [thought].
   
   **EXAMPLE** [Becker and Elías's] proposal . . . stands in sharp contrast to the NKF’s opposition to financial compensation and Eric Posner’s compromise. (“Annotated Bibliography,” citation 1, par. 2)

3. **Assess the credibility of your sources.**
   - X is likely to carry authority with most people because [thought].

   **(continued)**
For citation models and detailed instructions on creating a bibliography citation for your annotated bibliography, see Chapter 24 (MLA style) or Chapter 25 (APA style).

## Analyze your audience.

Once you have conducted research and added potential sources to your annotated bibliography, spend a few minutes thinking about your audience. Answering the questions that follow will help you decide on the best approach to take to your report or analysis.

### WHAT WILL INTEREST READERS OF MY REPORT OR ANALYSIS?

*Analyze your audience by brainstorming or freewriting answers to the following questions:*

- Who are your readers, and what are they likely to know about the topic? What opinions are they likely to hold? (Reconsider what you learned from the Test Your Choice activity earlier in this Guide to Writing.)

- How would you answer your readers’ “So what?” question? Think of at least one aspect of the topic that will clarify its importance for your readers.

- What is your relationship with your readers? What tone is most appropriate for addressing this audience? How do you want your readers to perceive you? (For an academic audience, a rational, dispassionate tone is usually most appropriate.)

Since you are reporting or analyzing a controversial topic, rather than offering your own opinion, be sure to keep your tone impartial.

### Brainstorm subtopics for a report.

If you have been asked to write a report, you will need to focus your attention on a few key subtopics that you can address thoroughly. A good way to come up with a list of subtopics to consider is by reviewing what you already know:

- List the milestones in the history of your topic, noting laws, events, and publications that mark important turning points.

- Reread your annotated bibliography and other source notes, highlighting subtopics that are discussed in two or more sources.

Then make a list of the subtopics that seem most relevant. Here’s an example from Maya Gomez’s report:

**Topic:** Solving the kidney-shortage problem
Possible Subtopics
- by preventing kidney disease (through education, diet, medication)
- by improving dialysis treatment
- by encouraging everyone to donate their kidneys after death (opt-out instead of the current opt-in system)
- by making kidney exchanges legal
- by removing the obstacles kidney donors face (paid time off)
- by compensating donors (money, health insurance, a kidney for themselves or for a loved one)
- by developing an artificial kidney to replace a non-functioning kidney

Gomez ended up focusing on four of these topics that she knew she had enough information about from her sources to report on in depth.

Choose opposing argument essays to analyze.

If you have been asked to write a comparative analysis, you will need to select texts that
- take different positions on the same controversial topic
- reflect different underlying basic values or worldviews

It may also be helpful to choose opposing arguments that refer explicitly to one other or that at least address the same aspect of the topic from different perspectives.

When compiling your annotated bibliography or writing your report, you may have come across two (or three) essays that looked promising. If you have one promising text but need to find a good opposing one, consider doing additional research on LexisNexis Academic or other databases accessible through your college library using the key words or sources referred to in the essay you’ve already chosen. Visiting sites like procon.org or the Room for Debate pages on the New York Times Web site (nytimes.com) may also be helpful.

Synthesize sources for a report or analysis.

One effective way to make sense of the information you have accumulated is to create a synthesis chart. Once you’ve devised a list of subtopics, go back to your annotated bibliography and source notes to synthesize the information and ideas you have accumulated.

Gomez selected four possible solutions to the kidney shortage to focus on in her report:
- replace opt-in with opt-out
- allow paired kidney exchanges
- remove disincentives to donation
- offer incentives to donation
She organized the information she found on those subtopics into a synthesis chart. Here is a portion of her chart on one of her subtopics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtopics</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>My Notes</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offer Incentives</td>
<td>Becker &amp; Elías</td>
<td>Only paying donors will “close the gap between the demand and supply of kidneys”</td>
<td>par. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delmonico open letter</td>
<td>Like NKF, opposed to pilot studies, $ incentives “would violate global standards and will not work.” Favors paying costs for donors. Signed by over 300 national and international doctors, clergy, bioethicists, members of organ procurement organizations.</td>
<td>n. pag., pars. 1-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satel, “Case”</td>
<td>Satel had kidney transplant. “It is easy to condemn the black market and the patients who patronize it. But you can’t fault people for trying to save their own lives.”</td>
<td>par. 10; quote, par. 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sullivan</td>
<td>1983 proposal by Dr. Barry Jacobs: People in US who need kidneys should be able to buy them from healthy third-world donors. Led to NOTA rules about compensation.</td>
<td>pars. 1-2, pars. 9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US Transplant open letter</td>
<td>Calls on Congress/president for pilot study to find ways to motivate donors, to make more organs available. 300 signers; surgeons, bioethicists, clergy.</td>
<td>open-letter text tab, signer’s tab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that Gomez keeps track of where the information in her notes came from, so she can check later to make sure she has represented borrowed ideas fairly and cited her sources accurately.

**Analyze and compare the opposing argument essays.**

The following activities will help you analyze and compare the opposing argument essays. If you’ve composed a summary of one or both texts, you’ve begun your analysis already. You may have highlighted and outlined the essay to identify parts of the argument. Now probe more deeply, exploring the motivating factors—the values, concerns, and priorities—that help explain the fundamental disagreement underlying the opposing points of view. (Most writers will need to reread parts of the opposing argument essays more than once and may need to do some additional research in order to determine the factors motivating each author.) Completing the Comparative Analysis Chart can be very helpful in planning and drafting your analysis.
HOW CAN I ANALYZE AND COMPAR THE OPPOSING ARGUMENTS?

Reread each essay, noting in the margin where you find indications of the following:

**Position:** The writer’s main idea or **thesis statement**, the writer’s opinion about the topic

**Arguments:** How the writer supports the position and responds to alternative points of view

**Motivating Factors:**
- **Values:** Moral, ethical, or religious principles (for example, justice, equality, “do unto others”)
- **Worldviews and ideologies:** Political or religious belief systems (such as libertarianism, progressivism, conservatism, orthodoxy)
- **Ideas and ideals** (for example, democratic ideals, including the right to vote and freedom of speech)
- **Concerns and fears** (for example, personal safety, abuse of power, protecting the environment)
- **Goals and priorities** about what is most important or urgent (for example, whether obedience to authority is more important than independent thinking)

**Fill in the Comparative Analysis Chart.**

Enter your notes, useful quotations, and the page or paragraph numbers in which you found the borrowed information. Searching the text for evidence of underlying values and other motivating factors will deepen your analysis and help you go beyond summarizing what is said to explaining **why** each author holds her or his opinion. Creating this chart will also help you see points of comparison and contrast between the opposing arguments. (Remember that you may have to leave some sections of the chart blank because you may not find examples of all the features in each essay.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart for Analyzing Opposing Arguments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOPIC:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Values                                 |
| Worldviews & Ideologies                |
| Ideas & Ideals                         |
| Concerns & Fears                       |
| Goals & Priorities                     |
**TEST YOUR CHOICE**

**Evaluating Your Analysis**
Get together with two or three other students to test the underlying value (or other motivating factor) you think plays an important role in the argument between the texts you’re comparing:

**Presenters.** Briefly tell your listeners what the disagreement is about and what you think is an important motivating factor (such as a value, worldview, or special concern) driving the argument. Provide one or two examples to show where you see the factor you’ve identified in the opposing texts.

**Listeners.** Tell the presenter what the examples suggest to you about the motivating factor underlying the disagreement. Share any questions, comments, or insights with the presenter.

**Draft a working thesis for your report or analysis.**

The thesis statement announces the purpose and the focus or main idea in both a report and a comparative analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>REPORT</th>
<th>ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus/Main idea</td>
<td>This report will <strong>survey an array of ideas</strong> that have been proposed to encourage people to donate their kidneys, including changing to an opt-out system of organ donation after death, facilitating paired kidney exchanges, reducing financial disincentives, and offering incentives. (Gomez, par. 3)</td>
<td>This essay <strong>compares the underlying values driving the arguments</strong> in the NKF position statement “Financial Incentives for Organ Donation” and Satel’s article “When Altruism Isn’t Moral.” Their views are diametrically opposed. . . . The basis of their disagreement is the proper role of altruism. The NKF emphatically endorses the current “altruistic system” (par. 5). Satel, in contrast, argues that current policy is failing precisely because it is an “altruism-only system” (par. 13). (Gomez, par. 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forecast of subtopics</td>
<td></td>
<td>Juxtaposing the thesis statements from Gomez’s report and analysis makes clear the different purposes of these two genres. They both focus on the issue of how to encourage more kidney donation. But whereas the report provides an overview, or survey, of different approaches to the problem, the analysis compares two conflicting documents to zero in on the factor (or factors) underlying the disagreement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Create an outline to organize your report or analysis effectively for your readers.

Once you have drafted a working thesis, you may want to devise a tentative outline, drawing on your invention and research notes. An effective outline for a report typically divides the topic into subtopics. An effective outline for a comparative analysis typically offers a sequenced (or alternating) comparison centered on points of disagreement.

Below are simple outlines of Gomez’s report and analysis, which you may use as a starting point:

**Outline: Gomez’s Report**

I. **Introduction:** Provides a brief history of kidney transplantation and demonstrates the seriousness of the kidney shortage. Thesis statement identifies the topic (proposals to increase the number of kidneys available for transplantation) and forecasts subtopics. (pars. 1–3)

II. **Change from Opt-in to Opt-out System**
   (Subtopic 1). Explains current opt-in system, surveys reasons for and against changing to opt-out, and concludes that this change is not enough to increase the number of kidneys available significantly. (pars. 4–5)

III. **Facilitate Paired Kidney Exchanges**
   (Subtopic 2). Provides history, explains current status, and concludes that paired kidney exchanges will not increase supply significantly. (pars. 6–8)

IV. **Remove Disincentives**
   (Subtopic 3). Explores current efforts and proposed changes. (pars. 9–10)

V. **Offer Incentives**
   (Subtopic 4). Explores history, and positions for and against offering incentives. (pars. 11–13)

VI. **Conclusion:** Reiterates the problem, emphasizes significance of problem. (par. 14)

**Outline: Gomez’s Analysis**

I. **Introduction:** Demonstrates the seriousness of the kidney shortage and provides background information; introduces the position of the National Kidney Foundation (NKF); introduces Satel, a key critic of the NKF, and her position. (pars. 1–3)

II. **Conflict:** Thesis identifies differing attitudes toward altruism as the basis of the conflict underlying Satel’s and the NKF’s positions on offering incentives to increase the supply of kidneys available for transplantation. (pars. 4–5)

III. **Satel’s First Objection: Moral Absolutism.**
    Reviews Satel’s argument that the NKF assumes unfairly that altruism is a shared value that trumps all others. (pars. 6–7)

IV. **Satel’s Second Objection:**
    Reviews Satel’s position that NKF unfairly assumes that all agree that commodification of the human body is wrong. (pars. 8–9)

V. **Satel’s Third Objection:**
    Criticizes the NKF’s moral logic—claims it commits the false choice fallacy. (pars. 10–11)

VI. **Conclusion:** Summarizes basic conflict: NKF emphasizes purity of motive; Satel prioritizes importance of increasing the pool of organs available for donation. (par. 12)

Use your outline to guide your drafting, but do not feel tied to it. You may figure out a better way to organize your ideas as you draft.
Develop your report or analysis.

Once you have a working thesis statement and outline, review your notes, including the writing you may have done to analyze your audience (p. 200), brainstorm possible subtopics (pp. 200–1), synthesize information and ideas from your sources (pp. 201–2), and complete the comparative analysis chart (p. 203) to determine how you can use the ideas and information you have to support your thesis.

The following Ways In activities provide some sentence strategies to help you analyze opposing arguments and develop supporting paragraphs using writing strategies like classification and comparison or contrast. Use the sentence strategies as a jumping-off point—you can always revise them later—or use language of your own from the start.

How can I present my analysis of the opposing arguments?

Analyze a quotation. Compose a few sentences explaining why you think a particular quotation (or group of quotations) suggests a basic value or other motivating factor that plays an important role in the arguments you are analyzing.

- Use of the words/phrase “__________” shows that factor A is central to X's way of thinking about __________.

Example

Altruism, according to Satel, is “the guiding narrative of the transplant establishment,” its underlying ideology or value system. (Gomez, Analysis, par. 5)

Summarize or paraphrase the disagreement.

- X, a member of group A, argues that __________ [describe approach] because __________. Y, a member of group B, disagrees, arguing that __________ [describe approach] because __________.

Example

One of the most vocal critics of NOTA's prohibition against compensating donors . . . is Sally Satel, M.D., . . . a lecturer in psychiatry at the Yale University Medical School and a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank “committed to expanding liberty, increasing individual opportunity and strengthening free enterprise.” And she is a kidney transplant recipient. . . . Whereas the NKF defends the status quo and urges retention of the valuable consideration clause, Satel deprecates the “woeful inadequacy of our nation's transplant policy” and proposes “rewards” to “encourage more living and posthumous donation” (par. 5). The basis of their disagreement is the proper role of altruism. The NKF emphatically endorses the current “altruistic system” (par. 5). Satel, in contrast, argues that current policy is failing precisely because it is an “altruism-only system” (par. 13). (Gomez, Analysis, pars. 4–5)
WHAT EXPLANATORY STRATEGIES COULD I USE?

Consider which explanatory strategies would be most useful in reporting on a controversial topic or analyzing conflicting positions on that topic. Ask yourself questions like these:

How can I classify aspects of the topic or different points of view?

- Topic X can be broken down into such categories as ____________, ____________, and ____________.
- Some of the reasons Professor X supports ____________ include ____________, ____________, and ____________.

EXAMPLE This report will survey an array of ideas that have been proposed to encourage people to donate their kidneys including changing to an opt-out system of organ donation after death, facilitating paired kidney exchanges, reducing financial disincentives, and offering incentives. (“Report,” Gomez, par. 3)

How can I use anecdotes to tell a story and make the topic less abstract for my readers?

- Consider the story of Ms. X, who did ____________ in 2015.
- For example, in 2015, X and Y stated ____________.

EXAMPLES The “first successful kidney transplant” took place in 1954 when Ronald Herrick donated one of his kidneys to his identical twin Richard, who was dying of kidney disease (National Kidney Foundation, “Milestones”). (“Report,” par. 1)

How could I use comparison and contrast to sharpen similarities and differences among the different points of view?

- While/Whereas X believes/argues/claims ____________, Y claims ____________.
- X is like Y in these ways: ____________, ____________, ____________.

EXAMPLE Whereas the NKF defends the status quo and urges retention of the valuable consideration clause, Satel deplores the “woeful inadequacy of our nation’s transplant policy” and proposes “rewards” to “encourage more living and posthumous donation” (pars. 5, 6). (“Analysis,” par. 4)

How do I define terms or concepts that may be unfamiliar to my readers?

- X means ____________.
- X, a type of ____________, is characterized by ____________, ____________, and ____________.

EXAMPLE A paired kidney exchange essentially trades a biologically incompatible kidney, usually donated by a family member, for a compatible one donated by a stranger. (“Report,” par. 7)

(continued)
What causes or effects are important to note?

- The result of __________ is __________.
- Because of __________, we no longer do __________.

**EXAMPLE**  
Because of improvements in blood and tissue typing, . . . it is no longer necessary for an identical twin or even a relative to make the donation.  
(“Report,” par. 1)

**Use visuals or multimedia illustrations to enhance your explanation.**

Reports explaining a controversial topic may benefit from including visuals, such as timelines, graphs, or tables. Reports published online can include animated graphics and videos. Presentations can use presentation slides (such as PowerPoint or Prezi) with embedded graphics or videos.

When deciding whether to include illustrations, ask yourself questions like the following:

- Can you create your own graphics (for example, by using spreadsheet software to create bar graphs or pie charts)?
- Will you need to borrow materials that others have created (for example, by downloading materials from the Internet, taking screenshots from Web sites, or scanning visuals from books or magazines)? Remember that borrowed material must be cited, including the sources of data you use to create graphs and tables.
- Will your writing be published on a Web site that is available to readers beyond the classroom? If so, you may also need to obtain permission to use borrowed media. (As an alternative, you may want to consider linking to the site, rather than embedding the material in your presentation.)

**Write the opening sentences.**

Review what you have already written to see if you have something that would help you start your report or analysis, or try out one of these opening strategies:

**Cite statistics to impress on readers the importance of the topic:**

According to the National Kidney Foundation (NKF), more than 100,000 people are on the U.S. transplant waiting list, with “nearly 3,000 new patients” joining the list every month and an estimated 12 patients dying every day while waiting for a kidney (“Organ”). (Analysis, par. 1)
Begin with an **anecdote** to humanize the topic:

The “first successful kidney transplant” took place in 1954 when Ronald Herrick donated one of his kidneys to his identical twin Richard, who was dying of kidney disease (National Kidney Foundation, “Milestones”). Richard and Ronald’s successful tandem surgery was an historic event ushering in the era of kidney transplantation. (Report, par. 1)

At this point, you simply want an opening sentence to launch your draft. Later, you may discover a better way to capture your readers’ attention.

**Draft your report or analysis.**

By this point, you have done a lot of writing to
- summarize sources accurately and concisely
- comment on how sources relate to one another
- create bibliographic citations for sources
- synthesize an array of information on the topic
- analyze opposing points of view
- find an appropriate focus for your report or analysis
- choose explanatory strategies
- draft a working thesis
- organize your ideas to make them clear, logical, and effective for readers

Now stitch that material together to create a draft. The next two parts of the Guide to Writing will help you evaluate and improve it.

**Evaluating the Draft: Using Peer Review**

Your instructor may arrange a peer review session in class or online, where you can exchange drafts with your classmates and give one another a thoughtful critical reading. A good critical reading does three things:

1. It lets the writer know how well the reader understands the point of the essay.
2. It praises what works best.
3. It indicates where the draft could be improved and makes suggestions on how to improve it.

One strategy for evaluating a draft is to use the basic features of the genre you are composing as a guide.
A PEER REVIEW GUIDE

An Informative Explanation

Is the report or analysis informative, interesting, and perceptive?

**Summarize:** Tell the writer what makes the topic important and opposing points of view interesting.

**Praise:** Give an example of something in the draft that you think will especially interest the intended readers.

**Critique:** Tell the writer about any confusion or uncertainty you have about the topic's importance. Indicate if the focus of the report or analysis could be clearer, more interesting, or more appropriate for the intended readers.

A Clear, Logical Organization

Does the report or analysis explain the topic and opposing positions clearly, and is it easy to follow?

**Summarize:** Look at the way the essay is organized by making a scratch outline.

**Praise:** Give an example of where the essay succeeds in being readable — for instance, in its overall organization, forecast of topics, or use of transitions.

**Critique:** Identify places where readability could be improved — for example, by adding a forecast, clarifying a topic sentence, or using headings.

Smooth Integration of Sources

Are sources incorporated into the report or analysis effectively?

**Summarize:** Note each source mentioned in the text, and check to make sure it appears in the list of works cited, if there is one. Highlight signal phrases and other in-text citations.

**Praise:** Give an example of the effective use of sources — for instance, a particularly well-integrated quotation, paraphrase, or summary that supports and illustrates the point. Note any especially descriptive verbs used to introduce information from sources.

**Critique:** Point out where adding experts' credentials would make a source more credible. Indicate quotations, paraphrases, or summaries that could be more smoothly integrated or more fully interpreted or explained. Identify verbs in signal phrases that could more clearly signal the writer's moves.

Tell the writer what makes the topic important and opposing points of view interesting.

**Praise:** Give an example of something in the draft that you think will especially interest the intended readers.

**Critique:** Tell the writer about any confusion or uncertainty you have about the topic's importance. Indicate if the focus of the report or analysis could be clearer, more interesting, or more appropriate for the intended readers.

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Making Comments Electronically  Most word processing software offers features that allow you to insert comments directly into the text of someone else's document. Many readers prefer to make their comments this way because it tends to be faster than writing on hard copy and space is virtually unlimited; it also eliminates the process of deciphering handwritten comments. Where such features are not available, simply typing comments directly into a document in a contrasting color can provide the same advantages.

Improving the Draft: Revising, Editing, and Proofreading

Start improving your draft by reflecting on what you have written thus far:

- Review peer review comments from your classmates, as well as feedback from your instructor or a writing center tutor: What basic problems do your readers identify?
- Look back at your invention writing: What else could you add? Is more research needed?
- Review your draft: What can you do to make your report or analysis more informative, interesting, perceptive, or clearly organized?

Revise your draft.

If your readers had difficulty with your draft, or if you think there is room for improvement, try some of the strategies listed in the Troubleshooting Guide that follows. They can help you fine-tune your presentation of each genre's basic features.

**Summarize:** Note which explanatory strategies the writer uses, such as classification, definition, comparison, or cause-effect.

**Praise:** Point to an explanatory strategy that is especially effective, and highlight research that is particularly helpful.

**Critique:** Point to any places where a definition is needed, where more (or better) examples might help, or where another explanatory strategy could be improved or added. Note where a visual (such as a flowchart or graph) would make the explanation clearer.
A TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

An Informative Explanation

My readers are not clear about my topic or the opposing positions I’m exploring.

- State the topic explicitly, perhaps as a question, so the conflicting positions are clear.
- Clarify how your subtopics relate to your topic by forecasting them in your thesis statement.
- Sharpen the contrast between opposing positions by using transitions of contrast (such as whereas or although).

My readers are not interested or do not appreciate the issue’s importance.

- Add information showing the impact of the issue or how it affects people’s lives.
- Put the topic in context by providing historical, political, or cultural importance.
- Quote notable authorities to emphasize the issue’s importance.
- Cite polls or research studies or use graphics to demonstrate the widespread impact of the issue.

My readers do not understand my analysis.

- Determine whether you are trying to cover too many points.
- Explain in more detail the points that are harder for readers to grasp.
- Consider emphasizing the less obvious points of the disagreement.

My report or analysis seems more like a summary.

- Revisit your sources, brainstorm a list of subtopics some or all of them cover, and create a synthesis chart to help you understand the similarities and differences.
- Consider how the writer’s profession or biography could explain why a particular motivating factor (such as a value or priority) has so much persuasive power.
- Think about the social and political situation in which each essay was written and how the writer was trying to appeal to readers.

A Clear, Logical Organization

My readers are confused by my essay or find it difficult to read.

- Outline your report or analysis. If necessary, move, add, or delete sections to strengthen coherence.
- Consider adding a forecasting statement with key terms that are repeated in topic sentences throughout the report or analysis.
- Consider adding headings to highlight subtopics; use key terms from the forecast in your headings.
- Check for appropriate transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and major sections of your report or analysis.
- Consider reorganizing your analysis to alternate between the sources you are comparing.
- Review your opening and closing paragraphs. Be sure you state your thesis explicitly and that your closing paragraph revisits your thesis.
Smooth Integration of Sources

Quotations, summaries, and paraphrases don’t flow smoothly with the rest of the essay.

- Reread all passages where you quote outside sources. Ask yourself whether you provide enough context for the quotation or establish clearly enough the credentials of the source’s author.
- Use signal phrases to put sources in context. Choose descriptive verbs that clearly indicate what the source author is doing (making a claim, asserting a position, reporting on a study, and so forth).
- Add a sentence explaining what the quotation, summary, or paraphrase means or why it is relevant.

Readers are concerned that my list of sources is too limited or unbalanced.

- Do additional research to balance your list, taking particular care that you have an adequate number of reliable sources from a variety of points of view.
- Ask a librarian or your instructor for help finding sources on your topic.

My readers wonder whether my sources are credible.

- Clearly identify all sources and state the credentials of cited authorities.
- Eliminate sources that are not relevant, credible, or otherwise appropriate.

Appropriate Explanatory Strategies

Readers don’t understand my report or analysis.

- Consider whether you have used the most appropriate writing strategies (defining, classifying, comparing and contrasting, narrating, illustrating, describing, or explaining causes and effects) for your topic.
- Recheck your definitions for clarity. Be sure that you have explicitly defined any key terms your readers might not know.

Readers want more information about certain aspects of the topic.

- Expand or clarify definitions by adding examples.
- Add examples or comparisons and contrasts to relate the topic to something readers already know.
- Conduct additional research on your topic, and cite it in your essay.

(continued)
Readers want visuals to help them understand certain aspects of the topic.

- Check whether your sources use visuals (tables, graphs, drawings, photographs, and the like) that might be appropriate for your report or analysis. (If you are publishing your work online, consider video clips, audio files, and animated graphics as well.)
- Consider drafting your own charts, tables, or graphs, or adding your own photographs or illustrations.

Summaries lack oomph; paraphrases are too complicated; quotations are too long.

- Revise the summaries to emphasize a single key idea.
- Restate the paraphrases more succinctly, omitting irrelevant details. Consider quoting important words.
- Use ellipses to tighten the quotations to emphasize the memorable words.

Edit and proofread your draft.

Our research indicates that particular errors occur often in research reports and analyses of conflicting perspectives on a controversial topic: incorrect comma usage in sentences with interrupting phrases, and vague pronoun reference. The following guidelines will help you check your writing for these common errors.

Using Commas around Interrupting Phrases

What is an interrupting phrase? When writers are reporting on a controversial topic or analyzing opposing positions, they need to supply a great deal of information precisely and accurately. They add much of this information in phrases that interrupt the flow of a sentence, as in the following example:

- The National Kidney Foundation, one of the most conservative advocacy groups, had been adamantly opposed to financial compensation of any kind since 2002 (“Financial”). (Gomez, “Report,” par. 9)

Such interrupting phrases, as they are called, are typically set off with commas.

The Problem Forgetting to set off an interrupting phrase with commas can make sentences unclear or difficult to read.

How to Correct It Add a comma on either side of an interrupting phrase.

- A radical proposal, aptly titled “Cash for Kidneys,” was published in the Wall Street Journal by two respected economists, Julio Elías and Nobel Laureate Gary Becker, who argue that the only way to “close the gap between the demand and supply of kidneys” is to pay people for their kidneys. (Gomez, “Report,” par. 11)
Correcting Vague Pronoun Reference

The Problem Pronouns replace and refer to nouns, making writing more efficient and cohesive. If the reference is vague, however, this advantage is lost. A common problem is vague use of this, that, it, or which.

How to Correct It Scan your writing for pronouns, taking special note of places where you use this, that, it, or which. Check to be sure that what this, that, it, which, or another pronoun refers to is crystal clear. If it is not, revise your sentence.

Television evangelists seem to be perpetually raising money, which makes some viewers question their motives.

By the late 1960s, plate tectonics emerged as a new area of study. Tectonics was based on the notion of the earth's crust as a collection of plates or land masses above and below sea level, constantly in motion. This took a while for most people to accept, because of its unexpected novelty.

Inside the Summit Tunnel, the Chinese laborers were using as much as 500 kegs a day of costly black powder to blast their way through the solid rock. It was straining the Central Pacific’s budget.

A WRITER AT WORK

Analyzing Opposing Arguments

Below is a two-part illustration of Maya Gomez’s work in progress: the notes Gomez made on Satel’s article and the Comparative Analysis Chart she filled in. She worked for several hours over a couple of days—rereading both the NKF’s position statement and Satel’s op-ed and making notes on the texts and in her chart. Notice that the entries in the chart under Satel often compare her essay to the NKF’s position statement. Note also Gomez’s comment in her comparative analysis chart (pp. 217–18), in which she analyzes the commodification argument: “Hard to analyze but core of arg between NKF & Satel. Use to focus: moral values arg is about altruism.” If you examine Gomez’s comparative analysis essay, you’ll see that this is exactly what she did.
Why should parents think twice before signing up their kids for Little League? Why might it not be a good idea for teens to get after-school jobs? Why should you care about online privacy if you haven’t done anything wrong? These are some of the compelling issues argued about in this chapter. Because of the in-your-face kind of arguing in blogs and on talk shows, you may associate arguing with quarreling. Although this kind of “argument” lets people vent strong feelings, it seldom leads them to consider other points of view seriously or to think critically about their own reasons or underlying values. A more thoughtful, deliberative kind of argument, one that depends on a critical analysis of an issue, on giving logical reasons rather than raising voices, is more likely to convince others of the validity of your position. Reasoned argument is also more likely to be expected in college courses and in the workplace.
You might compose this thoughtful kind of argument for a variety of purposes and audiences and publish them in a variety of media. For example, in a college course on law and society, a student might support the position in a blog post that the race of a murder victim is the crucial factor in whether the death penalty is sought. A group of parents might publish an open letter in the local newspaper arguing that the school board should institute the Peacemakers program to help children in the district learn to negotiate conflicts rather than resort to their fists. In the workplace, a consultant may make a presentation, citing statistics and examples, to argue that sustainable business practices are good for business.

In this chapter, we ask you to compose a position argument on a controversial issue. Your argument should try to convince readers to adopt your point of view or at least to consider it seriously. From reading and analyzing the selections in the Guide to Reading that follows, you will learn how writers frame and support a position so readers will take it seriously. The Guide to Writing later in the chapter will support your composing by showing you how to choose and frame an arguable position, marshal compelling evidence to support it, respond to naysayers, and organize it to put your position as compellingly as possible.

PRACTICING THE GENRE

Debating a Position
To get a sense of what’s involved in arguing a position, get together with a group of students (preferably four) to discuss an issue you have strong feelings about.

Part 1. Choose an issue you all know something about, or pick one of the following:
- Should college be paid for by taxes the way K–12 is?
- Should general education requirements be continued (or discontinued) at your college?
- Should drinking alcohol be banned on campuses?
- Should online courses replace large face-to-face lecture courses?

First, decide on your audience and purpose: Is your audience other students, faculty, administrators, or the general public? Is your purpose to persuade audience members to change their minds, confirm their opinions, move them to action, or something else? Then take five minutes to sketch out the arguments for and against your issue. Take turns presenting your arguments to each other.

Part 2. After your presentations, discuss what you learned:
- What did you learn about the genre from listening to others’ arguments?
  Were you convinced by the arguments? Would the intended audience have been convinced? That is, was the position presented with the audience’s values in mind?
- What did you learn about the genre from presenting your group’s position?
  Discuss with your group what was easiest and hardest about presenting your position; for example, finding enough evidence that your audience would find convincing, anticipating opposing views, or appealing to the values of your audience.
Analyzing Position Arguments

As you read the selections in this chapter, you will see how different authors argue convincingly for their positions:

- Jessica Statsky argues that organized sports activities can be harmful for children aged six to twelve (pp. 236–41).
- Noam Bramson calls on neighbors to welcome an unpopular group home for people with disabilities (pp. 242–44).
- Amitai Etzioni challenges the idea that after-school work is good for teenagers (pp. 247–50).
- Daniel J. Solove argues that protecting our privacy on the Internet is crucially important even if we feel we have “nothing to hide” (pp. 253–56).

Analyzing how these writers focus and frame their arguments to appeal to the hearts and minds of readers, how they anticipate and respond to opposing views, and how they select and present evidence that will convince readers and undermine objections will also help you see how you can employ these techniques to make your own position argument clear and compelling for your readers.

Determine the writer’s purpose and audience.

Although arguing a position helps writers decide where they really stand, typically writers compose arguments to influence their readers. As you read the position arguments that follow, ask yourself questions like these:

What seems to be the writer’s main purpose in arguing for a position?
- to change readers’ minds by convincing them to look at the issue in a new way?
- to confirm readers’ opinions by providing them with authoritative arguments?
- to move readers to take action by stressing the urgency or seriousness of the issue?
- to remind readers what is at stake and establish common ground on which people might be able to agree?

What does the author assume about the audience?
- that readers are already knowledgeable about the issue and likely to be sympathetic to the writer’s position?
- that they need to be inspired to care about the issue?
- that they have strong convictions and will likely have serious objections to the writer’s position?

Assess the genre’s basic features.

As you read position arguments in this chapter, consider how different authors incorporate the basic features of the genre. The examples that follow are taken from the reading selections that appear later in this Guide to Reading.
A FOCUSED, WELL-PRESENTED ISSUE

Read first to identify the issue. Look first at the title and the opening paragraphs. For current, hotly debated issues, the title may be enough to identify the issue for readers.

Why Privacy Matters Even If You Have “Nothing to Hide” (Solove)

Writers may use their opening paragraphs to remind readers about what is at stake or what the position is that they oppose, using a simple sentence pattern like this:

- When X happens, most people think __________, but I think __________ because __________.

For example, Solove uses this strategy in the opening paragraph:

When the government gathers or analyzes personal information, many people say . . . (par. 1)

His “but I think . . . because . . .” response to the common view takes up the bulk of the essay.

To present their positions effectively, writers must focus on a specific aspect of their issue, one they can address fully in the space allowed. An issue like youth employment, for example, is too complex to be tackled fully in a relatively brief essay, so writers must focus on one aspect of the issue, as Amitai Etzioni does (pp. 247–50) when he considers whether working at a fast-food restaurant, like McDonald’s or Burger King, is a good idea for high school students.

Notice how the writer establishes the issue’s significance. If readers are likely to be unfamiliar with an issue or consider it trivial, a writer will need to establish the issue’s significance, as student Jessica Statsky does in her position essay:

“Organized sports for young people have become an institution in North America,” reports sports journalist Steve Silverman, attracting more than 44 million youngsters according to a recent survey by the National Council of Youth Sports (“History”). (par. 1)

To establish the significance of the issue, Statsky quotes a respected authority and also cites statistics.

Also consider how the writer frames the issue. Framing an issue is like cropping and resizing a photograph to focus the viewer’s eye on one part of the picture (see Figure 6.1). Writers frame an issue to set the stage for their argument and promote their point of view. They may suggest that particular values are at stake or raise in readers’ minds certain concerns having to do with the issue. As you read, notice how each writer frames the issue, asking yourself questions like these:

- Who, or what groups of people, does the writer associate with each position, and how
does the writer characterize their views? For example, does one side appear thoughtful, moderate, and knowledgeable, and the other side extreme, unreasonable, or self-interested?

- What does the writer suggest is really at stake, and for whom? If you were unfamiliar with the issue, what did the writer lead you to think and feel about it? If you were already familiar with it, which of your preconceptions were reinforced and which were challenged by the writer’s way of framing the issue?

A WELL-SUPPORTED POSITION

*Identify the writer’s position, and determine whether the position is appropriately qualified.*

To argue effectively, writers need to assert an arguable position (an opinion, not a fact that can be proved or disproved or a belief that must be taken on faith). They may also need to *qualify* that position (for example, by using words like *may* and by specifying conditions) to avoid making a claim that is too strong to be defended given the available evidence.

In a position argument, writers typically declare their positions in a thesis statement early on in the essay. Notice, for example, how Jessica Statsky states her thesis:

> When overzealous parents and coaches impose adult standards on children’s sports, the result can be activities that are neither satisfying nor beneficial to children.

> I am concerned about all organized sports activities for children between the ages of six and twelve. (pars. 1–2)

She makes a claim that reasonable people could dispute, and she qualifies her claim by limiting its scope (not all children, just those between six and twelve, for example).

*Examine the main reasons and the evidence the writer provides.* Make sure that the reasons clearly support the writer’s position and that the evidence (facts and statistics, examples and anecdotes, research studies, expert testimony) is credible.

Look for sentence strategies like these that introduce supporting reasons:

- What makes issue X problematic / praiseworthy is __________.
- Because of __________, I support / oppose X.

**EXAMPLE**

This statistic illustrates another reason I oppose competitive sports for children: because they are so highly selective, very few children get to participate. (Statsky, par. 7)

Credible evidence is both relevant and representative; that is, it must clearly support the reason (which must in turn support the topic sentence and thesis), and it must be typical. The following examples demonstrate some approaches to introducing supporting evidence:

- **Statistics**
  - 24 percent . . . worked . . . five to seven days. . . . There is just no way such amounts of work will not interfere with school work, especially homework. In an informal survey. . . , 58 percent of seniors acknowledged that their jobs interfere with their school work. (Etzioni, par. 13)
Also consider whether the evidence the writer provides appeals to readers' intellect, values, or emotions and avoids logical fallacies. Writers can draw on various types of evidence—from facts and statistics to examples and anecdotes to photographs and flowcharts—to support their positions, but position arguments are most convincing when writers are able to appeal to readers on three levels:

- **Logos**: Appeal to readers’ intellect, presenting readers with logical reasoning and reliable evidence.
- **Ethos**: Appeal to readers’ perception of the writer’s credibility and fairness.
- **Pathos**: Appeal to readers’ values and feelings.

Ask yourself how effectively the writers appeals to the reader’s intellect, emotions, and sense of fairness:

- Is the argument logical and reasonable (logos)?
- Does the writer appear credible and trustworthy (ethos)?
- Are the values and feelings sincere or manipulative (pathos)?

**AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO OPPOSING VIEWS**

Notice whether the author anticipates readers’ objections and opposing arguments, and whether he or she refutes or concedes those objections and arguments. Writers **refute** (argue against) opposing views when they can show that the opposing view is weak or flawed. A typical refutation states the problem with the opposing view and then explains why the view is problematic, using sentence strategies like these:

- One problem with position A is that __________.
- Some claim __________, but in reality __________.

Writers often introduce the refutation with a transition that indicates contrast, such as *but, although, nevertheless,* or *however:*

> The deeper problem with the nothing-to-hide argument is that it myopically views privacy as a form of secrecy. In contrast, understanding privacy as a plurality of related issues demonstrates that the disclosure of bad things is just one among many difficulties caused by government security measure. (Solove, par. 10)

Writers may also **concede** (accept) valid objections, concerns, or reasons. A typical way of conceding is to use sentence strategies like these:

- I agree that __________.
- __________ is certainly an important factor.

Here is an example from Jessica Statsky’s essay:

> Some children *want* to play competitive sports; they are not being forced to play. These children are eager to learn skills, to enjoy the camaraderie of the team, and earn self-respect by trying hard to benefit their team. I acknowledge that some children may benefit from playing competitive sports. (par. 12)
Conceding a strong opposing view reassures readers that the writer shares their values and builds a bridge of shared concerns.

Frequently, though, writers reach out to readers by making a concession but then go on to point out where they differ. We call this the **concession-refutation move**. Like writers refuting a point, writers making the concession-refutation move often follow their concession with a transition indicating contrast to indicate that an exception or refinement is coming. Here's an example:

> True, you still have to have the gumption to get yourself over to the hamburger stand, **but once you don the prescribed uniform, your task is spelled out in minute detail.** (Etzioni, par. 7)

While reading position arguments, assess the effectiveness of the responses by asking yourself questions like these:

- Do they appeal to shared values (pathos) or seem trite or maudlin?
- Do they offer compelling reasons and credible evidence (logos) or simply make unsubstantiated assertions or criticisms?
- Do they draw on authorities whose expertise is established (ethos) or merely refer vaguely to “some” or “many” people with whom they agree? Do the responses to opposing views seem significant and genuine or trivial and insincere?
- Do they misrepresent the opposition (committing a **straw man fallacy**) or attack people personally (committing an **ad hominem fallacy**)?

### A CLEAR, LOGICAL ORGANIZATION

*Look for a thesis statement that asserts the writer’s position and a forecast of the reasons the writer will offer as examples.* For instance, Amitai Etzioni grabs readers’ attention with an alarming sentence—“McDonald’s is bad for your kids.”—and then goes on to explain just how McDonald’s is bad for kids in the next sentence:

> I do not mean the flat patties and the white-flour buns; I refer to the jobs teen-agers undertake, mass-producing these choice items. (par. 1)

In addition to asserting the thesis, writers sometimes preview the reasons in the order they will bring them up later in the essay, as in this example of a **forecasting statement** by Jessica Statsky:

> Highly organized competitive sports . . . are **too often** played to adult standards, which are developmentally inappropriate for children and **can be both physically and psychologically harmful.** Furthermore, . . . they are actually counterproductive for developing either future players or fans. **Finally, . . . they . . . provide occasions for some parents and coaches to place their own fantasies and needs ahead of children’s welfare.** (par. 2)

Notice also where the writer uses **logical transitions** to indicate

- supporting evidence (**because**);
- exceptions (**however**);
concessions (admittedly);
refutations (on the other hand);
conclusions (therefore);
reasons (first, finally).

Transitions may be useful in a forecasting statement, as in the preceding example, or in the topic sentence of a paragraph or group of paragraphs, as in the following examples from Solove’s position argument:

To learn more about using cues, see Chapter 13.

To learn more about how Jessica Statsky developed her response to readers’ likely objections, see A Writer at Work on pp. 278–80. If you could have given Statsky advice in a peer review of her drafts, what objections would you have advised her to respond to, and how do you think she could have responded?

Jessica Statsky  

Children Need to Play, Not Compete

THIS ESSAY by Jessica Statsky about children’s competitive sports was written for a college composition course. When you were a child, you may have had experience playing competitive sports, in or out of school, for example in Peewee Football, Little League Baseball, American Youth Soccer, or some other organization. Or you may have had relatives or friends who were deeply involved in sports.

As you read, consider the following:

• In your experience and observation, was winning unduly emphasized or was more value placed on having a good time, learning to get along with others, developing athletic skills, or something else altogether?

• The questions in the margin: Your instructor may ask you to post your answers to a class blog or discussion board or to bring them to class.

“Organized sports for young people have become an institution in North America,” reports sports journalist Steve Silverman, attracting more than 44 million youngsters according to a recent survey by the National Council of Youth Sports (“History”). Though many adults regard Little League Baseball and Peeewee Football as a basic part of childhood, the games are not always joyous ones. When overzealous parents and coaches impose adult standards on children’s sports, the result can be activities that are neither satisfying nor beneficial to children.
I am concerned about all organized sports activities for children between the ages of six and twelve. The damage I see results from noncontact as well as contact sports, from sports organized locally as well as those organized nationally. Highly organized competitive sports such as Peewee Football and Little League Baseball are too often played to adult standards, which are developmentally inappropriate for children and can be both physically and psychologically harmful. Furthermore, because they eliminate many children from organized sports before they are ready to compete, they are actually counterproductive for developing either future players or fans. Finally, because they emphasize competition and winning, they unfortunately provide occasions for some parents and coaches to place their own fantasies and needs ahead of children’s welfare.

One readily understandable danger of overly competitive sports is that they entice children into physical actions that are bad for growing bodies. “There is a growing epidemic of preventable youth sports injuries,” according to the STOP Sports Injuries campaign (“Youth Sports”). “Among athletes ages 5 to 14, 28 percent of football players, 25 percent of baseball players, 22 percent of soccer players, 15 percent of basketball players, and 12 percent of softball players were injured while playing their respective sports.” Although the official Little League Web site acknowledges that children do risk injury playing baseball, it insists that “severe injuries . . . are infrequent,” the risk “far less than the risk of riding a skateboard, a bicycle, or even the school bus” (“What about My Child?”). Nevertheless, Leonard Koppett in Sports Illusion, Sports Reality claims that a twelve-year-old trying to throw a curve ball, for example, may put abnormal strain on developing arm and shoulder muscles, sometimes resulting in lifelong injuries (294). Contact sports like football can be even more hazardous. Thomas Tutko, a psychology professor at San Jose State University and coauthor of the book Winning Is Everything and Other American Myths, writes:

I am strongly opposed to young kids playing tackle football. It is not the right stage of development for them to be taught to crash into other kids. Kids under the age of fourteen are not by nature physical. Their main concern is self-preservation. They don’t want to meet head on and slam into each other. But tackle football absolutely requires that they try to hit each other as hard as they can. And it is too traumatic for young kids. (qtd. in Tosches A1)
As Tutko indicates, even when children are not injured, fear of being hurt detracts from their enjoyment of the sport. The Little League Web site ranks fear of injury as the seventh of seven reasons children quit (“What about My Child?”). One mother of an eight-year-old Peewee Football player explained, “The kids get so scared. They get hit once and they don’t want anything to do with football anymore. They’ll sit on the bench and pretend their leg hurts…” (qtd. in Tosches A1). Some children are driven to even more desperate measures. For example, in one Peewee Football game, a reporter watched the following scene as a player took himself out of the game:

“Coach, my tummy hurts. I can’t play,” he said. The coach told the player to get back onto the field. “There’s nothing wrong with your stomach,” he said. When the coach turned his head the seven-year-old stuck a finger down his throat and made himself vomit. When the coach turned back, the boy pointed to the ground and told him, “Yes there is, coach. See?” (Tosches A33)

Besides physical hazards and anxieties, competitive sports pose psychological dangers for children. Martin Rabolovsky, a former sports editor for the New York Times, says that in all his years of watching young children play organized sports, he has noticed very few of them smiling. “I’ve seen children enjoying a spontaneous pre-practice scrimmage become somber and serious when the coach’s whistle blows,” Rabolovsky says. “The spirit of play suddenly disappears, and sport becomes joblike” (qtd. in Coakley 94). The primary goal of a professional athlete — winning — is not appropriate for children. Their goals should be having fun, learning, and being with friends. Although winning does add to the fun, too many adults lose sight of what matters and make winning the most important goal. Several studies have shown that when children are asked whether they would rather be warming the bench on a winning team or playing regularly on a losing team, about 90 percent choose the latter (Smith, Smith, and Smoll 11).

Winning and losing may be an inevitable part of adult life, but they should not be part of childhood. Too much competition too early in life can affect a child’s development. Children are easily influenced, and when they sense that their competence and worth are based on their ability to live up to their parents’ and coaches’ high expectations — and on their ability to win — they can become discouraged and depressed. Little League advises parents to “keep winning in perspective” (“Your
Children Need to Play, Not Compete

Statsky

Role”), noting that the most common reasons children give for quitting, aside from change in interest, are lack of playing time, failure and fear of failure, disapproval by significant others, and psychological stress (“What about My Child?”). According to Dr. Glyn C. Roberts, a professor of kinesiology at the Institute of Child Behavior and Development at the University of Illinois, 80 to 90 percent of children who play competitive sports at a young age drop out by sixteen (Kutner).

This statistic illustrates another reason I oppose competitive sports for children: because they are so highly selective, very few children get to participate. Far too soon, a few children are singled out for their athletic promise, while many others, who may be on the verge of developing the necessary strength and ability, are screened out and discouraged from trying out again. Like adults, children fear failure, and so even those with good physical skills may stay away because they lack self-confidence. Consequently, teams lose many promising players who with some encouragement and experience might have become stars. The problem is that many parent-sponsored, out-of-school programs give more importance to having a winning team than to developing children’s physical skills and self-esteem.

Indeed, it is no secret that too often scorekeeping, league standings, and the drive to win bring out the worst in adults who are more absorbed in living out their own fantasies than in enhancing the quality of the experience for children (Smith, Smith, and Smoll 9). Recent newspaper articles on children’s sports contain plenty of horror stories. Los Angeles Times reporter Rich Tosches, for example, tells the story of a brawl among seventy-five parents following a Peewee Football game (A33). As a result of the brawl, which began when a parent from one team confronted a player from the other team, the teams are now thinking of hiring security guards for future games. Another example is provided by a Los Angeles Times editorial about a Little League manager who intimidated the opposing team by setting fire to one of their team’s jerseys on the pitcher’s mound before the game began. As the editorial writer commented, the manager showed his young team that “intimidation could substitute for playing well” (“The Bad News”).

Although not all parents or coaches behave so inappropriately, the seriousness of the problem is illustrated by the fact that Adelphi University in Garden City, New York, offers a sports psychology workshop for Little League coaches, designed to

How effective do you think Statsky’s argument in par. 7 is? Why?

In criticizing some parents’ behavior in pars. 8–9, Statsky risks alienating her readers. How effective is this part of her argument?
balance their “animal instincts” with “educational theory” in hopes of reducing the “screaming and hollering,” in the words of Harold Weisman, manager of sixteen Little Leagues in New York City (Schmitt). In a three-and-one-half-hour Sunday morning workshop, coaches learn how to make practices more fun, treat injuries, deal with irate parents, and be “more sensitive to their young players’ fears, emotional frailties, and need for recognition.” Little League is to be credited with recognizing the need for such workshops.

Some parents would no doubt argue that children cannot start too soon preparing to live in a competitive free-market economy. After all, secondary schools and colleges require students to compete for grades, and college admission is extremely competitive. And it is perfectly obvious how important competitive skills are in finding a job. Yet the ability to cooperate is also important for success in life. Before children are psychologically ready for competition, maybe we should emphasize cooperation and individual performance in team sports rather than winning.

Many people are ready for such an emphasis. In 1988, one New York Little League official who had attended the Adelphi workshop tried to ban scoring from six- to eight-year-olds’ games — but parents wouldn’t support him (Schmitt). An innovative children’s sports program in New York City, City Sports for Kids, emphasizes fitness, self-esteem, and sportsmanship. In this program’s basketball games, every member on a team plays at least two of six eight-minute periods. The basket is seven feet from the floor, rather than ten feet, and a player can score a point just by hitting the rim (Bloch). I believe this kind of local program should replace overly competitive programs like Peewee Football and Little League Baseball. As one coach explains, significant improvements can result from a few simple rule changes, such as including every player in the batting order and giving every player, regardless of age or ability, the opportunity to play at least four innings a game (Frank).

Some children want to play competitive sports; they are not being forced to play. These children are eager to learn skills, to enjoy the camaraderie of the team, and earn self-respect by trying hard to benefit their team. I acknowledge that some children may benefit from playing competitive sports. While some children do benefit from these programs, however, many more would benefit from programs that avoid the excesses and dangers of many competitive sports programs and instead emphasize fitness, cooperation, sportsmanship, and individual performance.
Statsky  

*Children Need to Play, Not Compete*

**Works Cited**


Are Statsky’s sources adequate to support her position, in number and kind? Has she documented them clearly and accurately?
Noam Bramson

Child, Home, Neighborhood, Community, and Conscience

NOAM BRAMSON is a native of New Rochelle, a suburb of New York City that is home to about 78,000 residents. After earning a master's degree in public policy from Harvard University, he served on the City Council and is now the mayor, having won re-election with 79 percent of the vote. The argument below originally appeared on his Web site in 2014.

As you read, consider Bramson's intended audience and how he appeals to those readers:

1. How does the example of Matthew help build sympathy for Bramson’s position? How does it lend credibility to Bramson himself?

2. How would you react to Bramson’s argument if you and your family lived in New Rochelle? How would you react if you lived near the proposed location of the group home? (The acronym NIMBY stands for “not in my backyard.”)

Let me tell you a little about Matthew. Next fall, Matthew will enter fourth grade. His favorite food is pizza. He’s always happy to jump on his trampoline or go for a swim. He can’t wait to return to Disney World. And he loves riding horses.

As the school year was wrapping up, Matthew and I, along with his classmates, had lunch together. Their teacher had made the winning bid on “lunch with the mayor” at a Special Education PTA auction. I could not have asked for a warmer, friendlier greeting from the kids, although—let’s be honest—the McDonald’s happy meals that I brought with me may have accounted for just a bit of the excitement.

The students in this small class of five have a range of serious developmental disabilities, including autism (“What Is Autism?”), Down syndrome, and others. All need intensive supervision. Some might require support throughout their lives.

Over lunch, we chatted, smiled, joked, took photos. Sometimes a little gentle coaxing was needed to elicit a response or encourage eye contact. A few of the kids communicated more easily with an iPad than through speech. They all presented me with personal artwork and a welcome poster.

And then I said good-bye, walked to my car, slumped into the driver’s seat, and let out a long breath. These great children and their amazingly dedicated teachers and therapists had overwhelmed me, and that was after just 45 minutes.

Every prior experience I’ve had with children who have developmental disabilities has stirred similar feelings, so I have always been in awe of the parents of kids with profound special needs. The day-to-day challenges are enormous, life-altering, and nearly incomprehensible to those of us whose families face no unusual obstacles. The parents I’ve known would all say—to a person—that they receive far more from their children than they give. And perhaps a greater depth of humanity is the gift of such relationships, but it is a hard-earned gift.

Then consider the emotional strength required to envision and plan for the future—to contemplate the day when many support services will end, when mom and dad can no longer provide care or companionship, and when an uncertain adulthood begins to take shape.

That brings me to the real purpose of my writing today. By sheer coincidence, around the same time of my visit to Matthew’s class, a controversy was erupting over a proposed group home in a residential area here in New Rochelle.

Some background: Group homes (or “community residences”) are intended to provide a supportive, neighborhood-based living arrangement to adults with disabilities or other challenges. Unlike institutionalization, they allow the disabled to be part of a community
and to achieve as much independence as their individual circumstances and abilities permit. Typically, a not-for-profit social service agency will purchase a single-family home, make modest renovations as appropriate, and then provide staff and supervision. There are roughly twenty group homes in New Rochelle today, scattered fairly evenly across the city.

Group homes are strongly promoted by state law, which pretty much sweeps away the zoning authority that would ordinarily enable municipalities to prevent group homes from being created. In order to block a group home, a municipality must demonstrate that there is already an over-concentration of similar group homes in the proposed area, or the municipality must present a specific alternative location, within the same community, that has the same characteristics as the property that was proposed. (If you want to know more, Google the Padavan Law.)

There’s lots of variation among group homes, but just about all of them have two things in common: (1) they almost always generate serious concern and opposition when they are proposed; and (2) they almost never create any serious problems when they are actually up and running.

In the case at issue now, an agency called Cardinal McCloskey Community Services is proposing to purchase a property in a pleasant, close-knit, middle-class neighborhood. It will serve as a home for four young men with autism.

The neighborhood is opposed—strongly, passionately, and just about universally. At a meeting at City Hall a couple of weeks ago, residents turned out in big numbers to voice their objections in polite, but very forceful terms.

With public opinion overwhelmingly against the group home, the City Administration then acted on the neighborhood’s request and filed a formal objection with the New York State Office of Mental Health, citing the over-concentration argument noted above. This objection will be adjudicated in the weeks ahead.

Now here’s where I make an admission that will get me in trouble: I disagreed with the City’s decision to file an objection, and I recommended against submitting it.

Before I get into my reasons, please understand something. I have known many of the residents of this neighborhood for twenty years, and they are good people—generous with friends, kind to strangers, trustworthy in their personal relationships, deeply loyal to their community. They are volunteers, church-goers, givers to charity. Some have children or grandchildren with severe disabilities. They are reacting as most neighborhoods react, so I am not singling them out.

I simply believe that the objections are wrong. Profoundly wrong. And that the objections should not be validated by the city or its leadership.

My thoughts about all this crystallized as I listened to the comments at the meeting . . .

Much was made of the property’s location on a cul de sac, presently used by many children as a play area. The group home, speakers argued, would take away a safe haven that is vital to families. That sounds like a fair point, until you start reflecting on it. Why exactly couldn’t children just continue playing on the cul de sac?

Another speaker asked rhetorically whether the group home operators could “guarantee” that the young men would not pose a safety risk. Again, that seems like a reasonable question, until you think it through. I can’t guarantee that my next door neighbor is not a drug dealer, or that the couple moving in across the street aren’t spying for the Russians. The question ought to be whether there is any rational basis for fearing such things.

There was a suggestion during a prior meeting that these four young men should instead be given a suite of rooms at the hospital—essentially rejecting the entire concept of community-based living for the disabled.

One, and only one, speaker contended that the young men with autism presented a threat of sexually predatory behavior. This claim (which lacks any solid evidence) is highly inflammatory, to say the least. I was glad that it wasn’t repeated explicitly by others, but I hoped the room would respond with stony silence. Instead, everyone applauded, blurring the line between those who were fair-minded and those who were not.

There was more. Speakers said the proposed home was too close to other houses, that the neighborhood would be permanently and irreparably harmed, that
Many took pains to say that they had nothing against the disabled, but surely an alternative site could be found that made more sense for all involved. (If anyone stated the case for why another neighborhood would be happier to welcome a group home, I missed it.)

I have no doubt that all the speakers really believed what they were saying, and truly felt their positions to be based on logic and reason. But, as I listened, I couldn’t shake the feeling that the conclusion—“No!”—had come first, with the arguments following afterwards as a kind of back-engineered rationalization. (In fact, for almost all of us, that’s how decision-making tends to work.)

It was not about NIMBYism, they said, and so they believed. But of course it was exactly about NIMBYism. It was only about NIMBYism.

One more factor: even for the most virtuous and self-confident individuals, the dynamic of a group seized by emotion can exert a powerful influence. The crowd ends up being less than the sum of its parts. Often a lot less. I suspect that a few of the neighbors who spoke or applauded will look back in a couple of years and have second thoughts or regrets.

But those regrets will pale in comparison to what I felt when the meeting concluded: shame. I was ashamed of myself, because I simply sat there quietly without saying a word. And I can’t imagine a worse display of cowardice.

Continued silence would certainly be the politically wise approach. The city’s formal objection to the site has no chance whatsoever of succeeding. (In fact, I am told that no such objection has ever succeeded in New York, because the threshold established by state law is simply too high.) That means the process will run its course to the inevitable conclusion, the group home will go to the proposed site, and the empty gesture of a city objection will have taken care of the politics. By contrast, this statement of mine will probably anger many people. So why not do the sensible thing and keep my mouth shut?

Because there’s a cost to all this—to this cycle of too many politicians pretending to fight for people, while really serving only themselves, elevating expediency over conscience, issuing nice-sounding assurances in exchange for applause, until eventually reality overtakes the empty pledges, and then faith in public leadership slips just a little lower into the basement. After two decades in public life, I am neither naïve nor pure, but there comes a point when someone has to say enough to all that, and I guess this is my moment. Silence is complicity.

Our community, which has always been defined by its welcoming spirit, is better than the objections raised at the meeting. The people who made those objections are better by far than their comments, and they will eventually come to realize it. Indeed, I have no doubt whatsoever that these four young men will be greeted with courtesy and warmth, even by those who were most concerned about their arrival.

How would Catie and I react if a group home was proposed next door to our house? We have asked ourselves this question. Would we raise a host of seemingly fair arguments in opposition? Pinebrook Boulevard is too heavily trafficked . . . bus service and stores are too far away . . . there’s already a group home down the street on Beechmont, and another up the street on Sussex. Would we band together with our neighbors, reinforcing each others’ sense of certainty? Would we have the self-awareness to perceive our own inner, and perhaps less-than-worthy, motivations? It is impossible to know, and I don’t pretend to be any more noble than the next person.

But I want very much to believe that we would not fight, that we would make the best of it, that we would offer whatever good will we could to our new neighbors, and that we would try to set an example for our own two boys by showing them that every person has worth. At one point or another in our lives, each of us will be expected to step outside our comfort zone or bear some burden for a larger purpose. It can be as simple and broad as the taxes we pay for ADA curb cuts and special ed classes, or as complex and specific as this issue of group home placement. The costs are not always fairly distributed. What we get in return is the chance to live in a decent society.

Matthew is nine years old. That means in about a dozen more years, he will age out of the services that support youngsters, and a new chapter of his life will begin. I hope it is a wonderful life, and that when he is older, his neighbors and community will welcome him and take joy in his humanity.

Link
Make connections: Outside the “comfort zone.”

Bramson writes that “At one point or another in our lives, each of us will be expected to step outside our comfort zone . . . (par. 34). Think about a time when you were forced “to step outside your comfort zone.” For example, you might have moved to a new neighborhood or school or started a new job. Your instructor may ask you to post your thoughts to a class discussion board or blog, or to discuss them with other students in class. Use these questions to get started:

- How did you feel as a newcomer? Did anyone try to make you feel welcome or unwelcome? How did your opinion of group members change as you got to know them (or the rules they followed) better?
- Consider the insights, if any, you gained from stepping outside of your “comfort zone.” Did your experience change the way you now respond to others joining a group to which you belong? Did it change the way you respond to the behavior of members of your own group?

Use the basic features.

Disagreement over controversial issues often depends on a difference of values and concerns. To argue effectively, writers must anticipate what their readers are likely to think about the issue, and they must frame (or reframe) the issue to influence how their readers think about it. In “Child, Home, Neighborhood, Community, and Conscience,” Bramson discusses a meeting at which residents framed the controversy in terms of the danger the group home represents to their neighborhood. In his argument, Bramson reframes the issue, changing it to one of generosity and shared burdens.

Write a few paragraphs analyzing how Bramson reframes the issue of locating group homes in the community:

1. How do the opening and closing paragraphs (pars. 1–7, 35) help Bramson reframe the issue? What role do the paragraphs providing background (pars. 9–12) play in his reframing of the issue?

2. Given his audience and purpose, why do you think Bramson decided that reframing the issue as one of shared burdens would be an effective way to persuade residents to be more accepting of group homes?
A WELL-SUPPORTED POSITION: USING ANECDOTES AND EXAMPLES

Anecdotes (brief stories) and examples can be especially effective as evidence because they appeal to readers’ values and feelings. Jessica Statsky, for instance, relates an anecdote about a seven-year-old Peewee Football player who made himself vomit to avoid playing. This anecdote delivers the message powerfully, although it runs the risk of being perceived by readers as exaggerated or emotionally manipulative. Writers can also use examples to bring home their claims, making them more concrete, graphic, and convincing, as Statsky does when she tells of “a brawl among seventy-five parents following a Peewee Football game” (par. 8). Because examples are isolated instances, however, they do not necessarily prove the general rule. To get around this, Statsky introduces this example as one of many “horror stories” to suggest that it is not all that unusual, but a fairly typical incident that should be taken seriously as evidence to support her position.

ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a paragraph analyzing and evaluating Bramson’s use of anecdotes and examples in “Child, Home, Neighborhood, Community, and Consience”:
1. Highlight the anecdotes and examples—both real and hypothetical—Bramson uses to support his position.
2. Why do you think, given his original Web site readers, that Bramson thought these anecdotes and examples would be compelling? How effective are they for you?

AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE: CONCEEDING AND REFUTING

Writers of position essays try to anticipate other positions on the issue as well as objections and questions readers might raise, because doing so enhances the writer’s credibility (or ethos) and strengthens the argument. They may concede, refute, or combine the two strategies in a concession-refutation move. To review examples of these response strategies and criteria to assess their effectiveness, look back at pp. 234–35 in the Guide to Reading.

ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a paragraph or two analyzing and evaluating how Bramson concedes and refutes anticipated criticism.
1. Skim Bramson’s essay, marking where he uses concession, refutation, or both. How did you identify which strategy Bramson is using?
2. Analyze and evaluate Bramson’s response: What values does he assume underlie his intended readers’ point of view? How does his way of responding bridge the gap between their point of view and his own?
3. How do you think citizens of New Rochelle would respond to Bramson? How would you respond if you were arguing for or against locating a group home in your neighborhood?

For more on recognizing emotional manipulation, see Chapter 12, p. 520.
A CLEAR, LOGICAL ORGANIZATION: CREATING CLOSURE

A variety of strategies are available to writers to create a sense of closure for readers. They may simply reiterate the main points they’ve addressed, suggest steps readers can take as a result of what they’ve learned, or repeat a word or phrase with which the selection opened.

ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a paragraph analyzing how Bramson creates a sense of closure in “Child, Home, Neighborhood, Community, and Conscience”:

1. Reread paragraphs 1–7 to remind yourself how Bramson begins the essay and paragraph 35 to recall how he concludes it.
2. Now skim the rest of the piece to see how Bramson connects the anecdote about Matthew and his classmates with the broader issue of the location of the group home and the community’s response to it.
3. Consider how effective Bramson’s conclusion is for persuading readers to accept the group home and to accept, more broadly, the importance of sharing burdens. Were you persuaded? Do you think Bramson’s intended readers — the voters of New Rochelle — would have been persuaded? Why or why not?

Consider possible topics: Issues concerning fairness.

List some issues that involve what you believe to be unfair distribution of benefits or burdens. For example, should the richest 1 percent of citizens pay a higher rate of taxes than the poorer 99 percent? Should schools in wealthy districts be required to share donations from parents with schools in poorer districts? Should schools create and enforce guidelines to protect individuals from bullying and discrimination? Should taxes be raised so that Medicaid (health insurance for the poor) could be expanded to cover more of the low-income uninsured?

Amitai Etzioni

AMITAI ETZIONI is a sociologist who has taught at Columbia, Harvard, and George Washington University, where he currently directs the Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies. He has written numerous articles and more than two dozen books, including The Spirit of Community: The Reinvention of American Society (1983); The Limits of Privacy (2004); Security First: For a Muscular, Moral Foreign Policy (2007); and most recently, The New Normal: Finding a Balance between Individual Rights and the Common Good (2014). The following reading was originally published on the opinion page of the Miami Herald newspaper.
As you read, consider the following:

- What do you imagine Etzioni’s teenage son Dari, who helped his father write the essay, contributed?

- What kinds of summer and school-year jobs, if any, have you and your friends held while in high school or college?

McDonald’s is bad for your kids. I do not mean the flat patties and the white-flour buns; I refer to the jobs teen-agers undertake, mass-producing these choice items.

As many as two-thirds of America’s high school juniors and seniors now hold down part-time paying jobs, according to studies. Many of these are in fast-food chains, of which McDonald’s is the pioneer, trend-setter and symbol.

At first, such jobs may seem right out of the Founding Fathers’ educational manual for how to bring up self-reliant, work-ethic-driven, productive youngsters. But in fact, these jobs undermine school attendance and involvement, impart few skills that will be useful in later life, and simultaneously skew the values of teen-agers—especially their ideas about the worth of a dollar.

It has been a longstanding American tradition that youngsters ought to get paying jobs. In folklore, few pursuits are more deeply revered than the newspaper route and the sidewalk lemonade stand. Here the youngsters are to learn how sweet are the fruits of labor and self-discipline (papers are delivered early in the morning, rain or shine), and the ways of trade (if you price your lemonade too high or too low . . .).

Roy Rogers, Baskin Robbins, Kentucky Fried Chicken, et al. may at first seem nothing but a vast extension of the lemonade stand. They provide very large numbers of teen jobs, provide regular employment, pay quite well compared to many other teen jobs and, in the modern equivalent of toiling over a hot stove, test one’s stamina.

Closer examination, however, finds the McDonald’s kind of job highly uneducational in several ways. Far from providing opportunities for entrepreneurship (the lemonade stand) or self-discipline, self-supervision and self-scheduling (the paper route), most teen jobs these days are highly structured—what social scientists call “highly routinized.”

True, you still have to have the gumption to get yourself over to the hamburger stand, but once you don the prescribed uniform, your task is spelled out in minute detail. The franchise prescribes the shape of the coffee cups; the weight, size, shape and color of the patties; and the texture of the napkins (if any). Fresh coffee is to be made every eight minutes. And so on. There is no room for initiative, creativity, or even elementary rearrangements. These are breeding grounds for robots working for yesterday’s assembly lines, not tomorrow’s high-tech posts.

There are very few studies on the matter. One of the few is a 1984 study by Ivan Charper and Bryan Shore Fraser. The study relies mainly on what teen-agers write in response to questionnaires rather than actual observations of fast-food jobs. The authors argue that the employees develop many skills such as how to operate a food-preparation machine and a cash register. However, little attention is paid to how long it takes to acquire such a skill, or what its significance is.

What does it matter if you spend 20 minutes to learn to use a cash register, and then—“operate” it? What “skill” have you acquired? It is a long way from learning to work with a lathe or carpenter tools in the olden days or to program computers in the modern age.

A 1980 study by A. V. Harrell and P. W. Wirtz found that, among those students who worked at least 25 hours per week while in school, their unemployment rate four years later was half of that of seniors who did not work. This is an impressive statistic. It must be seen, though, together with the finding that many who begin as part-time employees in fast-food chains drop out of high school and are gobbled up in the world of low-skill jobs.

Far from providing opportunities for entrepreneurship . . . most teen jobs these days are highly structured.
11 Some say that while these jobs are rather unsuited for college-bound, white, middle-class youngsters, they are “ideal” for lower-class, “non-academic,” minority youngsters. Indeed, minorities are “over-represented” in these jobs (21 percent of fast-food employees). While it is true that these places provide income, work and even some training to such youngsters, they also tend to perpetuate their disadvantaged status. They provide no career ladders, few marketable skills, and undermine school attendance and involvement.

12 The hours are often long. Among those 14 to 17, a third of fast-food employees (including some school dropouts) labor more than 30 hours per week, according to the Charper-Fraser study. Only 20 percent work 15 hours or less. The rest: between 15 and 30 hours.

13 Often the stores close late, and after closing one must clean up and tally up. In affluent Montgomery County, Md., where child labor would not seem to be a widespread economic necessity, 24 percent of the seniors at one high school in 1985 worked as much as five to seven days a week; 27 percent, three to five. There is just no way such amounts of work will not interfere with school work, especially homework. In an informal survey published in the most recent yearbook of the high school, 58 percent of seniors acknowledged that their jobs interfere with their school work.

14 The Charper-Fraser study sees merit in learning teamwork and working under supervision. The authors have a point here. However, it must be noted that such learning is not automatically educational or wholesome. For example, much of the supervision in fast-food places leans toward teaching one the wrong kinds of compliance: blind obedience, or shared alienation with the “boss.”

15 Supervision is often both tight and woefully inappropriate. Today, fast-food chains and other such places of work (record shops, bowling alleys) keep costs down by having teens supervise teens with often no adult on the premises.

16 There is no father or mother figure with which to identify, to emulate, to provide a role model and guidance. The work-culture varies from one place to another: Sometimes it is a tightly run shop (must keep the cash registers ringing); sometimes a rather loose pot party interrupted by customers. However, only rarely is there a master to learn from, or much worth learning. Indeed, far from being places where solid adult work values are being transmitted, these are places where all too often delinquent teen values dominate. Typically, when my son Oren was dishing out ice cream for Baskin Robbins in upper Manhattan, his fellow teen-workers considered him a sucker for not helping himself to the till. Most youngsters felt they were entitled to $50 severance “pay” on their last day on the job.

17 The pay, oddly, is the part of the teen work-world that is most difficult to evaluate. The lemonade stand or paper route money was for your allowance. In the old days, apprentices learning a trade from a master contributed most, if not all, of their income to their parents’ household. Today, the teen pay may be low by adult standards, but it is often, especially in the middle class, spent largely or wholly by the teens. That is, the youngsters live free at home (“after all, they are high school kids”) and are left with very substantial sums of money.

18 Where this money goes is not quite clear. Some use it to support themselves, especially among the poor. More middle-class kids set some money aside to help pay for college, or save it for a major purchase — often a car. But large amounts seem to flow to pay for an early introduction into the most trite aspects of American consumerism: flimsy punk clothes, trinkets and whatever else is the last fast-moving teen craze.

19 One may say that this is only fair and square; they are being good American consumers and spend their money on what turns them on. At least, a cynic might add, these funds do not go into illicit drugs and booze. On the other hand, an educator might bemoan that these young, yet unformed individuals, so early in life driven to buy objects of no intrinsic educational, cultural or social merit, learn so quickly the dubious merit of keeping up with the Joneses in ever-changing fads, promoted by mass merchandising.

20 Many teens find the instant reward of money, and the youth status symbols it buys, much more alluring than credits in calculus courses, European history or foreign languages. No wonder quite a few would rather skip school — and certainly homework — and instead work longer at a Burger King. Thus, most teen work these days is not providing early lessons in the work ethic; it fosters escape from school and responsibilities,
quick gratification and a short cut to the consumeristic aspects of adult life.

Thus, parents should look at teen employment not as automatically educational. It is an activity—like sports—that can be turned into an educational opportunity. But it can also easily be abused. Youngsters must learn to balance the quest for income with the needs to keep growing and pursue other endeavors that do not pay off instantly—above all education.

**REFLECT**

**Make connections: Useful job skills.**

Etzioni argues that fast-food jobs do not qualify as meaningful work experience because they do not teach young people the skills and habits they will need for fulfilling careers: “entrepreneurship . . . or self-discipline, self-supervision and self-scheduling” (par. 6).

To judge Etzioni’s argument against your own experience and expectations, consider what you have learned or expect people to learn from summer and after-school jobs, either paid or volunteer. Your instructor may ask you to post your thoughts on a class discussion board or to discuss them with other students in class. Use these questions to get started:

- Which, if any, of the skills and habits Etzioni lists as important do you think young people learn at summer or after-school jobs?
- Why do you think these skills and habits are worth learning? If you think other skills and habits are as important or even more important, explain what they are and why you think so.

**ANALYZE**

**Use the basic features.**

**A FOCUSED, WELL-PRESENTED ISSUE: FRAMING AN ARGUMENT FOR A DIVERSE GROUP OF READERS**

When Jessica Statsky wrote “Children Need to Play, Not Compete,” she knew she would be addressing her classmates. But writers of position essays do not always have such a homogeneous audience. Often, they have to direct their argument to a diverse group of readers, many of whom do not share their concerns or values. From the first sentence, it is clear that Etzioni’s primary audience is the parents of teenagers, but his concluding sentence is a direct address to the teenagers themselves: “Go back to school.”

**ANALYZE & WRITE**

Write a paragraph analyzing and evaluating how Etzioni presents the issue to a diverse group of readers:

1. Reread paragraphs 1–7, highlighting the qualities—values and skills—associated with traditional jobs (the newspaper route and lemonade stand of yesteryear) and with today’s McDonald’s-type jobs, at least according to Etzioni. How does Etzioni use this comparison to persuade parents to reconsider their assumption that McDonald’s-type jobs are good for their kids?
Now skim the rest of the essay, looking for places where Etzioni appeals to teenagers themselves. (Notice, for example, how he represents teenagers’ experience and values.) How effective do you think Etzioni’s appeal would be to teenage readers? How effective do you think it would be for you and your classmates?

A WELL-SUPPORTED POSITION: USING STATISTICS

Numbers can seem impressive—as, for example, when Jessica Statsky refers to the research finding that about 90 percent of children would choose to play regularly on a losing team rather than sit on the bench of a winning team (par. 5). However, without knowing the size of the sample (90 percent of 10 people, 100 people, or 10,000 people?), it is impossible to judge the significance of the statistic. Moreover, without knowing who the researchers are and how their research was funded and conducted, it is also difficult to judge the credibility of the statistic. That’s why most critical readers want to know the source of statistics to see whether the research is peer-reviewed—that is, whether it has been evaluated by other researchers knowledgeable about the subject and able to judge the reliability of the study’s findings.

ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a paragraph analyzing and evaluating Etzioni’s use of statistics.

1. Reread paragraphs 8–14, and highlight the statistics Etzioni uses. What is each statistic being used to illustrate or prove?

2. Identify what you would need to know about these research studies before you could accept their statistics as credible. Consider also what you would need to know about Etzioni himself before you could decide whether to rely on statistics he calls “impressive” (par. 10). How does your personal experience and observation influence your decision?

AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE: PRESENTING AND REINTERPRETING EVIDENCE TO UNDERMINE OBJECTIONS

At key points throughout his essay, Etzioni acknowledges readers’ likely objections and then responds to them. One strategy Etzioni uses is to cite research that appears to undermine his claim and then offer a new interpretation of that evidence. For example, he cites a study by Harrell and Wirtz (par. 10) that links work as a student with greater likelihood of employment later on. He then reinterprets the data from this study to show that the high likelihood of future employment could be an indication that workers in fast-food restaurants are more likely to drop out of school rather than an indication that workers are learning important employment skills. This strategy of presenting and reinterpreting evidence can be especially effective in academic writing, as Etzioni (a professor of sociology) well knows.
Write a paragraph or two analyzing and evaluating Etzioni’s strategy of reinterpreting data elsewhere in his essay:

1. Reread paragraphs 8–9, in which Etzioni responds to the claim that employees in McDonald’s-type jobs develop many useful skills.
2. Reread paragraphs 14–16, in which Etzioni discusses the benefits and shortcomings of various kinds of on-the-job supervision.
3. Identify the claim that appears in the research Etzioni cites. How does Etzioni reinterpret it? Do you find his reinterpretation persuasive? Why or why not?

A CLEAR, LOGICAL ORGANIZATION: PROVIDING CUES FOR READERS

Writers of position arguments generally try to make their writing logical and easy to follow. Providing cues, or road signs—for example, by forecasting their reasons in a thesis statement early in the argument, using topic sentences to announce each reason as it is supported, and employing transitions (such as furthermore, in addition, and finally) to guide readers from one point to another—can be helpful, especially in newspaper articles, the readers of which do not want to spend a lot of time deciphering arguments.

Write a paragraph analyzing and evaluating the cueing strategies Etzioni uses to help his readers follow his argument:

1. Find and highlight his thesis statement, the cues forecasting his reasons, the transitions he provides, and any other cueing devices Etzioni uses.
2. Identify the paragraphs in which Etzioni develops each of his reasons.
3. How does Etzioni help readers track his reasons, and how effective are his cues?

Consider possible topics: Issues facing students.

Etzioni focuses on a single kind of part-time work, takes a position on how worthwhile it is, and recommends against it. You could write a similar kind of essay. For example, you could take a position for or against students’ participating in other kinds of part-time work or recreation during the high school or college academic year or over the summer—for example, playing on a sports team, volunteering, completing an internship, studying a musical instrument or a foreign language, or taking an elective class. If you work to support yourself and pay for college, you could focus on why the job either strengthens or weakens you as a person, given your life and career goals. Writing for other students, you would either recommend the job or activity to them or discourage them from pursuing it, giving reasons and support for your position.
Daniel J. Solove

Why Privacy Matters Even If You Have “Nothing to Hide”

DANIEL J. SOLOVE is the John Marshall Harlan Research Professor of Law at the George Washington University Law School. In addition to writing numerous books and articles on issues of privacy and the Internet, Solove is the founder of a company that provides privacy and data security training to corporations and universities. Among his books are The Future of Reputation: Gossip, Rumor, and Privacy on the Internet (2007), which won Fordham University’s McGannon Award for Social and Ethical Relevance in Communications Policy Research; Nothing to Hide: The False Tradeoff between Privacy and Security (2011); and Privacy Law Fundamentals (with Paul M. Schwartz, 2013).

An earlier and longer version of this essay in a law review journal included citations that had to be eliminated for publication in the Chronicle of Higher Education in 2011, but we have restored them so that you can see how Solove uses a variety of sources to support his position.

As you read, consider the following:

• How do the sources cited in the opening paragraphs contribute to your understanding of why many people think privacy is not something they should be concerned about?

• Do you use Internet privacy settings? How concerned are you about protecting your privacy on social networking and other Web sites?

1 When the government gathers or analyzes personal information, many people say they’re not worried. “I’ve got nothing to hide,” they declare. “Only if you’re doing something wrong should you worry, and then you don’t deserve to keep it private.” The nothing-to-hide argument pervades discussions about privacy. The data-security expert Bruce Schneier calls it the “most common retort against privacy advocates.” The legal scholar Geoffrey Stone refers to it as an “all-too-common refrain.” In its most compelling form, it is an argument that the privacy interest is generally minimal, thus making the contest with security concerns a foreordained victory for security.

2 The nothing-to-hide argument is everywhere. In Britain, for example, the government has installed millions of public-surveillance cameras in cities and towns, which are watched by officials via closed-circuit television. In a campaign slogan for the program, the government declares: “If you’ve got nothing to hide, you’ve got nothing to fear” (Rosen 36). Variations of nothing-to-hide arguments frequently appear in blogs, letters to the editor, television news interviews, and other forums. One blogger in the United States, in reference to profiling people for national-security purposes, declares: “I don’t mind people wanting to find out things about me, I’ve got nothing to hide! Which is why I support [the government’s] efforts to find terrorists by monitoring our phone calls!” (greatcarrieoakey).

3 On the surface, it seems easy to dismiss the nothing-to-hide argument. Everybody probably has something to hide from somebody. As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn declared, “Everyone is guilty of something or has something to conceal. All one has to do is look hard enough to find what it is” (192). . . . One can usually think of something that even the most open person would want to hide. As a commenter to my blog post noted, “If you have nothing to hide, then that quite literally means you are willing to let me photograph you naked? And I get full rights to that photograph—so I can show it to your neighbors?” (Andrew). . .
But such responses attack the nothing-to-hide argument only in its most extreme form, which isn’t particularly strong. In a less extreme form, the nothing-to-hide argument refers not to all personal information but only to the type of data the government is likely to collect. Retorts to the nothing-to-hide argument about exposing people’s naked bodies or their deepest secrets are relevant only if the government is likely to gather this kind of information. In many instances, hardly anyone will see the information, and it won’t be disclosed to the public. Thus, some might argue, the privacy interest is minimal, and the security interest in preventing terrorism is much more important. In this less extreme form, the nothing-to-hide argument is a formidable one. However, it stems from certain faulty assumptions about privacy and its value.

Most attempts to understand privacy do so by attempting to locate its essence—its core characteristics or the common denominator that links together the various things we classify under the rubric of “privacy.” Privacy, however, is too complex a concept to be reduced to a singular essence. It is a plurality of different things that do not share any one element but nevertheless bear a resemblance to one another. For example, privacy can be invaded by the disclosure of your deepest secrets. It might also be invaded if you’re watched by a peeping Tom, even if no secrets are ever revealed. With the disclosure of secrets, the harm is that your concealed information is spread to others. With the peeping Tom, the harm is that you’re being watched. You’d probably find that creepy regardless of whether the peeper finds out anything sensitive or discloses any information to others. There are many other forms of invasion of privacy, such as blackmail and the improper use of your personal data. Your privacy can also be invaded if the government compiles an extensive dossier about you. Privacy, in other words, involves so many things that it is impossible to reduce them all to one simple idea. And we need not do so.

To describe the problems created by the collection and use of personal data, many commentators use a metaphor based on George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four. Orwell depicted a harrowing totalitarian society ruled by a government called Big Brother that watches its citizens obsessively and demands strict discipline. The Orwell metaphor, which focuses on the harms of surveillance (such as inhibition and social control), might be apt to describe government monitoring of citizens. But much of the data gathered in computer databases, such as one’s race, birth date, gender, address, or marital status, isn’t particularly sensitive. Many people don’t care about concealing the hotels they stay at, the cars they own, or the kind of beverages they drink. Frequently, though not always, people wouldn’t be inhibited or embarrassed if others knew this information.

Another metaphor better captures the problems: Franz Kafka’s The Trial. Kafka’s novel centers around a man who is arrested but not informed why. He desperately tries to find out what triggered his arrest and what’s in store for him. He finds out that a mysterious court system has a dossier on him and is investigating him, but he’s unable to learn much more. The Trial depicts a bureaucracy with inscrutable purposes that uses people’s information to make important decisions about them, yet denies the people the ability to participate in how their information is used.

The problems portrayed by the Kafkaesque metaphor are of a different sort than the problems caused by surveillance. They often do not result in inhibition. Instead they are problems of information processing—the storage, use, or analysis of data—rather than of information collection. They affect the power relationships between people and the institutions of the modern state. They not only frustrate the individual by creating a sense of helplessness and powerlessness, but also affect social structure by altering the kind of relationships people have with the institutions that make important decisions about their lives.

Legal and policy solutions focus too much on the problems under the Orwellian metaphor—those of surveillance—and aren’t adequately addressing the Kafkaesque problems—those of information processing. The difficulty is that commentators are trying to conceive of the problems caused by databases in terms of surveillance when, in fact, those problems are different. Commentators often attempt to refute the nothing-to-hide argument by pointing to things people want to
hide. But the problem with the nothing-to-hide argument is the underlying assumption that privacy is about hiding bad things. By accepting this assumption, we concede far too much ground and invite an unproductive discussion about information that people would very likely want to hide. As the computer-security specialist Schneier aptly notes, the nothing-to-hide argument stems from a faulty “premise that privacy is about hiding a wrong.” Surveillance, for example, can inhibit such lawful activities as free speech, free association, and other First Amendment rights essential for democracy.

The deeper problem with the nothing-to-hide argument is that it myopically views privacy as a form of secrecy. In contrast, understanding privacy as a plurality of related issues demonstrates that the disclosure of bad things is just one among many difficulties caused by government security measures. To return to my discussion of literary metaphors, the problems are not just Orwellian but Kafkaesque. Government information-gathering programs are problematic even if no information that people want to hide is uncovered. In The Trial, the problem is not inhibited behavior but rather a suffocating powerlessness and vulnerability created by the court system’s use of personal data and its denial to the protagonist of any knowledge of or participation in the process. The harms are bureaucratic ones—indifference, error, abuse, frustration, and lack of transparency and accountability.

One such harm, for example, which I call aggregation, emerges from the fusion of small bits of seemingly innocuous data. When combined, the information becomes much more telling. By joining pieces of information we might not take pains to guard, the government can glean information about us that we might indeed wish to conceal. For example, suppose you bought a book about cancer. This purchase isn’t very revealing on its own, for it indicates just an interest in the disease. Suppose you bought a wig. The purchase of a wig, by itself, could be for a number of reasons. But combine those two pieces of information, and now the inference can be made that you have cancer and are undergoing chemotherapy. That might be a fact you wouldn’t mind sharing, but you’d certainly want to have the choice.

Another potential problem with the government’s harvest of personal data is one I call exclusion. Exclusion occurs when people are prevented from having knowledge about how information about them is being used, and when they are barred from accessing and correcting errors in that data. Many government national-security measures involve maintaining a huge database of information that individuals cannot access. Indeed, because they involve national security, the very existence of these programs is often kept secret. This kind of information processing, which blocks subjects’ knowledge and involvement, is a kind of due-process problem. It is a structural problem, involving the way people are treated by government institutions and creating a power imbalance between people and the government. To what extent should government officials have such a significant power over citizens? This issue isn’t about what information people want to hide but about the power and the structure of government.

A related problem involves secondary use. Secondary use is the exploitation of data obtained for one purpose for an unrelated purpose without the subject’s consent. How long will personal data be stored? How will the information be used? What could it be used for in the future? The potential uses of any piece of personal information are vast. Without limits on or accountability for how that information is used, it is hard for people to assess the dangers of the data’s being in the government’s control.

Yet another problem with government gathering and use of personal data is distortion. Although personal information can reveal quite a lot about people’s personalities and activities, it often fails to reflect the whole person. It can paint a distorted picture, especially since records are reductive—they often capture information in a standardized format with many details omitted. For example, suppose government officials learn that a person has bought a number of books on how to manufacture methamphetamine. That information makes them suspect that he’s building a meth lab. What is missing from the records is the full story: The person is writing a novel about a character who makes meth. When he bought the books, he didn’t consider how suspicious the purchase might appear to government officials, and his records didn’t reveal the reason for the purchases. Should he have to worry about government scrutiny of all his purchases and actions? Should he have to be concerned that he’ll wind up on a suspicious-persons list? Even if he isn’t doing anything wrong, he may want to keep his records away from
government officials who might make faulty inferences from them. He might not want to have to worry about how everything he does will be perceived by officials nervously monitoring for criminal activity. He might not want to have a computer flag him as suspicious because he has an unusual pattern of behavior. . . .

Privacy is rarely lost in one fell swoop. It is usually eroded over time, little bits dissolving almost imperceptibly until we finally begin to notice how much is gone. When the government starts monitoring the phone numbers people call, many may shrug their shoulders and say, “Ah, it’s just numbers, that’s all.” Then the government might start monitoring some phone calls. “It’s just a few phone calls, nothing more.” The government might install more video cameras in public places. “So what? Some more cameras watching in a few more places. No big deal.” The increase in cameras might lead to a more elaborate network of video surveillance. Satellite surveillance might be added to help track people’s movements. The government might start analyzing people’s bank records. “It’s just my deposits and some of the bills I pay—no problem.” The government may then start combing through credit-card records, then expand to Internet-service providers’ records, health records, employment records, and more. Each step may seem incremental, but after a while, the government will be watching and knowing everything about us.

“My life’s an open book,” people might say. “I’ve got nothing to hide.” But now the government has large dossiers of everyone’s activities, interests, reading habits, finances, and health. What if the government leaks the information to the public? What if the government mistakenly determines that based on your pattern of activities, you’re likely to engage in a criminal act? What if it denies you the right to fly? What if the government thinks your financial transactions look odd—even if you’ve done nothing wrong—and freezes your accounts? What if the government doesn’t protect your information with adequate security, and an identity thief obtains it and uses it to defraud you? Even if you have nothing to hide, the government can cause you a lot of harm. . . .

Works Cited


Whereas Solove’s position argument focuses on concerns about government collection and use of personal information, many people today are concerned as well about corporate collection and use of personal information. For example, potential employers review blogs and social media Web sites to gather information about job candidates and to check their résumés. Corporations also use data mining to personalize advertising, sending diaper coupons, for example, to women in their thirties who have recently bought diaper bags or baby monitors online.
Think about the implications of corporate data mining, and reflect on how this could affect your own sense of online privacy. Your instructor may ask you to post your thoughts on a class discussion board or to discuss them with other students in class. Use these questions to get started:

- How, if at all, do you manage the privacy preferences or settings on sites you use? Do you ever de-friend people or click the “do not track” tool when you have the opportunity to do so? Would you untag photos or delete comments on social networking sites like Facebook that you didn’t want potential employers to see?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of corporate data mining? Have targeted advertisements been a boon to you, or are you distressed about a corporation’s knowing so much about you?

**Use the basic features.**

**A FOCUSED, WELL-PRESENTED ISSUE: REFRAMING THROUGH CONTRAST**

Writers sometimes have to remind their readers why an issue is controversial. Beginning with the title, Solove works to undermine the widely held assumption that the erosion of privacy should not be a concern. He does this primarily by contrasting two different ways of thinking about threats to privacy, which he calls Orwellian and Kafkaesque, based on the novels *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, by George Orwell, and *The Trial*, by Franz Kafka. To present this contrast, Solove uses sentence patterns like these:

- Not __________, but __________.
- __________ focus on __________, which is characterized by __________, and they don’t even notice __________, which is characterized by __________.

Here are a couple of examples from Solove’s position argument:

*The problems are not just Orwellian but Kafkaesque.* (par. 10)

*Legal and policy solutions focus too much on the problems under the Orwellian metaphor—those of surveillance—and aren’t adequately addressing the Kafkaesque problems—those of information processing.* (par. 9)

**ANALYZE & WRITE**

Write a paragraph analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of Solove’s use of contrast to reframe the issue for readers:

1. Reread paragraphs 6–7 to see how Solove explains the two contrasting metaphors.
2. Then skim paragraphs 8–10, highlighting any sentence patterns used to mark the contrast.
3. Has Solove’s reframing of the discussion affected your understanding of privacy and your concerns about its loss? Why or why not?
A WELL-SUPPORTED POSITION: USING SOURCES

Writers of position arguments often quote, paraphrase, and summarize sources. Usually, they use sources to support their positions, as Jessica Statsky does in her argument about children’s sports. Sometimes, however, they use sources to highlight opposing positions to which they will respond, as Solove does on occasion in this essay.

In the following example, Solove signals his opinion through the words he chooses to characterize the source:

As the computer-security specialist Schneier aptly notes, the nothing-to-hide argument stems from a faulty “premise that privacy is about hiding a wrong.” (par. 9)

Elsewhere, readers have to work a little harder to determine how Solove is using the source.

Solove also uses what we might call hypothetical quotations—sentences that quote not what someone actually said but what they might have said:

Many people say they’re not worried. “I’ve got nothing to hide,” they declare. “Only if you’re doing something wrong should you worry, and then you don’t deserve to keep it private.” (par. 1)

“My life’s an open book,” people might say. “I’ve got nothing to hide.” (par. 16)

You can tell from a signal phrase like “people might say” or “many people say” that no actual person made the statement, but Solove does not always supply such cues.

ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a paragraph analyzing and evaluating Solove’s use of quotations:

1 Find and mark the quotations, noting which actually quote someone and which are hypothetical.

2 Identify the quotations—real or hypothetical—that Solove agrees with and those that represent an opposing view.

3 How effective did you find Solove’s quoting strategy, given his purpose and audience? (Remember that this article appeared in the Chronicle of Higher Education, a weekly newspaper for college faculty and administrators.)

AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE: REFUTING BY DEMONSTRATING THE EFFECTS

As his title suggests, Solove refutes the claim that privacy does not matter “if you have ‘nothing to hide.’” His primary way of refuting the nothing-to-hide argument is to argue that the collection and use of personal information (the cause) has negative effects, which he sometimes calls “problems” and sometimes calls “harms” (par 5).
ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a paragraph or two analyzing and evaluating Solove’s use of cause and effect reasoning to refute the claim that privacy only matters if you have something to hide:

1. Reread paragraphs 6–14, noting where Solove discusses potential problems or harms that could result from the collection of personal data.

2. Choose one of these harms, and examine Solove’s argument more closely. How does he support this part of the argument—for example, what are his reasons, his evidence, the values and beliefs he uses to appeal to his audience?

3. How effective are Solove’s reasons and evidence for you? How effective might they have been for his original audience?

A CLEAR, LOGICAL ORGANIZATION: USING CUEING DEVICES

Solove uses a number of cueing devices to help readers keep track of his argument. Perhaps the most obvious and helpful cues are the topic sentences that begin each paragraph and the logical transitions (“One such harm . . .,” “Another potential problem . . .,” “A related problem . . .,” “Yet another problem . . .” [pars. 11–14]) that signal connections between and within paragraphs. In addition, Solove uses rhetorical questions, such as the series of “What if” questions in the final paragraph.

ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a paragraph or two analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of Solove’s use of cueing devices to help readers follow his argument:

1. Choose a couple of paragraphs that seem to you to use topic sentences and logical transitions effectively. Look closely at the way Solove uses these cueing devices, and determine what makes them so effective.

2. Highlight the rhetorical questions posed in paragraphs 12–14 and 16. Why do you imagine Solove uses so many of them, especially in the final paragraph? Given his purpose and audience, how effective do you think these rhetorical questions were likely to have been? How effective do you find them?

Consider possible topics: Issues concerning privacy.

Solove focuses on one concern about the erosion of privacy. You could write a similar type of essay, taking a position on issues such as state laws requiring women to have ultrasounds before terminating a pregnancy; airport security requiring passengers either to go through a full-body scanner or to submit to a “pat-down” before boarding a flight; cell phones making it possible for individuals to be located and tracked without their consent or knowledge; or houses, offices, and even people on the street being depicted on Google Maps without knowledge or consent.
Position arguments occur regularly in genres and media besides the college essay. For example, Jessica Statsky’s could use information from her argument in a report about injuries in children’s sports, or she could have reworked some of the information as an infographic for coaches. Instead, Statsky decided to remix her essay as an article in her local PTA newsletter. (A remix takes all or part of a text in one genre to create a text in another genre or for another purpose or audience.) Since Statsky’s position argument warned about the dangers of children’s sports, she thought an appropriate target audience would be parents and that the best place to reach them would be through a parenting magazine or newsletter. So after writing her essay, she remixed it as an op-ed for her local PTA newsletter.

In the next section of this chapter, we ask you to craft your own position argument. After composing it as an essay, consider remixing it by presenting it (or a portion of it) in another genre or medium, or using it as part of an essay with a different purpose or audience.

**CONSIDER YOUR RHETORICAL SITUATION**

**Purpose:** The purpose of your position argument is to convince readers that an issue is important (or at least open their eyes to it) and maybe persuade them to take action. If you remix your position argument, which genre or medium would best allow you to make a compelling case for your position?

**Audience:** The original audience for your position argument was your instructor and other students in your class. Which audience would be most affected by your issue or be able to take action on it? What genre or medium would best help you reach that audience?

**Genre and medium:** The genre of your position argument was the essay; the medium was textual, delivered either in print or online. If you remix your position argument, what genre or medium would best help you persuade your target audience?
The Writing Assignment

Compose a position argument on a controversial issue: Before you take a position, learn more about the issue and the debate surrounding it. Then frame the issue so readers recognize that it merits their attention, consider and respond to views that differ from yours, and develop a well-supported, clearly organized argument that will confirm, challenge, or change your readers’ views.

This Guide to Writing will help you compose your own position argument and apply what you have learned from reading other position argument. The Starting Points chart here will help you find answers to many of your questions. Use the chart to find the guidance you need, when you need it.

STARTING POINTS: ARGUING A POSITION

How do I come up with an issue to write about?

- Consider possible topics: Issues concerning fairness. (p. 247)
- Consider possible topics: Issues facing students. (p. 252)
- Consider possible topics: Issues concerning privacy. (p. 259)
- Choose a controversial issue on which to take a position. (pp. 263–64)
- Test Your Choice: Choosing an Issue (p. 264)

A Focused, Well-Presented Issue

How can I effectively frame the issue for my readers?

- Assess the genre’s basic features: A focused, well-presented issue. (pp. 232–33)
- A Focused, Well-Presented Issue: Framing an Argument for your Audience (p. 245)
- A Focused, Well-Presented Issue: Framing an Argument for a Diverse Group of Readers (p. 250)
- A Focused, Well-Presented Issue: Reframing through Contrast (p. 257)
- Frame the issue for your readers. (pp. 264–66)
- A Troubleshooting Guide: A Focused, Well-Presented Issue (p. 275)

(continued)
How do I respond to possible objections to my position?

- Assess the genre’s basic feature: An effective response to opposing views. (pp. 234–35)
- An Effective Response: Conceding and Refuting (p. 246)
- Identify and respond to your readers’ likely reasons and objections. (pp. 269–71)
- Write the opening sentences. (p. 272)

How do I respond to possible alternative positions?

- Assess the genre’s basic feature: An effective response to opposing views. (pp. 234–35)
- An Effective Response: Conceding and Refuting (p. 246)
- An Effective Response: Presenting and Reinterpreting Evidence to Undermine Objections (pp. 251–52)
- An Effective Response: Refuting by Demonstrating the Effects (pp. 258–59)
- Research your position. (pp. 267–68)
- Identify and respond to your readers’ likely reasons and objections. (pp. 269–71)

A Well-Supported Position

- How do I come up with a plausible position?
  - Assess the genre’s basic features: A well-supported position. (pp. 233–34)
  - Formulate a working thesis stating your position. (p. 266)
  - Develop the reasons supporting your position. (p. 267)
  - Research your position. (pp. 267–68)
  - Use sources to reinforce your credibility. (pp. 268–69)

- How do I come up with reasons and evidence supporting my position?
  - A Well-Supported Position: Using Anecdotes and Examples (p. 246)
  - A Well-Supported Position: Using Statistics (p. 251)
  - A Well-Supported Position: Using Sources (p. 258)
  - Formulate a working thesis stating your position. (p. 266)
  - Develop the reasons supporting your position. (p. 267)
  - Research your position. (pp. 267–68)
Writing a Draft: Invention, Research, Planning, and Composing

The activities in this section will help you choose and research an issue as well as develop and organize an argument for your position. Your writing in response to many of these activities can be used in a rough draft that you will be able to improve after receiving feedback from your classmates and instructor. Do the activities in any order that makes sense to you (and your instructor), and return to them as needed as you revise.

Choose a controversial issue on which to take a position.

When choosing an issue, keep in mind that the issue must be

- controversial—an issue that people disagree about;
- arguable—a matter of opinion on which there is no absolute proof or authority;
- one that you can research, as necessary, in the time you have; and
- one that you care about.

Choosing an issue about which you have special interest or knowledge usually works best. For example, if you are thinking of addressing an issue of national concern, focus on a local or at least a specific aspect of it: For example, instead of addressing censorship in general, write about a local lawmaker’s recent effort to propose a law censoring the Internet, a city council attempt to block access to Internet sites at the public library, or your school board’s ban on certain textbooks.

You may already have an issue in mind. If you do, skip to Test Your Choice: Choosing an Issue (p. 264). If you do not, the topics that follow, in addition to those following the readings (pp. 247, 252, 259), may suggest an issue you can make your own:

- Should particular courses, community service, or an internship be a graduation requirement at your high school or college?
- Should students attending public colleges be required to pay higher tuition fees if they have been full-time students but have not graduated within four years?
Should your large lecture or online courses have frequent (weekly or biweekly) exams instead of only a midterm and final?

Should children raised in this country whose parents entered illegally be given an opportunity to become citizens upon finishing college or serving in the military?

Should the football conference your school (or another school in the area) participates in be allowed to expand?

Should you look primarily for a job that is well paid or for a job that is personally fulfilling or socially responsible?

Should the racial, ethnic, or gender makeup of the police force resemble the makeup of the community it serves?

Should public employees be allowed to unionize and to bargain collectively for improved working conditions, pay, or pensions?

Should the state or federal government provide job training for those who are unemployed but able to work?

TEST YOUR CHOICE

Choosing an Issue

First, ask yourself the following questions:

Does the issue matter to me? If not, could I argue convincingly that it ought to be of concern?

Do I know enough about the issue to take a position that I can support effectively, or can I learn what I need to know in the time I have?

Can I frame or reframe the issue in a way that might open readers to my point of view or help them reconsider what’s at stake?

Then get together with two or three other students to take turns trying out your issues with potential readers. Ask group members questions like the following:

What, if anything, do you already know about the issue?

What about the issue (if anything) seems particularly intriguing or important to you?

Do you already hold a position on this issue? If so, how strongly do you hold it? Would you be open to considering other points of view? If you don’t care about the issue, what might convince you that it matters?

Consider these questions and their responses as you plan and draft your argument.

Frame the issue for your readers.

Once you have made a preliminary choice of an issue, consider how you can frame (or reframe) your issue so that readers who support opposing positions will listen to your argument. Consider how the issue has been debated in the past and what your readers are likely to think. Use the following questions and sentence strategies to help you put your ideas in writing.
To determine what your readers are likely to think, ask yourself questions like these and answer them using the sentence strategies as a jumping-off point.

**WHAT VALUES AND CONCERNS DO MY READERS AND I SHARE REGARDING THE ISSUE?**

- Concern about Issue X leads many of us to oppose ________. We worry about the consequences if ________ is implemented.
- X is a basic human right that needs to be protected. But what does it mean in everyday practice when ________?

**WHAT FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES IN WORLDVIEW OR EXPERIENCE MIGHT KEEP ME AND MY READERS FROM AGREEING?**

- Those who disagree about Issue X often see it as a choice between ________ and ________. But we don’t have to choose between them.
- While others may view it as a matter of ________, for me what’s at stake is ________.

Once you have a good idea of how the issue has been debated and what your readers think, use these sentence strategies to frame the issue for your readers.

**WHAT IS THE ISSUE, AND WHY SHOULD MY READERS BE CONCERNED ABOUT IT?**

- Issue X is of concern to all members of group A because ________.

**EXAMPLE**

I’m concerned about the high cost of tuition at state colleges like ours because students have to borrow more money to pay for their education than they will be able to earn once they graduate.

**WHY ARE POPULAR APPROACHES OR ATTITUDES INAPPROPRIATE OR INADEQUATE?**

- Although many in the community claim X, I think Y because ________.

(continued)
HOW CAN I DEVISE AN ARGUABLE THESIS?

Begin by describing the issue, possibly indicating where others stand on it or what’s at stake, and then stating your position. These sentence strategies may help you get started:

- At a recent meeting, many people argued ............... Although I sympathize with their point of view, this is ultimately a question of ..........., not ............ Therefore, we must do ..............

- This issue is dividing our community. Some people argue X, others contend Y, and still others believe Z. However, it is in all of our interests to do .............. because ..............

- Conventional wisdom claims that .............. But I take a different view: I believe .............. because ..............

EXAMPLE
Some argue that college football players should be paid because of the money the school is earning off players’ labor. I disagree. I think the current system should be maintained because without the money earned from football less lucrative sports programs, like fencing and wrestling, would have to be cut.

Frame Your Issue
Ask two or three other students to consider the way you have framed your issue.

Presenters. Briefly explain the values and concerns you think are at stake. (The sentence strategies in the Ways In section can help you articulate your position and approach.)

Listeners. Tell the presenter how you respond to this way of framing the issue and why. You may use the language that follows as a model for structuring your response, or use language of your own.

- I’m also/not concerned about Issue X because ..............
- I agree/disagree with you about Issue X because ..............

Formulate a working thesis stating your position.

Try drafting a working thesis statement now. (If you prefer to conduct research or develop your argument before trying to formulate a thesis, skip this activity and return to it when you’re ready.) As you develop your argument, rework your assertion to make it a compelling thesis statement by making the language clear and straightforward. You may also need to qualify it with words like often, sometimes, or in part. Forecast your reasons.
Develop the reasons supporting your position.

The following activities will help you find plausible reasons and evidence for your position. You can do some focused research later to fill in the details, or skip ahead to conduct research now.

**HOW CAN I COME UP WITH REASONS THAT SUPPORT MY POSITION?**

Write nonstop for at least five minutes exploring your reasons. Ask yourself questions like these:

- How can I show readers that my reasons lead logically to my position (LOGOS)?
- How can I convince my readers that I am trustworthy (ETHOS)?
- How can I appeal to their feelings (PATHOS)?

At this point, don’t worry about the exact language you will use in your final draft. Just write the reasons you hold your position and the evidence (such as anecdotes, examples, statistics, expert testimony) that supports it. Keep your readers and their values in mind—what would they find most convincing and why?

To brainstorm a list of reasons, try this:

- Start by writing your position at the top of the page.
- On the left half of the page, list as many potential reasons as you can think of to support your position. (Don’t judge at this point.)
- On the right half of the page, make notes about the kinds of evidence you would need to provide to convince readers of each reason and to show how each supports your position.

Research your position.

Do some research to find out how others have argued in support of your position:

- Try entering keywords or phrases related to the issue or your position in the search box of an all-purpose database, such as Academic OneFile (InfoTrac) or Academic Search Complete (EBSCOHost), to find relevant articles in magazines and journals, or use the database Lexis/Nexis to find articles in newspapers. For example, Jessica Statsky could have tried a combination of keywords, such as children’s sports, or variations on her terms (youth sports) to find relevant articles. A similar search of your library’s catalog could also be conducted to locate books and other resources on your topic.
- If you think your issue has been dealt with by a government agency, explore the state, local, or tribal sections of USA.gov—the U.S. government’s official Web portal—or visit the Library of Congress page on state government information (www.loc.gov/rr/news/stategov/stategov.html) and follow the links.
Remember to bookmark promising sites and to record the URL and information you will need to cite and document any sources or visuals you use.

**Use sources to reinforce your credibility.**

How you represent your sources can quickly establish your credibility (ethos)—or the reverse. For example, by briefly describing the author’s credentials the first time you summarize, paraphrase, or quote from a source, you establish the source’s authority and demonstrate that you have selected sources appropriately:

![Signal phrase and author's credentials](image)

Martin Rablovsky, a former sports editor for the *New York Times*, says that in all his years of watching young children play organized sports, he has noticed very few of them smiling. “I’ve seen children enjoying a spontaneous pre-practice scrimmage become somber and serious when the coach’s whistle blows,” Rablovsky says . . . (qtd. in Coakley 94).

Quotations can also reinforce the accuracy of your summary or paraphrase and establish your fairness to opposing points of view. In the following sentence, Jessica Statsky demonstrates her fairness by quoting from the Web site of the Little League, a well-known organization, and she establishes her credibility by demonstrating that even those who disagree with her recognize that injuries occur:

![Statsky's introduction: Summarizes source](image)

Although the official Little League Web site acknowledges that children do risk injury playing baseball, it insists that “severe injuries . . . are infrequent,” the risk “far less than the risk of riding a skateboard, a bicycle, or even the school bus” (“What about My Child?”).

In both of these examples from “Children Need to Play, Not Compete” (pars. 5 and 3, respectively), Statsky introduces the source to her readers, explaining the relevance of the source material, including the author’s credentials, for readers rather than leaving them to figure out its relevance for themselves.

Whenever you borrow information from sources, be sure to double-check that you are summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting accurately and fairly. Compare Statsky’s sentence with the source passage (that follows). (The portions she uses are highlighted.) Notice that she has inserted ellipsis ( . . . ) to indicate that she has left out words from her source’s second sentence.

**Source**

Injuries seem to be inevitable in any rigorous activity, especially if players are new to the sport and unfamiliar with its demands. But because of the safety precautions taken in Little League, severe injuries such as bone fractures are infrequent. Most injuries are sprains and strains, abrasions and cuts and bruises. The risk of serious injury in Little League Baseball is far less than the risk of riding a skateboard, a bicycle, or even the school bus.
In both of the preceding examples, Statsky uses quotation marks to indicate that she is borrowing the words of a source and provides an in-text citation so that readers can locate the sources in her list of works cited. Doing both is essential to avoiding plagiarism; one or the other is not enough.

**Identify and respond to your readers’ likely reasons and objections.**

The following activity will help you anticipate reasons your readers may use to support their argument or objections they may have. You may want to return to this activity as you do additional research and learn more about the issue and the arguments people make. Return to the section “Research your position” on pp. 267–68 or consult Chapter 21, “Finding Sources and Conducting Field Research.”

**HOW CAN I FIGURE OUT WHAT MY READERS WILL BE CONCERNED ABOUT?**

1. List the REASONS you expect your readers to have for their position and the OBJECTIONS (including those based on logical fallacies) you expect them to raise to your argument. How do your VALUES, BELIEFS, and PRIORITIES differ from those of your readers?

2. Analyze your list of likely REASONS and OBJECTIONS. Which can you refute, and how? Which may you need to concede?

**HOW CAN I RESPOND TO READERS’ REASONS AND OBJECTIONS?**

Now, choose a REASON or OBJECTION, and try out a response:

1. Summarize it accurately and fairly. (Do not commit the “straw man” fallacy of knocking down something that no one really takes seriously.)

2. Decide whether you can refute it, need to concede it, or can refute part and concede part.

Try sentence strategies like these to REFUTE, CONCEDE, or CONCEDE and REFUTE reasons supporting readers’ arguments or their objections to your argument:

**To Refute**

Reason or Objection Lacks Credible Support

- My opponents cite research to support their reason/objection, but the credibility of that research is questionable because .............. In contrast, reliable research by Professor X shows ..............

- This reason/objection seems plausible on the surface, but evidence shows ..............
Readers' Values and Concerns Are Better Served by Your Position

- Some insist __________ without realizing that it would take away a basic right/make things even worse.
- X and Y think this issue is about __________. But what is really at stake here is __________.

Reasoning Is Flawed

- Proponents object to my argument on the grounds that __________. However, they are confusing results with causes. What I am arguing is __________.
- Polls show that most people favor __________, but an opinion's popularity does not make it true or right.
- While most would agree that __________, it does not necessarily follow that __________.

Times Have Changed

- One common complaint is __________. In recent years, however, __________.

To Concede

Accept an Objection Well Taken

- To be sure, __________ is true.
- Granted, __________ must be taken into consideration.

Qualify on Common Ground

- Some people argue that __________. I understand this reservation, and therefore, I think we should __________.

Refocus Your Argument

- A common concern about this issue is __________. That's why my argument focuses on [a different aspect of the issue].

To Concede and Refute

And Instead of Or

- I agree that __________ is important, and so is __________.

Yes, But

- I agree that __________ is important, but my opponents also need to consider __________.

On the One Hand . . . On the Other Hand

- On the one hand, I accept X's argument that __________, but on the other hand, I still think __________ is ultimately more important because __________.
Note: If a reason or an objection seems so damaging that you cannot refute it convincingly or concede it without undermining your own argument, discuss with your instructor how you could modify your position or whether you should choose a new issue to write about. If you do not know enough about readers’ views to anticipate their reasons or likely objections to your argument, do more research.

Create an outline that will organize your argument effectively for your readers.

Whether you have rough notes or a complete draft, making an outline of what you have written can help you organize the essay effectively for your audience. Compare the possible outlines that follow to see how you might organize your essay depending on whether your readers primarily agree or disagree with you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readers Primarily Agree with You</th>
<th>Readers Primarily Disagree with You</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen their convictions by organizing your argument around a series of reasons backed by supporting evidence or by refuting opposing arguments point by point:</td>
<td>Begin by emphasizing common ground, and make a concession to show that you have considered the opposing position carefully and with an open mind:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Presentation of the issue</td>
<td>I. Presentation of the issue: Reframe the issue in terms of common values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Thesis statement: A direct statement of your position</td>
<td>II. Concession: Acknowledge the wisdom of an aspect of the opposing position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Your most plausible reasons and evidence</td>
<td>III. Thesis statement: A direct statement of your position, qualified as necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Concession or refutation of opposing reasons or objections to your argument</td>
<td>IV. Your most plausible reasons and evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Conclusion: Reaffirmation of your position</td>
<td>V. Conclusion: Reiteration of shared values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whatever organizational strategy you adopt, do not hesitate to change your outline as necessary while drafting and revising. For instance, you might find it more effective to hold back on presenting your own position until you have discussed unacceptable alternatives. Or you might find a more powerful way to order the reasons for supporting your position. The purpose of an outline is to identify the basic components of your argument and to help you organize them effectively, not to lock you into a particular structure.

For more on outlining, see Chapter 11, pp. 490–94.
Consider document design.

Think about whether visual or audio elements—photographs, graphics, snippets of interviews with experts—would strengthen your position argument. If you can recall position arguments you’ve read in newspapers (op-eds and editorials generally argue for positions), on Web pages, and on blogs, what visual or audio elements were used to establish the writer’s credibility and to appeal to the reader logically, ethically, or emotionally? Position arguments do not require visual or audio examples to be effective, but these elements can be helpful.

Note: Be sure to cite the source of visual or audio elements you didn’t create, and get permission from the source if your essay is going to be published on a Web site that will be accessible outside of your class or college.

Consider also whether your readers might benefit from design features such as headings, bulleted or numbered lists, or other typographic elements that can make your argument easier to follow.

Write the opening sentences.

Review what you have already written to see if you have something that would help you frame or reframe the issue for your readers while also grabbing their attention:

Begin with statistics that would help readers grasp the importance of your topic:

“Organized sports for young people have become an institution in North America,” reports sports journalist Steve Silverman, attracting more than 44 million youngsters according to a recent survey by the National Council of Youth Sports (“History”). (Statsky, par. 1)

Use a personal anecdote to make the issue tangible or appeal to readers’ emotions:

Let me tell you a little about Matthew. . . . (Bramson, par. 1)

Start with a surprising statement to capture readers’ attention:

McDonald’s is bad for your kids. (Etzioni, par. 1)

Use a hypothetical quotation to indicate how people typically think about the issue:

When the government gathers or analyzes personal information, many people say they’re not worried. “I’ve got nothing to hide,” they declare. (Solove, par. 1)

Draft your position argument.

By this point, you have done a lot of writing to

- devise a focused, well-presented issue and take a position on it
- frame your issue so that readers will be open to your argument
- support your position with reasons and evidence your readers will find persuasive
- refute or concede alternative viewpoints on the issue
- organize your ideas to make them clear, logical, and effective for readers
Now stitch that material together to create a draft. The next two parts of this Guide to Writing will help you evaluate and improve that draft.

Evaluating the Draft: Using Peer Review

Your instructor may arrange a peer review session in class or online, where you can exchange drafts with your classmates and give each other a thoughtful critical reading—pointing out what works well and suggesting ways to improve the draft. A good critical reading does three things:

1. It lets the writer know how the reader understands the point of the argument.
2. It praises what works best.
3. It indicates where the draft could be improved and makes suggestions how to improve it.

One strategy for evaluating a draft is to use the basic features of a position argument as a guide.

**A Peer Review Guide**

**How well does the writer present the issue?**

**A Focused, Well-Presented Issue**

*Summarize:* Tell the writer what you understand the issue to be. If you were already familiar with it and understand it differently, briefly explain.

*Praise:* Give an example from the essay where the issue and its significance come across effectively.

*Critique:* Tell the writer where more information about the issue is needed, where more might be done to establish its seriousness, or how the issue could be framed or reframed in a way that would better prepare readers for the argument.

**How well does the writer argue in support of the position?**

**A Well-Supported Position**

*Summarize:* Underline the thesis statement and the main reasons.

*Praise:* Give an example in the essay where the argument is especially effective; for example, indicate which reason is especially convincing or which supporting evidence is particularly compelling.

*Critique:* Tell the writer where the argument could be strengthened; for example, indicate how the thesis statement could be made clearer or more appropriately qualified, how the argument could be developed, or where additional support is needed.

(continued)
How effectively has the writer responded to others’ reasons and likely objections?

**Summarize:** Identify where the writer responds to a reason others use to support their argument or an objection they have to the writer’s argument.

**Praise:** Give an example in the essay where a concession seems particularly well done or a refutation is convincing.

**Critique:** Tell the writer how a concession or refutation could be made more effective, identify a reason or objection the writer should respond to, or note where common ground could be found.

How clearly and logically has the writer organized the argument?

**Summarize:** Find the sentence(s) in which the writer states the thesis and forecasts supporting reasons, as well as transitions or repeated key words and phrases.

**Praise:** Give an example of how or where the essay succeeds in being especially easy to read, perhaps in its overall organization, clear presentation of the thesis, clear transitions, or effective opening or closing.

**Critique:** Tell the writer where the readability could be improved. Can you, for example, suggest better forecasting or clearer transitions? If the overall organization of the essay needs work, make suggestions for rearranging parts or strengthening connections.

Before concluding your peer review, be sure to address any of the writer’s concerns that have not been discussed already.

**Making Comments Electronically**  Most word processing software offers features that allow you to insert comments directly into the text of someone else's document. Many readers prefer to make their comments this way because it tends to be faster than writing on hard copy and space is virtually unlimited; it also eliminates the process of deciphering handwritten comments. Where such features are not available, simply typing comments directly into a document in a contrasting color can provide the same advantages.

### Improving the Draft: Revising, Editing, and Proofreading

Start improving your draft by reflecting on what you have written thus far:

- Review critical reading comments from your classmates, instructor, or writing center tutor: What problems are your readers identifying?
- Consider your invention writing: What else should you consider?
- Review your draft: What can you do to support your position more effectively?
Revise your draft.

If your readers are having difficulty with your draft, or if you think there is room for improvement, try some of the strategies listed in the Troubleshooting Guide that follows. It can help you fine-tune your presentation of the genre’s basic features.

A TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

**A Focused, Well-Presented Issue**

- My readers don’t get the point.
  - Quote experts or add information—statistics, examples, anecdotes, and so on—to help readers understand what’s at stake.
  - Consider adding visuals, such as photos, graphs, tables, or charts to present the issue more clearly.

- My readers have a different perspective on the issue than I do.
  - Show the limitations of how the issue has traditionally been understood.
  - Reframe the issue by showing how it relates to values, concerns, needs, and priorities you share with readers.
  - Give concrete examples or anecdotes, facts, and details that could help readers see the issue as you see it.

**A Well-Supported Position**

- My readers do not find my argument clear and/or persuasive.
  - Revisit your thesis statement to make sure your position is stated clearly and directly.
  - Reconsider your reasons, or explain how they support your position.
  - Add supporting evidence—statistics, examples, authorities, and so on.
  - Consider adding visuals, graphs, tables, or charts to support your argument.
  - Strengthen the logical, ethical, and/or emotional appeals of your argument.
  - Try outlining your argument; if your organization is weak or illogical, or if your transitional strategies are not working, try reorganizing the material, adding transitional words and phrases, or repeating key words strategically.

**An Effective Response to Opposing Views**

- My readers question my response to opposing arguments or objections to my argument.
  - If your refutation is weak, strengthen it with additional or more compelling reasons and evidence.
  - If your concession weakens your argument, qualify your position with words like *sometimes* or *often*.
  - Consider adding a refutation to your concession.

*(continued)*
Edit and proofread your draft.

Students frequently struggle to maintain a neutral tone when arguing a position they hold dearly. Our research also indicates that incorrect comma usage in sentences with coordinating conjunctions and punctuation errors in sentences that use conjunctive adverbs are common in position arguments. The following guidelines will help you check your essay for these common errors.

**Editing for Tone**

To demonstrate that you are treating alternative viewpoints fairly, use words with a positive or neutral connotation (emotional resonance) and avoid name-calling.

- Too often . . . the drive to win turns parents into monsters threatening 
  umpires.

As you edit your position argument, also watch out for language that is puffed up or pompous:

- A coach who had attended the Adelphi workshop tried to operationalize what he had learned there, but the players’ progenitors 
  would not support him.

**Using Commas before Coordinating Conjunctions**

In essays that argue a position, writers often use coordinating conjunctions (and, but, for, or, nor, so, and yet) to join related independent clauses—groups of words that can stand alone as complete sentences—to create compound sentences. Consider this example from Jessica Statsky’s essay:

- Winning and losing may be an inevitable part of adult life, but they should not be part 
  of childhood. (par. 6)
In this sentence, Statsky links two complete ideas of equal importance with the coordinating conjunction *but* to emphasize contrast.

**The Problem**  Two common errors occur in sentences like these:
1. A comma may be left out when two independent clauses are linked by a coordinating conjunction.
2. A comma may be inserted before the coordinating conjunction when one of the sentence parts is not an independent clause.

**The Correction**  Add a comma before coordinating conjunctions that join two independent clauses, as in the following example:

> The new immigration laws will bring in more skilled people *but* their presence will take jobs away from other Americans.

Omit the comma when coordinating conjunctions join phrases that are not independent clauses:

> We need people with special talents *and* diverse skills to make the United States a stronger nation.

**Avoiding Comma Splices When Using Conjunctive Adverbs to Link Independent Clauses**

**Conjunctive adverbs** (such as *consequently, furthermore, however, moreover, therefore,* and *thus*) indicate the logical relationships among ideas. For example, words like *thus* and *therefore* are used to alert readers that a conclusion is coming, and words like *furthermore* and *moreover* are used to alert readers to expect additional ideas on the same topic. When writers take a position, they often use conjunctive adverbs to link independent clauses.

Consider this example:

> Children watching television recognize violence *but* not its intention; *thus,* they become desensitized to violence.

In this sentence, the writer uses the word *thus* to indicate that he is drawing a conclusion.

**The Problem**  A *comma splice* is one error that often occurs when writers use a comma before a conjunctive adverb linking two independent clauses.

**The Correction**  Use a semicolon before and a comma after a conjunctive adverb when it links two independent clauses:

> The recent vote on increasing student fees produced a disappointing turnout; *moreover,* the presence of campaign literature on ballot tables violated voting procedures.

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**A Note on Grammar and Spelling Checkers**

These tools can be helpful, but do not rely on them exclusively to catch errors in your text: Spelling checkers cannot catch misspellings that are themselves words, such as *to* for *too.* Grammar checkers miss some problems, sometimes give faulty advice for fixing problems, and can flag correct items as wrong. Use these tools as a second line of defense after your own (and, ideally, another reader’s) editing and proofreading efforts.
Make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses before inserting a semicolon, a conjunctive adverb, and a comma to link them. If one or both parts cannot stand alone, add a subject, a verb, or both as needed to avoid a *sentence fragment*:

- Children watching television recognize violence; however, not its intention.

Alternatively, you may replace the semicolon, conjunctive adverb, and comma with a coordinating conjunction:

- Children watching television recognize violence, but however, not its intention.

**A Common Problem for Multilingual Writers: Subtle Differences in Meaning**

Because the distinctions in meaning among some common conjunctive adverbs are subtle, nonnative speakers often have difficulty using them accurately. For example, the difference between *however* and *nevertheless* is small; each is used to introduce a contrasting statement. But *nevertheless* emphasizes the contrast, whereas *however* softens it. Check usage of such terms in an English dictionary rather than a bilingual one. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* has special usage notes to help distinguish frequently confused words.

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**A WRITER AT WORK**

**Jessica Statsky’s Response to Opposing Positions**

In this section, we look at how Jessica Statsky tried to anticipate opposing positions and respond to them. To understand Statsky’s thinking about possible opposing positions, look first at the invention writing she did while analyzing her potential readers.

I think I will write mainly to **parents** who are considering letting their children get involved in competitive sports and to those whose children are already on teams and who don’t know about the possible dangers. **Parents** who are really into competition and winning probably couldn’t be swayed by my arguments anyway. I don’t know how to reach **coaches** (but aren’t they also parents?) or **league organizers**. I’ll tell parents some horror stories and present solid evidence from psychologists that competitive sports can really harm children under the age of twelve. I think they’ll be impressed with this scientific evidence.
I share with parents one important value: the best interests of children. Competition really works against children’s best interests. Maybe parents’ magazines (don’t know of any specific ones) publish essays like mine.

Notice that Statsky lists three potential groups of readers here, but she is already leaning toward making parents her primary audience. Moreover, she divides these parents into two camps: those who are new to organized sports and unaware of the adverse effects of competition, and those who are really into winning. Statsky decides early on against trying to change the minds of parents who place great value on winning. But as you will see in the next excerpt from her invention writing, Statsky gave a lot of thought to the position these parents would likely favor.

Listing Reasons for the Opposing Position

In continuing her invention writing, Statsky listed the following reasons she thought others might have for their position that organized competitive sports teach young children valuable skills:

--because competition teaches children how to succeed in later life
--because competition—especially winning—is fun
--because competition boosts children’s self-esteem
--because competition gives children an incentive to excel

This list appears to pose serious challenges to Statsky’s argument, but she benefited by considering the reasons her readers might give for opposing her position before she drafted her essay. By preparing this list, she gained insight into how she had to develop her own argument in light of these predictable arguments, and she could begin thinking about which reasons she might concede and which she had to refute. Her essay ultimately gained authority because she could demonstrate a good understanding of the opposing arguments that might be offered by her primary readers—parents who have not considered the dangers of competition for young children.

Conceding a Plausible Reason

Looking over her list of reasons, Statsky decided that she could accommodate readers by conceding that competitive sports can sometimes be fun for children—at least for those who win. Here are her invention notes:

It is true that children do sometimes enjoy getting prizes and being recognized as winners in competitions adults set up for them. I remember feeling very excited when our sixth-grade relay team won a race at our school’s sports day. And I felt really good when I would occasionally win the candy bar for being the last one standing in classroom spelling contests. But when I think about these events, it’s the activity itself I remember as the main fun, not the winning. I think I can concede that winning is exciting to six- to twelve-year-olds, while arguing that it’s not as important as adults might think. I hope this will win me some friends among readers who are undecided about my position.
We can see this concession in paragraph 5 of Statsky’s revised essay (p. 238), in which she concedes that sports should be fun but quotes an authority who argues that even fun is jeopardized when competition becomes intense.

**Refuting an Implausible Reason**

Statsky recognized that she had to attempt to refute the other objections in her list. She chose the first reason in her list and tried out the following refutation:

> It irritates me that adults are so eager to make first and second graders go into training for getting and keeping jobs as adults. I don’t see why the pressures on adults need to be put on children. Anyway, both my parents tell me that in their jobs, cooperation and teamwork are keys to success. You can’t get ahead unless you’re effective in working with others. Maybe we should be training children and even high school and college students in the skills necessary for cooperation, rather than competition. Sports and physical activity are important for children, but elementary schools should emphasize achievement rather than competition—race against the clock rather than against each other. Rewards could be given for gains in speed or strength instead of for defeating somebody in a competition.

This brief invention activity led to the argument in paragraph 10 of the revised essay (p. 240), in which Statsky acknowledges the importance of competition for success in school and work, but goes on to argue that cooperation is also important. To support this part of her argument, she gives examples in paragraph 11 of sports programs that emphasize cooperation over competition.

You can see from Statsky’s revised essay that her refutation of this opposing argument runs through her entire essay. The invention activities Statsky did advanced her thinking about her readers and purpose; they also brought an early, productive focus to her research on competition in children’s sports.

**THINKING CRITICALLY**

To think critically means to use all of the knowledge you have acquired from the information in this chapter, your own writing, the writing of other students, and class discussions to reflect deeply on your work for this assignment and the genre (or type) of writing you have produced. The benefit of thinking critically is proven and important: Thinking critically about what you have learned will help you remember it longer, ensuring that you will be able to put it to good use well beyond this writing course.
Reflecting on What You Have Learned

In this chapter, you have learned a great deal about arguing for a position from reading several position arguments and from writing one of your own. To consolidate your learning, reflect not only on what you learned but also on how you learned it.

**ANALYZE & WRITE**

Write a blog post to classmates, a letter to your instructor, or an e-mail message to a student who will take this course next term, using the writing prompt that seems most productive for you:

- Explain how your purpose and audience influenced one of your decisions as a writer, such as how you presented the issue, the strategies you used in arguing your position, or the ways in which you attempted to counter possible objections.
- Discuss what you learned about yourself as a writer in the process of writing this essay. For example, what part of the process did you find most challenging? Did you try anything new, like getting a critical reading of your draft or outlining your draft in order to revise it?
- Choose one of the readings in this chapter and explain how it influenced your essay. Be sure to cite specific examples from your essay and the reading.
- If you got good advice from a critical reader, explain exactly how the person helped you—perhaps by questioning the way you addressed your audience or the kinds of evidence you offered in support of your position.

Reflecting on the Genre

While you were writing your position argument, we encouraged you to frame your position in terms of values you share with your readers and to provide logical reasons and evidence in support of your position. However, some critics argue that privileging reasoned argument over other ways of arguing is merely a means to control dissent. Instead of expressing what may be legitimate outrage and inciting public concern through passionate language, dissenters are urged to be dispassionate and reasonable even though they are arguing with people whose views they find repugnant. In the end, trying to present a well-reasoned, well-supported argument may serve to maintain the status quo by silencing the more radical voices within the community. What do you think about this controversy?

**ANALYZE & WRITE**

Write a page or two explaining your ideas about whether the genre’s requirement that writers give reasons and support suppresses dissent. Connect your ideas to your own position argument and to the readings in this chapter. In your discussion, you might consider one or more of the following questions:

1. In your own experience of arguing a position on a controversial issue, did having to give reasons and support discourage you from choosing any particular issue or from expressing strong feelings? Reflect on the issues you listed as possible subjects for your essay and how you made your choice. Did you reject any issues
because you could not come up with reasons and support for your position? When you made your choice, did you think about whether you could be dispassionate and reasonable about it?

2 Consider the readings in this chapter and the position arguments you read by other students in the class. Do you think any of these writers felt limited by the need to give reasons and support for their position? Which of the essays you read, if any, seemed to you to express strong feelings about the issue? Which, if any, seemed dispassionate?

3 Consider the kind of arguing you typically witness in the media—radio, television, newspapers, magazines, the Internet. In the media, have giving reasons and support and anticipating readers' objections been replaced with a more contentious, in-your-face style of arguing? Think of media examples of these two different ways of arguing. What do these examples lead you to conclude about the contention that reasoned argument can stifle dissent?
Can a student convince his professor that giving infrequent, high-stakes exams is a bad idea? Will a marine biologist's proposal to save orcas by moving them from theme parks to wildlife sanctuaries float? Should we try out a law professor's idea to solve the shortage of kidneys for transplantation? These are some of the problems and solutions addressed by the proposals in this chapter. Proposals like these need, first, to convince their audience that the problem actually exists and is serious and, second, that the proposed solution will not only solve the problem but is the best available option.
People make proposals for various purposes and audiences and publish them in a variety of media. For example, students in a health sciences course collaborated on a project to build a Web page that informs the community about a water quality problem, evaluates the feasibility of alternative solutions, and argues for their preferred solution, and a blogger posted a proposal to solve the problem of the rising college loan default rate, arguing that truth in advertising laws should be used to crack down on for-profit colleges that use aggressive recruiting tactics to target low-income students.

In this chapter, we ask you to identify a problem you care about and write a proposal to solve it. By analyzing the selections in the Guide to Reading that follows, you will learn how to make a convincing case for the solution you propose. The Guide to Writing later in the chapter will show you ways to use the basic features of the genre to make your proposal inventive as well as practical.

**PRACTICING THE GENRE**

**Arguing That a Solution Is Feasible**

Proposals often succeed or fail on the strength of the argument that the proposed solution is feasible. To practice making a feasibility argument, get together with two or three other students and follow these guidelines:

**Part 1.** Begin by identifying a problem you face as a student in one of your college courses (this course or a different one). Next, discuss the problem in your group, and choose one of the following solutions (or think of another solution): The instructor should drop one of the assigned books, offer special study sessions, or post study sheets on the readings.

Then discuss the following questions to determine how you could demonstrate to the instructor that your solution is feasible:

- **Is it doable?** List specific steps that the instructor would need to take.
- **Is it worth doing?** Identify what implementing the solution would cost the instructor (in terms of time, for example) compared to how much it would benefit the students (in terms of learning, for example).
- **Would it work?** To prove it would actually help to solve the problem, you could show that it eliminates a cause of the problem or that it has worked elsewhere, for example.

**Part 2.** As a group, discuss what you learned.

- **What did you learn about demonstrating that your proposed solution is feasible?**
  Typically, a proposal tries to convince the audience that the solution is doable, worth the time and money, and would actually help solve the problem. Are all three elements of feasibility necessary? If not, which is most important? Why?

- **Think about how the rhetorical situation of your proposal—the purpose, audience, and medium—affects how you need to argue for your solution’s feasibility.**
  For example, how would you change your argument about negative effects of relying on high-stakes exams if you were trying to convince a group of professors at a conference about undergraduate teaching versus an administrator who controls the budget or schedule? Would feasibility be equally important to both groups?
Analyzing Proposals

As you read the selections in this chapter, you will see how different writers argue for a solution:

- Patrick O’Malley argues for more low-stakes quizzes (pp. 290–96).
- Naomi Rose proposes that marine theme parks create orca sanctuaries (pp. 296–99).
- Eric Posner argues for an “altruism exchange” to motivate kidney donors (pp. 302–5).
- Kelly D. Brownell and Thomas R. Frieden propose raising taxes on sugary soft drinks as a way to stem the “obesity epidemic” (pp. 308–12).

Analyzing how these writers define their problems, argue for their solutions, respond to opposing views, and organize their writing will help you see how you can use these techniques to make your own proposals clear and compelling for your readers.

Determine the writer’s purpose and audience.

When reading the proposals that follow, ask yourself questions like these:

**What seems to be the writer’s purpose (or multiple purposes)?**
- to convince readers that the problem truly exists and needs immediate action?
- to persuade readers that the writer’s proposed solution is better than alternative solutions?
- to rekindle readers’ interest in a long-standing problem?

**What does the writer assume about the audience?**
- that readers will be unaware of the problem?
- that they will recognize the existence of the problem but fail to take it seriously?
- that they will think the problem has already been solved?
- that they will prefer an alternative solution?

Assess the genre’s basic features.

As you read the proposals in this chapter, consider how different authors incorporate the basic features of the genre. The examples that follow are taken from the reading selections that appear later in this Guide to Reading.

A FOCUSED, WELL-DEFINED PROBLEM

*Read first to see how the writer defines or frames the problem. Framing a problem is a way of preparing readers for the proposed solution by focusing on the aspect of the problem the proposal tries to solve.* In “More Testing, More Learning,” for example,
student Patrick O’Malley frames the problem in terms of the detrimental effects of high-stakes exams on students’ learning. If O’Malley were writing to students instead of their teachers, he might have framed the problem in terms of students’ poor study habits or procrastination. By framing the problem as he does, he indicates that teachers, rather than students, have the ability to solve the problem and tries to convince readers that it is real and serious.

Determine, how (and how well) the writer frames the problem, for example,

- by recounting anecdotes or constructing scenarios to show how the problem affects people:

  EXAMPLE  It’s late at night. The final’s tomorrow. (O’Malley, par. 1)

- by giving examples to make the problem less abstract:

  EXAMPLE  For example, research by Karpicke and Blunt (2011) published in Science found that testing was more effective than other, more traditional methods of studying both for comprehension and for analysis. (O’Malley, par. 4)

- by listing the negative effects of the problem:

  EXAMPLE  The latest data (Rose, 2011) show that orcas are more than three times as likely to die at any age in captivity as they are in the wild. This... is probably the result of several factors... Second, they are in artificial and often incompatible social groups. This contributes to chronic stress, which can depress the immune system and leave captive orcas susceptible to infections they would normally fight off in the wild... These factors boil down simply to this: Captivity kills orcas. (Rose, par. 2)

Consider also how the writer uses research studies and statistics to demonstrate the severity of the problem. Look for source material and notice whether the writer emphasizes the credibility of the research by including the expert’s name and credentials or by identifying the publication in which the study appeared at the beginning of the sentence in which the study is mentioned:

- Dr. X at University of Y has found that ...........

- A study published in Journal X shows that ............

  EXAMPLE  A 2006 study reported in the journal Psychological Science concluded that “taking repeated tests... leads to better... retention”... according to the study’s coauthors, Henry L. Roediger and Jeffrey Karpicke (ScienceWatch.com, 2008). (O’Malley, par. 4)

Alternatively, the writer may emphasize the data by putting the results of the study up front and identifying the source later in the sentence or in the parenthetical citation, as in the following:

- ........ percent of group X believe/work/struggle ............

  EXAMPLE  A 2006 study reported in the journal Psychological Science concluded that “taking repeated tests... leads to better... retention”... according to the study’s coauthors, Henry L. Roediger and Jeffrey Karpicke (ScienceWatch.com, 2008). (O’Malley, par. 4)
EXAMPLE

Very few captive orcas make it to midlife (approximately 30 years for males and 45 for females) and not one out of more than 200 held in captivity has ever come close to old age (60 for males, 80 for females) \((\text{Killer Whale})\). (Rose, par. 3)

In contexts where sources are not normally cited (such as newspapers and certain Web sites) or where the information is widely available, the writer may cite statistics without indicating a specific source:

> Research findings show that \(\ldots\ldots\ldots\) (source).

EXAMPLE

More than 100,000 people languish on the waitlist for kidneys, thousands of them dying before they receive a transplant. In 2012, almost 35,000 people joined the waitlist, while only 17,000 received transplants. (Posner, par. 1)

In academic writing the sources of such statistics must be cited.

A WELL-ARGUED SOLUTION

To argue convincingly for a solution to a problem, writers need to make clear exactly what is being proposed and offer supporting reasons and evidence showing that the proposed solution

- will help solve the problem;
- can be implemented;
- is worth the expense, time, and effort to do so.

Read first to find the proposed solution, usually declared in a thesis statement early in the essay. Typically, the thesis describes the proposed solution briefly and indicates how it would solve the problem, as in this example, which contrasts the problem’s disadvantages with the solution’s benefits:

So, not only do high-stakes exams discourage frequent study and undermine students’ performance, they also do long-term damage to students’ cognitive development. If professors gave brief exams at frequent intervals, students would be spurred to learn more and worry less. They would study more regularly, perform better on tests, and enhance their cognitive functioning. (O’Malley, par. 2)

Then check to see how the writer presents the supporting reasons and evidence, and consider how compelling the argument is likely to be, given the writer’s purpose and audience. The following sentence strategies and accompanying examples suggest the kinds of reasons and evidence proposal writers often employ to present their argument, as well as the writing strategies they represent:

- The proposed solution would reduce or eliminate a major cause of the problem and would (or could) have beneficial effects:

  As research shows, solution X would stop something harmful, change habits, reverse a decline, and would lead to/encourage \(\ldots\ldots\ldots\).
A review conducted by Yale University’s Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity suggested that ... a tax on sugared beverages would encourage consumers to switch to more healthful beverages, which would lead to reduced caloric intake and less weight gain. (Brownell and Frieden, par. 3)

A similar solution has worked elsewhere:

Solution X has worked for problem Y, so it could work for this problem as well.

Taxes on tobacco products have been highly effective in reducing consumption, and data indicate that higher prices also reduce soda consumption. (Brownell and Frieden, par. 3)

The necessary steps to put the solution into practice can be taken without excessive cost or inconvenience:

This solution is easy to implement: first do ___________ and then do ___________.

Ideally, a professor would give an in-class test or quiz after each unit. ... These exams should be given weekly or at least twice monthly. ... Exams should take no more than 15 or 20 minutes. (O’Malley, par. 3)

Stakeholders could come together behind the proposal ____________.

X and Y are working together on ____________.

Merlin Entertainments is pursuing the establishment of the world’s first bottlenose dolphin sanctuary with Whale and Dolphin Conservation (“WDCS,” 2009), a nonprofit environmental group. (Rose, par. 6)

**AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS**

*Read to see how the writer responds to readers’ likely objections and to the alternative solutions readers may prefer, for example,*

- by **conceding** (accepting) a valid objection and modifying the argument to accommodate it:
  
    To accommodate critic A’s concern, instead of doing ____________, you could do ____________.

- by **refuting** (arguing against) criticism—for example, by demonstrating that an objection is without merit or arguing that an alternative solution would be more costly or less likely to solve the problem than the proposed solution:
  
    Some object that the proposed solution would cost too much/cause too much disruption. However, when you take into consideration the fact that inaction would cost even more/cause more disruption than implementing solution B, you have to conclude that ____________.

    Although X and Y prefer approach A, solution B would be less expensive/easier to implement because ____________.
Here are a few examples showing how the proposals in this chapter refute objections or alternative solutions. Notice that proposal writers often introduce the refutation with a transition that indicates contrast, such as but, although, nevertheless, or however:

**EXAMINES**

This system might run afoul of NOTA, **but** if so, Congress could easily change the law to make it legal, as it has done before. (Posner, par. 12)

Some believe that . . . From the student’s perspective, **however**, . . . (O’Malley, par. 9)

Some argue that . . ., **but several** considerations support . . . The **first** is . . . The **second** consideration is . . . A **third** consideration is . . . (Brownell and Frieden, par. 5)

by **conceding** and then **refuting** (or the concession-refutation move):

- Yes, this solution might result in Problem X, **but** X can be overcome/avoided by . . .

**EXAMPLE**

If weekly exams still seem too time-consuming to some professors, their frequency could be reduced to every other week or their length to 5 or 10 minutes. In courses where multiple-choice exams are appropriate, several questions could be designed to take only a few minutes to answer. (O’Malley, par. 9)

When reading a proposal, consider whether the writer presents others’ views fairly and accurately and whether the writer’s rebuttal is likely to be convincing to readers. Pay special attention to the writer’s tone in responding to other views, noting any place the tone seems sarcastic or dismissive and considering whether such a tone would be effective given the writer’s purpose and audience.

**A CLEAR, LOGICAL ORGANIZATION**

*Look for cues or signposts that help readers identify the parts of the proposal.* Identify the topic and find the thesis, which in a proposal asserts the solution. Look also for topic sentences, particularly those that announce the parts of the proposal argument. Notice also any transitions and how they function. For example, all of the transitions in the following topic sentences (another, moreover, still, and furthermore) indicate items in a list. Other transitions you can expect in proposals signal causes or effects (because, as a result), exceptions (but), concessions (although), refutations (however), emphasis (more important), conclusions (then, therefore), and enumerations (first, second). Here are the beginnings of several topic sentences from O’Malley’s essay:

- The **main** reason professors should give frequent exams is that . . . (par. 4)
- **Another**, closely related argument in favor of multiple exams is that . . . (par. 6)
- **Moreover**, professors object to frequent exams because . . . (par. 10)
- **Still** another solution might be to . . . (par. 12)
- **Furthermore**, professors could . . . (par. 13)
Finally, if headings or visuals (such as flowcharts, graphs, tables, photographs, or cartoons) are included, determine how they contribute. Notice whether visuals are referred to in the text and whether they have titles or captions.

**Readings**

**Patrick O’Malley**  
*More Testing, More Learning*

FRUSTRATED BY what he calls “high-stakes exams,” Patrick O’Malley wrote the following proposal while he was a first-year college student. To conduct research into opposing viewpoints, O’Malley interviewed two professors, talked with several students, and read published research on testing. He cited his sources using APA style, as his instructor had requested.

As you read, consider the questions in the margin. Your instructor may ask you to post your answers or bring them to class. Also consider the following:

- Think about your own feelings about high-stakes exams. How well does the opening scenario resonate for you?
- Given O’Malley’s audience, how convincing do you think his use of sources is likely to be?

It’s late at night. The final’s tomorrow. You got a C on the midterm, so this one will make or break you. Will it be like the midterm? Did you study enough? Did you study the right things? It’s too late to drop the course. So what happens if you fail? No time to worry about that now—you’ve got a ton of notes to go over.

Although this last-minute anxiety about midterm and final exams is only too familiar to most college students, many professors may not realize how such major, infrequent, high-stakes exams work against the best interests of students both psychologically and cognitively. They cause unnecessary amounts of stress, placing too much importance on one or two days in the students’ entire term, judging ability on a single or dual performance. Reporting on recent research at Cornell University Medical School, Sian Beilock, a psychology professor at the University of Chicago, points out...
that “stressing about doing well on an important exam can backfire, leading students
to ‘choke under pressure’ or to score less well than they might otherwise score if the
stakes weren’t so high.” Moreover, Cornell’s research using fMRI brain scans shows that
“the pressures of a big test can reach beyond the exam itself—stunting the cognitive
systems that support the attention and memory skills every day” (Beilock, 2010).

So, not only do high-stakes exams discourage frequent study and undermine students’
performance, they also do long-term damage to students’ cognitive development.

If professors gave brief exams at frequent intervals, students would be spurred
to learn more and worry less. They would study more regularly, perform better on tests,
and enhance their cognitive functioning.

Ideally, a professor would give an in-class test or quiz after each unit, chapter,
or focus of study, depending on the type of class and course material. A physics class
might require a test on concepts after every chapter covered, while a history class
could necessitate quizzes covering certain time periods or major events. These exams
should be given weekly or at least twice monthly. Whenever possible, they should
consist of two or three essay questions rather than many multiple-choice or short-
answer questions. To preserve class time for lecture and discussion, exams should take
no more than 15 or 20 minutes.

The main reason professors should give frequent exams is that when they do and
when they provide feedback to students on how well they are doing, students learn more
in the course and perform better on major exams, projects, and papers. It makes sense
that in a challenging course containing a great deal of material, students will learn more
of it and put it to better use if they have to apply or “practice” it frequently on exams,
which also helps them find out how much they are learning and what they need to go
over again. A 2006 study reported in the journal Psychological Science concluded that
“taking repeated tests on material leads to better long-term retention than repeated
studying,” according to the study’s coauthors, Henry L. Roediger and Jeffrey Karpicke
(ScienceWatch.com, 2008). When asked what the impact of this breakthrough research
would be, they responded: “We hope that this research may be picked up in educational
circles as a way to improve educational practices, both for students in the classroom
and as a study strategy outside of class.” The new field of mind, brain, and education
research advocates the use of “retrieval testing.” For example, research by Karpicke and
Blunt (2011) published in *Science* found that testing was more effective than other, more traditional methods of studying both for comprehension and for analysis. Why retrieval testing works is not known. UCLA psychologist Robert Bjork speculates that it may be effective because “when we use our memories by retrieving things, we change our access” to that information. “What we recall,” therefore, “becomes more recallable in the future” (qtd. in Belluck, 2011).

Many students already recognize the value of frequent testing, but their reason is that they need the professor’s feedback. A Harvard study notes students’ “strong preference for frequent evaluation in a course.” Harvard students feel they learn least in courses that have “only a midterm and a final exam, with no other personal evaluation.” Students believe they learn most in courses with “many opportunities to see how they are doing” (Light, 1990, p. 32). In a review of a number of studies of student learning, Frederiksen (1984) reports that students who take weekly quizzes achieve higher scores on final exams than students who take only a midterm exam and that testing increases retention of material tested.

Another, closely related argument in favor of multiple exams is that they encourage students to improve their study habits. Greater frequency in test taking means greater frequency in studying for tests. Students prone to cramming will be required—or at least strongly motivated—to open their textbooks and notebooks more often, making them less likely to resort to long, kamikaze nights of studying for major exams. Since there is so much to be learned in the typical course, it makes sense that frequent, careful study and review are highly beneficial. But students need motivation to study regularly, and nothing works like an exam. If students had frequent exams in all their courses, they would have to schedule study time each week and would gradually develop a habit of frequent study. It might be argued that students are adults who have to learn how to manage their own lives, but learning history or physics is more complicated than learning to drive a car or balance a checkbook. Students need coaching and practice in learning. The right way to learn new material needs to become a habit, and I believe that frequent exams are key to developing good habits of study and learning. The Harvard study concludes that “tying regular evaluation to good course organization enables students to plan their work more than a few days in advance. If quizzes and homework are scheduled on specific days, students plan their work to capitalize on them” (Light, 1990, p. 33).
By encouraging regular study habits, frequent exams would also decrease anxiety by reducing the procrastination that produces anxiety. Students would benefit psychologically if they were not subjected to the emotional ups and downs caused by major exams, when after being virtually worry-free for weeks they are suddenly ready to check into the psychiatric ward. Researchers at the University of Vermont found a strong relationship among procrastination, anxiety, and achievement. Students who regularly put off studying for exams had continuing high anxiety and lower grades than students who procrastinated less. The researchers found that even “low” procrastinators did not study regularly and recommended that professors give frequent assignments and exams to reduce procrastination and increase achievement (Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986, pp. 393–394).

Research supports my proposed solution to the problem I have described. Common sense as well as my experience and that of many of my friends support it. Why, then, do so few professors give frequent brief exams?

Some believe that such exams take up too much of the limited class time available to cover the material in the course. Most courses meet 150 minutes a week—three times a week for 50 minutes each time. A 20-minute weekly exam might take 30 minutes to administer, and that is one-fifth of each week’s class time. From the student’s perspective, however, this time is well spent. Better learning and greater confidence about the course seem a good trade-off for another 30 minutes of lecture. Moreover, time lost to lecturing or discussion could easily be made up in students’ learning on their own through careful regular study for the weekly exams. If weekly exams still seem too time-consuming to some professors, their frequency could be reduced to every other week or their length to 5 or 10 minutes. In courses where multiple-choice exams are appropriate, several questions could be designed to take only a few minutes to answer.

Moreover, professors object to frequent exams because they take too much time to read and grade. In a 20-minute essay exam, a well-prepared student can easily write two pages. A relatively small class of 30 students might then produce 60 pages, no small amount of material to read each week. A large class of 100 or more students would produce an insurmountable pile of material. There are a number of responses to this objection. Again, professors could give exams every other week or make them very short. Instead of reading them closely, they could skim them quickly to see whether students understand an idea or can apply it to an unfamiliar problem; and instead of numerical
or letter grades, they could give a plus, check, or minus. Exams could be collected and responded to only every third or fourth week. Professors who have readers or teaching assistants could rely on them to grade or check exams. And the Scantron machine is always available for instant grading of multiple-choice exams. Finally, frequent exams could be given in place of a midterm exam or out-of-class essay assignment.

Since frequent exams seem to some professors to create too many problems, however, it is reasonable to consider alternative ways to achieve the same goals. One alternative solution is to implement a program that would improve study skills. While such a program might teach students how to study for exams, it cannot prevent procrastination or reduce “large test anxiety” by a substantial amount. One research team studying anxiety and test performance found that study skills training was not effective in reducing anxiety or improving performance (Dendato & Diener, 1986, p. 134). This team, which also reviewed other research that reached the same conclusion, did find that a combination of “cognitive/relaxation therapy” and study skills training was effective. This possible solution seems complicated, however, not to mention time-consuming and expensive. It seems much easier and more effective to change the cause of the bad habit rather than treat the habit itself. That is, it would make more sense to solve the problem at its root: the method of learning and evaluation.

Still another solution might be to provide frequent study questions for students to answer. These would no doubt be helpful in focusing students’ time studying, but students would probably not actually write out the answers unless they were required to. To get students to complete the questions in a timely way, professors would have to collect and check the answers. In that case, however, they might as well devote the time to grading an exam. Even if it asks the same questions, a scheduled exam is preferable to a set of study questions because it takes far less time to write in class, compared to the time students would devote to responding to questions at home. In-class exams also ensure that each student produces his or her own work.

Furthermore, professors could help students prepare for midterm and final exams by providing sets of questions from which the exam questions will be selected or announcing possible exam topics at the beginning of the course. This solution would
have the advantage of reducing students’ anxiety about learning every fact in the
textbook, and it would clarify the course goals, but it would not motivate students to
study carefully each new unit, concept, or text chapter in the course. I see this as a
way of complementing frequent exams, not as substituting for them.

From the evidence and from my talks with professors and students, I see frequent,
brief in-class exams as the only way to improve students’ study habits and learning,
reduce their anxiety and procrastination, and increase their satisfaction with college.
These exams are not a panacea, but only more parking spaces and a winning football
team would do as much to improve college life. Professors can’t do much about parking
or football, but they can give more frequent exams. Campus administrators should get
behind this effort, and professors should get together to consider giving exams more
frequently. It would make a difference.

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Naomi Rose

*Captivity Kills Orcas*

NAOMI ROSE is a scientist specializing in marine mammals at the Animal Welfare Institute in Washington, D.C. Author of numerous articles and book chapters for scientists and the general public, Rose regularly presents university lectures, serves on task forces, and testifies before Congress. She has also worked with the Merlin Entertainments Group to build sanctuaries for bottlenose dolphins. Her proposal here is based on research she conducted and reported in *Killer Controversy: Why Orcas Should No Longer Be Kept in Captivity* (2011) for the Humane Society International. The proposal was originally published by CNN.com in 2013, shortly after the release of the controversial documentary *Blackfish*, which depicts the devastating results—to both the animals and their trainers—of keeping wild orcas in captivity. We have converted Rose’s links to in-text citations and have provided a list of the links at the end of the selection.

As you read,

- Think about your own experience with marine parks, zoos, and similar attractions. How did the animals you observed seem to fare in captivity?
- Consider the treatment of animals trained for human entertainment. Given your own experience with animals (as a pet owner, for example), do you think some animals might enjoy performing? Why or why not?
The film *Blackfish* compellingly describes many of the reasons why keeping orcas in captivity is—and always has been—a bad idea (Magnolia). The main premise of the film is that these large, intelligent, social predators are dangerous to their trainers. But orcas are also directly harmed by being confined in concrete tanks and the science is growing to support this common sense conclusion.

The latest data (Rose, 2011) show that orcas are more than three times as likely to die at any age in captivity as they are in the wild. This translates into a shorter life span and is probably the result of several factors. First, orcas in captivity are out of shape; they are the equivalent of couch potatoes, as the largest orca tank in the world is less than one ten-thousandth of one percent (0.0001%) the size of the smallest home range of wild orcas. Second, they are in artificial and often incompatible social groups. This contributes to chronic stress, which can depress the immune system and leave captive orcas susceptible to infections they would normally fight off in the wild. Third, they often break their teeth chewing compulsively on metal gates. These broken teeth, even drilled and cleaned regularly by irrigation, are clear routes for bacteria to enter the bloodstream. These are the obvious factors; there are almost certainly others contributing to the elevated mortality seen in captivity. These factors boil down simply to this: Captivity kills orcas.

Yes, they may survive for years entertaining audiences, but eventually the stressors of captivity catch up to them. Very few captive orcas make it to midlife (approximately 30 years for males and 45 for females) and not one out of more than 200 held in captivity has ever come close to old age (60 for males, 80 for females) (*Killer Whale*). Most captive orcas die while they are still very young by wild orca standards.
There is a solution to both the trainer safety and orca welfare dilemmas facing marine theme parks around the world, including SeaWorld in the United States. These facilities can work with experts around the world to create sanctuaries where captive orcas can be rehabilitated and retired. These sanctuaries would be sea pens or netted-off bays or coves, in temperate to cold water natural habitat. They would offer the animals respite from performing and the constant exposure to a parade of strangers (an entirely unnatural situation for a species whose social groupings are based on family ties and stability—“strangers” essentially do not exist in orca society). Incompatible animals would not be forced to cohabit the same enclosures and family groups would be preserved. Show business trainers would no longer be necessary. Expert caretakers would continue to train retired whales for veterinary procedures, but would not get in the water and would remain at a safe distance (this is known in zoo parlance as “protected contact”). And the degree to which they interact directly with the whales would be each whale’s choice.

A fundamental premise of these sanctuaries, however, is that eventually they would empty. Breeding would not be allowed and captive orcas would no longer exist within the next few decades. Many wildlife sanctuaries, for circus, roadside zoo and backyard refugees, exist around the globe for animals such as big cats, elephants and chimpanzees. The business (usually nonprofit) model for these types of facilities is therefore well-established for terrestrial species and can be adapted for orcas. Wildlife sanctuaries are sometimes open to the public, although public interaction with the animals is usually minimized. A visitor’s center can offer education, real-time remote viewing of the animals, a gift shop, and in the case of whales and dolphins can even be a base for responsible whale watching if the sanctuary is in a suitable location for that activity. Marine theme parks do not need to lose out financially by phasing out orca shows; this is a transformative proposal, not a punitive one.

Creating a whale or dolphin sanctuary is not entirely theoretical. Merlin Entertainments is pursuing the establishment of the world’s first bottlenose dolphin sanctuary with Whale and Dolphin Conservation (“WDCS,” 2009), a nonprofit environmental group. Whale and Dolphin Conservation put together a team to determine the feasibility of such a concept and the company has now identified potential sites and is studying the infrastructure that will be needed to support a group of retired dolphins.

Before the tragic death of SeaWorld trainer Dawn Brancheau in 2010 (“SeaWorld”), the ethical arguments against keeping orcas in captivity came largely from the animal welfare/animal rights community, with the marine theme parks basically ignoring or dismissing their opponents as a vocal and out-of-touch minority. Now even staunch SeaWorld supporters are wondering if the time has come to think outside the (concrete) box.

Furthermore, the marine mammal science community, which has long maintained a neutral stance on the question of whether orcas are a suitable species for captive display, has finally recognized the need to engage. An informal panel discussion on captive orcas is scheduled at the 20th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals in December, the first time this topic will be openly addressed by the world’s largest marine mammal science society.

The first orca was put on public display in 1964. The debate on whether that was a good idea—for people or the whales—began the next day but didn’t really heat up until the 1970s. It raged mostly on the fringe for the next 25 years. It picked up steam in the mid-1990s, with the release of the film Free Willy and the rehabilitation of its orca star Keiko. And now, thanks in part to Blackfish, it is mainstream and consensus is building that orcas don’t belong in captivity. The marine theme parks can shift with the paradigm or be left behind—it is up to them.
Make connections: Thinking about corporate and consumer responsibility.

Rose argues that for-profit marine parks should eliminate orca shows and send their captive orcas to nonprofit sanctuaries. Think about the responsibilities corporations like SeaWorld owe to the animals they use to make a profit. Your instructor may ask you to post your thoughts to a class discussion board or blog, or to discuss them with other students in class. Use these questions to get started:

- What aspects of the problem seem most important: that businesses are profiting, that orcas and dolphins are highly intelligent mammals, that they are being taken out of their habitats and put into captivity, that the mammals are being trained to do tricks for our entertainment, or something else?
- Thinking about animals more generally, should business ventures such as zoos, scuba diving tours, fishing boats, race tracks, and circuses—or movies that feature animals—contribute in some way to ensure the well-being of the animals from which they profit?
- Reflect also on the consumer’s responsibilities in supporting businesses that profit from animals. The documentary Blackfish and Rose’s CNN.com proposal are addressed to the general public. What role, if any, do you think consumers should play?

Use the basic features.

A focused, well-defined problem: Convincing the audience

If the audience doesn’t care about the problem, or if people aren’t convinced it exists, any solution may seem too expensive or hard to implement. For this reason, proposal writers must frame the problem so that their audience will want a solution.

In his proposal, Patrick O’Malley begins by addressing his fellow students: “You got a C on the midterm . . .” (par. 1). But he knows that students are not his primary audience because the most they can do is help him pressure the real decision
makers— their instructors. To convince professors that the problem is important, O’Malley uses a couple of strategies:

- He addresses the intended audience:
  
  “many professors may not realize” (par. 2)

- He grabs the intended audience’s attention and enlists readers’ sympathy, using the opening scenario and rhetorical questions to remind professors what it was like to be a student:
  
  “It’s late at night. . . . Did you study enough? Did you study the right things?” (par. 1)

- He gains the audience’s respect by demonstrating that he is not just whining about a personal problem. He cites sources and establishes their reliability by identifying the researchers’ credentials and where the research was presented, and by showing that it is current:
  
  “Reporting on recent research at Cornell University Medical School, Sian Beilock, a psychology professor at the University of Chicago. . . .” (par. 2)

**ANALYZE & WRITE**

Write a paragraph analyzing the strategies Rose uses to frame the problem, establish its seriousness, and persuade her audience:

1. Based on what you can infer about the audience of CNN.com, who do you think Rose hopes to influence by publishing her proposal on that Web site? For example, does she appear to be addressing SeaWorld executives who could take action on her proposal, advertisers who could put pressure on decision makers, the general public who could boycott the theme park? What signs, if any, help you identify Rose’s intended audience and her purpose in addressing them?

2. Reread paragraphs 1–3. What strategies does Rose employ to convince the members of her audience that the problem is serious and they should care about it? Does Rose employ strategies like those O’Malley uses? If so, where? If not, what alternative strategies does Rose employ?

3. Considering Rose’s purpose and audience, how effective do you think her opening paragraphs were and what else might she have done to persuade her readers to take the problem seriously?

**A WELL-ARGUED SOLUTION: DEMONSTRATING FEASIBILITY**

To persuade readers that more testing would help students, O’Malley makes clear in his thesis statement exactly what he wants faculty to do and why:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If professors gave brief exams at frequent intervals, students would be spurred to learn more and worry less. They would study more regularly, perform better on tests, and enhance their cognitive functioning.</td>
<td>(par. 4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

He then cites scientific studies and news reports about scientific studies to persuade readers that the results he promises are realistic.
ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a paragraph analyzing Rose’s strategy to demonstrate that her proposal is feasible:

1. Reread paragraph 4, highlighting the sentences in which Rose spells out her proposal. What does she propose, and what does she claim the result would be if her proposal were implemented?

2. Now skim paragraphs 5–8. What writing strategies (such as cause-effect reasoning, comparison and contrast, process analysis, statistics, examples) does Rose use to support her claim?

3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the evidence Rose supplies. What other kinds of evidence would have made Rose’s proposal more convincing for you?

AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS:
ANTICIPATING NEGATIVE SIDE EFFECTS

Effective proposals respond to readers’ potential objections. O’Malley, for example, suggests ways faculty can reduce the negative side effects of offering more low-stakes quizzes by making exams shorter and simplifying grading systems (pars. 9–10).

ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a paragraph evaluating how Rose responds to objections to marine sanctuaries:

1. Skim paragraphs 5–8. What are some of the objections that Rose implies owners of facilities like SeaWorld would make?

2. How effective are Rose’s suggestions for mitigating the negative effects that retiring captive orcas to sanctuaries would have on marine parks? Why do you think she claims that “this is a transformative proposal, not a punitive one” (par. 5)? Why do you think she feels the needs to reassure her audience that her proposal is “not a punitive one”? Who would care if it was?

3. Now skim paragraphs 7–9. If you’re not familiar with the film Rose mentions, watch the Blackfish trailer. What sort of resistance does Rose seem to be anticipating from her audience? How effective is her response?

A CLEAR, LOGICAL ORGANIZATION: CREATING UNITY

It’s important, especially in complicated proposals, to provide cues to help the audience move from paragraph to paragraph without losing sight of the main point. O’Malley, for example, provides a forecast of what his essay will cover by repeating key terms or their synonyms from his thesis statement in each of his topic sentences:

If professors gave brief exams at frequent intervals, students would be spurred to learn more and worry less. They would study more regularly, perform better on tests, and enhance their cognitive functioning. (par. 2)

The main reason professors should give frequent exams is that when they do and when they provide feedback to students on how well they are doing, students learn more in the course and perform better on major exams. . . . (par. 4)
O’Malley also uses transitions—“The main reason” (par. 4), “Another, closely related argument reason” (par. 6)—to remind readers how each paragraph relates to the thesis and to the paragraphs that precede and follow it. Writers may also use the conclusion to unify their writing by coming full circle: revisiting an idea, example, or comparison at the end of the essay that they had introduced at the beginning.

**ANALYZE & WRITE**

Write a paragraph analyzing and evaluating how Rose cues readers and creates unity:

1. Reread the first and last paragraphs of Rose’s essay. What idea does Rose mention in both paragraphs? How does paragraph 9 close a circle started in paragraph 1?
2. Now skim paragraphs 2–8, highlighting Rose’s topic sentences and any transitional words or phrases she uses.
3. What else might Rose have done to unify her proposal and make it easier to follow?

**RESPOND**

Consider possible topics: Representing the voiceless.

In her proposal to free captive orcas, Rose speaks for creatures that cannot speak for themselves—at least, not in English. You could propose a solution to a problem faced by those who cannot effectively advocate for themselves, perhaps because they belong to another species, do not speak the language of power, lack access to the technologies they would need to be heard, or lack the credibility or status necessary to get a fair hearing. For example, consider writing a proposal that would reduce the number of abandoned pets on campus or in the community. Or propose ways to help elderly and infirm people in your community who need transportation or elementary-school kids who need after-school programs.

**Eric Posner**

**A Moral Market**

ERIC POSNER is the Kirkland and Ellis Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Chicago Law School. A prolific author, Posner has over a dozen books and more than a hundred legal articles and book chapters to his credit. As a public intellectual, he also maintains a blog (www.ericposner.com) and an active Twitter feed, as well as a regular column on *Slate.com*, where “A Moral Market” first appeared. Like Naomi Rose, Posner first composed a well-researched academic study on “altruism exchanges” before writing a shorter, more accessible version of the proposal he later published online for a general audience. (Posner’s legal article “Altruism Exchanges and the Kidney Shortage,” written in collaboration with law professors Stephen J. Choi and G. Mitu Gulati, is available online at chicagounbound.uchicago.edu.) We have converted Posner’s links to in-text citations and provided a list of links at the end of the selection. You also may have noticed that Chapter 5 of this book includes student writing on “A Moral Market” as well as other sources on the question of
whether to compensate kidney donors. Your instructor may invite you to read Chapter 5 or you may choose to do so on your own. The activities following this selection, however, do not require familiarity with the material in Chapter 5.

As you read,

• What might lead you to consider donating one of your kidneys, assuming you could do so without damaging your own health?

• It is currently against the law, as Posner points out, to buy and sell kidneys. Why do you imagine people object to a cash market for organs for transplantation?

1 Sunday is the thirtieth anniversary of the National Organ Transplant Act, but no one wants to celebrate. U.S. policy on organ transplants—especially as applied to kidneys—is a mess. More than 100,000 people languish on the waitlist for kidneys, thousands of them dying before they receive a transplant. In 2012, almost 35,000 people joined the waitlist, while only 17,000 received transplants.

2 Every year the waitlist lengths. NOTA virtually guaranteed this shortage by shutting down an incipient market in kidneys. Some economists have argued that the best way to encourage people to donate kidneys is to allow people to sell them. Since almost everyone has one unneeded kidney, and most people could use some money, a market would form. The estimated price—perhaps in the range of $100,000 per kidney—would be less than the cost of dialysis (more than $70,000 per patient per year [Costs]), even taking into account transplant surgery, and so the donor fee would be paid by insurers, including Medicare and Medicaid.

3 The law reflected a popular, inchoate repugnance at the idea of kidney-selling. Ethicists have tried to supply a philosophical argument. They argue that, if a market for kidneys existed, poor people would be taken advantage of; moreover, we should not treat body parts as “commodities.” Neither of these arguments is persuasive. A regulated market that required informed consent would eliminate the worst forms of exploitation and could ensure (as under current law) that kidneys were equally available to rich and poor. If poor people really can’t be trusted to make good decisions on their own behalf, then a simple solution is to ban poor people from selling their kidneys while allowing everyone else to do so. Nor is it clear why it’s more objectionable to sell a kidney than, say, one’s hair, blood plasma, egg cells, or sperm (sale of which is legal in most places within the United States).

4 But political opposition to selling kidneys will not go away, and so the question is how to increase the supply of kidneys without creating a market. Most proposals, including a recent open letter (Open Letter) by transplant experts and bioethicists to top government officials, try to thread the needle by giving donors implicit or in-kind compensation, such as travel expenses to the hospital, a tax credit, or priority on the waitlist if they ever need a kidney themselves. The proposals amount to attempts to evade moral objections by allowing limited, implicit compensation rather than a price in dollars.

5 But it is possible to be more imaginative. It may help to sort out the source of moral objections to a market in kidneys. One possible view is that people should not exchange their body parts for other things of value. Another is that people shouldn’t profit on the sale of their body parts. These ideas are different. To see why, imagine that Martha wants to donate her kidney to her daughter (this is legal, of course), but the daughter’s body would reject her mother’s kidney because the mother’s and daughter’s antigens are not matched (Transplant Rejection), or similar enough. Meanwhile, an unrelated person named Frank wants to donate his kidney to his son, but also cannot do so because of immunological incompatibility. But it happens that Martha matches with Frank’s son and Frank matches with Martha’s daughter. Could Martha donate her kidney to Frank’s son in exchange for Frank donating his kidney to Martha’s daughter? Under NOTA, the answer was (or was believed to be) no: An exchange of any kind was illegal. In a subsequent law, called the Charlie W. Norwood Living Organ Donation Act, Congress clarified that this type of exchange, called a “paired donation,” is
lawful. But only a few hundred transplants per year are arranged through paired donations because it is hard to find and arrange matches between strangers.

So while the Norwood Act did not solve the problem of undersupply of kidneys, it did reveal a key feature of public morality—that people don’t object to exchanges of kidneys. That means the feature of markets they must object to is not exchange but profit. A donor like Martha may give her kidney to a stranger like Frank, who wants it for his son, as long as what she gets in return is not money that she spends on herself, but something different—a benefit for another person, her daughter.

But if that’s true, we can do better than paired donations, as I argue in a paper (Posner) written with law professors Stephen Choi and Mitu Gulati. Suppose that Martha needs a kidney for her daughter but Frank’s son does not need a kidney. Martha proposes to Frank that if Frank donates his kidney to her daughter, Martha (or, actually, Martha’s insurer, which, remember, wants to avoid the high cost of dialysis) will make a $100,000 contribution to Frank’s favorite charity—say, Doctors Without Borders, which could use the money to combat Ebola in Liberia. Frank, of course, might say no; but there are likely other people who might be willing to take Martha up on the deal.

If you’re skeptical, you should be aware that every year a few hundred people donate their kidneys to strangers in return for nothing at all. There must certainly be additional people who would stop short of donating a kidney to help merely a single stranger but would be willing to do so to help hundreds or thousands of desperate people—who need medical care, disaster relief, or basic infrastructure like irrigation systems. There are also probably thousands of people who can’t help a friend or loved one who needs a kidney because of the lack of a match but who would be willing to donate their own kidney to a pool of organs if it would secure the matched kidney of someone else. And friends and relatives who can’t donate a kidney would surely donate money if doing so enabled them to secure a kidney for a friend or loved one. Frank might donate his kidney to Martha’s daughter for another reason. Suppose Frank’s son does not yet have end-stage renal disease but he does suffer from a medical condition that will probably lead to kidney shutdown decades from now. Frank worries that by the time his son needs a kidney, Frank will be too old to participate in a paired donation. So Frank agrees to donate a kidney to Martha’s daughter today in return for the right to have his son receive a kidney from someone else when the son needs it.

How would this work? Imagine that charities set up “altruism exchanges” that accept donations of various types—kidneys, money, whatever. The charities then do two things. First, they distribute kidneys and other resources to those who need them. Second, they give to donors “credits” that the donors can take back to the charity in the future. The credits can then be used to obtain kidneys for loved ones, cash distributions to causes that they care about, and other resources as long as they are allocated to people other than the donors themselves.

The charities would vastly strengthen people’s incentives to donate a kidney. If you donate your kidney at age 20, you would be given a credit, which you could then use—immediately or later in life—to obtain a charitable benefit for someone you care about or a cause that matters to you. It could be a kidney for your own child, or it could be housing, food, and water for victims of natural disasters. It could be for malaria control in Africa or girls’ education in Pakistan. The charity would also make it much easier to arrange kidney matches. Martha would no longer need to find someone who matched with her daughter. Instead, Martha would donate her kidney to a stranger via the altruism exchange, and then could use her credit when the first match for her daughter came along, which could be immediately or years later.

The system would increase the supply of kidneys by giving donors the power to help more than a single stranger. Everyone would get to be a major philanthropist, and the more people who participated, the larger the benefits. At the same time, the profit motive would be avoided. All exchanges must be altruistically motivated. The system would not necessarily help everyone. People who don’t have generous friends and relatives may still find themselves on the wait list for transplants. But those people would still be better off than under the current system because the larger supply of kidneys—donated by people who exchanged their kidneys for other types of charitable benefits financed by people who donated money—would shorten the waitlist considerably.

This system might run afoul of NOTA, but if so, Congress could easily change the law to make it legal, as it has done before. Congress would simply need to provide that anyone may donate a kidney and receive in exchange the right to allocate future charitable benefits
through a government-approved charity. The dollar value of those benefits could be based on the avoided costs of dialysis. Donors would be forbidden to receive cash or goods. So people couldn’t donate kidneys to raise money to buy a Tesla Model D. They could donate kidneys only to help others.

Make connections: Compromising on a solution.

Because he is determined to find a pragmatic solution—one that will garner widespread public support—Posner seems willing to forge a compromise. That is, although he appears to support the idea of a market in kidneys, he understands that “political opposition to selling kidneys will not go away, and so the question is how to increase the supply of kidneys without creating a market” (par. 4). Think about some conditions under which compromising is the right thing to do. Your instructor may ask you to post your thoughts to a class discussion board or blog, or to discuss them with other students in class. Use these questions to get started:

- What makes this problem so important? How does Posner try to inspire his audience to join with him in the search for a solution?
- How does Posner present his solution as a compromise? What is being compromised by those who support a kidney market and by those who oppose it?
- How does Posner try to convince his readers that this solution would not require them to compromise their moral values? How convincing do you think his argument is likely to be?

Use the basic features.

A FOCUSED, WELL-DEFINED PROBLEM: FRAMING THE PROBLEM

Every proposal begins with a problem. What writers say about the problem and how much space they devote to it depends on what they assume their audience already knows and thinks about it. Savvy proposal writers try to present even familiar problems in a way that reminds readers of the problem’s seriousness and prepares them for the writer’s preferred solution. They often frame the problem by focusing attention on values they share with their audience. For example, knowing that professors care about learning, Patrick O’Malley says he wants his audience of professors to “realize” that their current exam policy impairs learning and has a detrimental effect on “students’ cognitive development” (par. 2).
CHAPTER 7  Proposing a Solution

ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a paragraph analyzing how Posner frames the problem:

1. Given his Slate.com audience, why do you think Posner opens his proposal by pointing out that it is the anniversary of the National Organ Transplant Act (NOTA)?

2. Skim paragraphs 1–3. What kinds of information does Posner include here, and how does this information help him frame the problem around shared values?

3. Consider how, in these paragraphs, Posner introduces the debate between economists and ethicists over what to do about the lack of organs for transplantation. How does setting up these opposing views help Posner frame the problem in a way that prepares his audience for the solution he proposes?

A WELL-ARGUED SOLUTION: MAKING A PERSUASIVE ARGUMENT

To be persuasive, a proposal must demonstrate to the audience that the proposed solution would work—that it would solve or at least lessen the problem—and that it could be implemented without too much effort, time, and cost. Proposals attempting to solve a highly controversial problem, like whether to pay people to donate their kidneys, must also meet a feasibility test. That is, the solution has to be seen as realistic. If your solution (or something like it) has never been implemented, then you might use sentence strategies like these to describe one or more hypothetical scenarios to show the audience the result of implementing your solution:

- Suppose X does ______________.
- If solution X were implemented, then ______________ would result.

EXAMPLE

Ideally, a professor would give an in-class test. . . . A physics class might require a test on concepts . . . while a history class could necessitate. . . . Exams should be given weekly. . . . (O’Malley, par. 3)

If students had frequent exams in all their courses, they would have to schedule study time each week and would gradually develop a habit of frequent study. (O’Malley, par. 6)

Note that sometimes these hypotheticals use an “if-then” construction, as in the last example above. Scenarios work like examples by giving the audience a graphic image of what could happen. But, like an example or anecdote, a scenario will not be effective unless the audience sees it as a credible, realistic possibility.

ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a paragraph or two analyzing Posner’s argument for his proposed solution:

1. Skim paragraphs 9–11. How does Posner try to convince his audience that his proposed solution can be implemented and that it would indeed help solve the problem?

2. Now reread paragraphs 5–8 and 10. Notice the Martha-and-Frank scenarios and the sentence strategies Posner uses. How effective do you think these scenarios are likely to be in convincing Posner’s Slate audience that his solution is workable?
In addition to arguing for the proposed solution, proposal writers also need to show that their solution is preferable to alternatives their readers might favor. Patrick O’Malley, for example, identifies several alternative solutions his intended audience (instructors) might bring up, including implementing programs to improve students’ study skills, giving students study questions, and handing out possible exam topics to help students prepare. He concedes the benefits of some of these solutions, but he also points out their shortcomings, showing how his solution is better.

Write a paragraph or two analyzing how Posner attempts to show that his solution is the best option:

1. Skim paragraphs 2–5, in which Posner reviews three alternative solutions and the objections raised to each of them:
   - the economists’ proposed solution (pars. 2–3);
   - the solution offered by “transplant experts and bioethicists” (par. 4);
   - the “paired donation” solution (par. 5).

   What, if anything, do the objections to all three proposed solutions have in common?

2. Choose one of these alternative solutions to examine closely, identifying the solution being proposed and the objections that have been raised to it.

3. Think about Posner’s strategy to “sort out the source of moral objections to a market in kidneys” (par. 5) before proposing his own solution. How does Posner’s “altruism exchange” (par. 9) emerge from his analysis of objections to the other solutions? How effective do you think his solution would be in avoiding the same objections?

Writers use a variety of strategies to make a proposal clear and easy to follow. One common strategy is to use a rhetorical question (a question to which no answer is expected) to make a transition from one topic to the next. For example, O’Malley uses a rhetorical question at the end of paragraph 8—“Why, then, do so few professors give frequent brief exams?”—as a transition to the section dealing with likely objections. The two paragraphs following the rhetorical question begin with an answer:

   “Some believe that such exams . . .” (par. 9)

   “Moreover, professors object to frequent exams because . . .” (par 10)

Another strategy is to use transitions. O’Malley, for example, uses transitions such as moreover (par. 10), still another (12), and furthermore (13) in the opening sentence of a paragraph to connect it to the preceding one. Notice the different functions transitions have:
Consider possible topics: Moving the masses.

Although Posner proposes a change to law, ultimately he hopes to change the way large numbers of people behave. Think about problems that cannot be solved unless many people change what they are doing. Many such problems can be referred to collectively as the “tragedy of the commons”: resources that no one owns—like air, water, and public spaces—are neglected, damaged, or recklessly depleted. For example, consider a proposal that would encourage dorm residents to change sloppy behavior in common areas, that would encourage those drinking communal coffee to help clean up or make the next pot, or that would discourage residents from dropping garbage in public parks or playgrounds. The challenge to solving such problems is, of course, that you’re unlikely to change public behavior just by making a good argument. Like Posner, you may have to propose a policy change or come up with an incentive, a process that often starts with figuring out why people aren’t already doing what you want them to do.

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Brownell and Frieden  Ounces of Prevention

THOMAS R. FRIEDEN, a physician specializing in public health, is the director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and served for several years as the health commissioner for the City of New York.

Brownell and Frieden’s proposal “Ounces of Prevention—The Public Policy Case for Taxes on Sugared Beverages” was originally published in 2009 in the highly respected New England Journal of Medicine, which calls itself “the most widely read, cited, and influential general medical periodical in the world.” In fact, research published there is often referred to widely throughout the media.

As you read, consider the effect that Brownell and Frieden’s use of graphs and formal citation of sources has on their credibility:

• How do the graphs help establish the seriousness of the problem? How do they also help demonstrate the feasibility of the solution the authors propose?
• How do the citations help persuade you to accept the authors’ solution? What effect might they have had on their original readers? (Note that the authors use neither of the two citation styles covered in Part 4 of this text. Instead, they use one common to medical journals and publications of the U.S. National Library of Medicine.)

Sugar, rum, and tobacco are commodities which are nowhere necessaries of life, which are become objects of almost universal consumption, and which are therefore extremely proper subjects of taxation.

— Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, 1776

The obesity epidemic has inspired calls for public health measures to prevent diet-related diseases. One controversial idea is now the subject of public debate: food taxes. Forty states already have small taxes on sugared beverages and snack foods, but in the past year, Maine and New York have proposed large taxes on sugared beverages, and similar discussions have begun in other states. The size of the taxes, their potential for generating revenue and reducing consumption, and vigorous opposition by the beverage industry have resulted in substantial controversy. Because excess consumption of unhealthful foods underlies many leading causes of death, food taxes at local, state, and national levels are likely to remain part of political and public health discourse.

Sugar-sweetened beverages (soda sweetened with sugar, corn syrup, or other caloric sweeteners and other carbonated and uncarbonated drinks, such as sports and energy drinks) may be the single largest driver of the obesity epidemic. A recent meta-analysis found that the intake of sugared beverages is associated with increased body weight, poor nutrition, and displacement of more healthful beverages; increasing consumption increases risk for obesity and diabetes; the strongest effects are seen in studies with the best methods (e.g., longitudinal and interventional vs. correlational studies);* and interventional studies show that reduced intake of soft drinks improves health.1 Studies that do not support a relationship between consumption of sugared beverages and health outcomes tend to be conducted by authors supported by the beverage industry.2 Sugared beverages are marketed extensively to children and adolescents, and in the mid-1990s, children’s intake of sugared beverages surpassed that of milk. In the past decade, per capita intake of calories

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*In a longitudinal study, researchers observe changes taking place over a long period of time; in an interventional study, investigators give research subjects a measured amount of whatever is being studied and note its effects; and in a correlational study, researchers examine statistics to see if two or more variables have a mathematically significant similarity. [Editor’s note]
from sugar-sweetened beverages has increased by nearly 30 percent (see bar graph Daily Caloric Intake from Sugar-Sweetened Drinks in the United States); beverages now account for 10 to 15 percent of the calories consumed by children and adolescents. For each extra can or glass of sugared beverage consumed per day, the likelihood of a child’s becoming obese increases by 60 percent. Taxes on tobacco products have been highly effective in reducing consumption, and data indicate that higher prices also reduce soda consumption. A review conducted by Yale University’s Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity suggested that for every 10 percent increase in price, consumption decreases by 7.8 percent. An industry trade publication reported even larger reductions: as prices of carbonated soft drinks increased by 6.8 percent, sales dropped by 7.8 percent, and as Coca-Cola prices increased by 12 percent, sales dropped by 14.6 percent. Such studies—and the economic principles that support their findings—suggest that a tax on sugared beverages would encourage consumers to switch to more healthful beverages, which would lead to reduced caloric intake and less weight gain.

The increasing affordability of soda—and the decreasing affordability of fresh fruits and vegetables (see line graph)—probably contributes to the rise in obesity in the United States. In 2008, a group of child and health care advocates in New York proposed a one-penny-per-ounce excise tax on sugared beverages, which would be expected to reduce consumption by 13 percent—about two servings per week per person. Even if one quarter of the calories consumed from sugared beverages are replaced by other food, the decrease in consumption would lead to an estimated reduction of 8,000 calories per person per year—slightly more than 2 pounds each year for the average person. Such a reduction in caloric consumption would be expected to substantially reduce the risk of obesity and diabetes.
and may also reduce the risk of heart disease and other conditions.

Some argue that government should not interfere in the market and that products and prices will change as consumers demand more healthful food, but several considerations support government action. The first is externality—costs to parties not directly involved in a transaction. The contribution of unhealthful diets to health care costs is already high and is increasing—an estimated $79 billion is spent annually for overweight and obesity alone—and approximately half of these costs are paid by Medicare and Medicaid, at taxpayers’ expense. Diet-related diseases also cost society in terms of decreased work productivity, increased absenteeism, poorer school performance, and reduced fitness on the part of military recruits, among other negative effects. The second consideration is information asymmetry between the parties to a transaction. In the case of sugared beverages, marketers commonly make health claims (e.g., that such beverages provide energy or vitamins) and use techniques that exploit the cognitive vulnerabilities of young children, who often cannot distinguish a television program from an advertisement. A third consideration is revenue generation, which can further increase the societal benefits of a tax on soft drinks. A penny-per-ounce excise tax would raise an estimated $1.2 billion in New York State alone. In times of economic hardship, taxes that both generate this much revenue and promote health are better options than revenue initiatives that may have adverse effects.

Objections have certainly been raised: that such a tax would be regressive, that food taxes are not comparable to tobacco or alcohol taxes because people must eat to survive, that it is unfair to single out one type of food for taxation, and that the tax will not solve the obesity problem. But the poor are disproportionately affected by diet-related diseases and would derive the greatest benefit from reduced consumption; sugared beverages are not necessary for survival; Americans consume about 250 to 300 more calories daily today than they did several decades ago, and nearly half this increase is accounted for by consumption of sugared beverages; and though no single intervention will solve the obesity problem, that is hardly a reason to take no action.

The full impact of public policies becomes apparent only after they take effect. We can estimate changes in sugared-drink consumption that would be prompted by a tax, but accompanying changes in the consumption of other foods or beverages are more difficult to predict. One question is whether the proportions of calories consumed in liquid and solid foods would change. And shifts among beverages would have different effects depending on whether consumers substituted water, milk, diet drinks, or equivalent generic brands of sugared drinks.

Effects will also vary depending on whether the tax is designed to reduce consumption, generate revenue, or both; the size of the tax; whether the revenue is earmarked for programs related to nutrition and health; and where in the production and distribution chain the tax is applied. Given the heavy consumption of sugared beverages, even small taxes will generate substantial revenue, but only heftier taxes will significantly reduce consumption. Sales taxes are the most common form of food tax, but because they are levied as a percentage of the retail price, they encourage the purchase of less-expensive brands or larger containers. Excise taxes structured as a fixed cost per ounce provide an incentive to buy less and hence would be much more effective in reducing consumption and improving health. In addition, manufacturers generally pass the cost of an excise tax along to their customers, including it in the price consumers see when they are making their selection, whereas sales taxes are seen only at the cash register.

Although a tax on sugared beverages would have health benefits regardless of how the revenue was used, the popularity of such a proposal increases greatly if revenues are used for programs to prevent childhood obesity, such as media campaigns, facilities and programs for physical activity, and healthier food in schools. Poll results show that support of a tax on sugared beverages ranges from 37 to 72 percent; a poll of New York residents found that 52 percent supported a “soda tax,” but the number rose to 72 percent when respondents were told that the revenue would be used for obesity prevention. Perhaps the most defensible approach is to use revenue to subsidize the purchase of healthful foods. The public would then see a relationship between tax and benefit, and
any regressive effects would be counteracted by the reduced costs of healthful food.

A penny-per-ounce excise tax could reduce consumption of sugared beverages by more than 10 percent. It is difficult to imagine producing behavior change of this magnitude through education alone, even if government devoted massive resources to the task. In contrast, a sales tax on sugared drinks would generate considerable revenue, and as with the tax on tobacco, it could become a key tool in efforts to improve health.

References

Make connections: Government problem solving.

Brownell and Frieden explicitly argue in favor of the federal and/or state government taking action to address public health problems such as those related to obesity and smoking. Imposing taxes is one thing government can do. Another action is to require that foods be labeled with accurate nutritional information.

Write a few paragraphs considering the right and responsibility of government to solve public health problems. Your instructor may ask you to post your thoughts on a class discussion board or to discuss them with other students in class. Use these questions to get started:

- Consider what actions government could take to address public health problems and whether government should take such actions.
- Think about how you would respond to Brownell and Frieden’s argument that “though no single intervention will solve the obesity problem, that is hardly a reason to take no action” (par. 6).

Use the basic features.

A FOCUSED, WELL-DEFINED PROBLEM: CITING RESEARCH STUDIES

Brownell and Frieden identify the problem for which they are proposing a solution in broad terms as the “obesity epidemic” (par. 1). However, they frame the issue by focusing on “sugar-sweetened beverages” (par. 2). To support a causal connection between consuming sugar-sweetened beverages and obesity, they cite research studies.
ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a paragraph or two analyzing more closely how Brownell and Frieden use research to establish a causal connection between sweetened drinks and obesity:

1. Skim paragraph 3 to identify the findings Brownell and Frieden summarize there. Note that these are the findings of a “meta-analysis,” which compares different studies researching the same question.

2. Consider how effectively, if at all, these findings support Brownell and Frieden’s argument about a cause-effect relationship between consuming sugar-sweetened beverages and obesity.

3. Think about what kinds of studies were done and consider how Brownell and Frieden rate these different kinds of studies. Why might it be helpful for Brownell and Frieden’s readers from the New England Journal of Medicine to know the kinds of studies that have been used and which ones employ “the best methods” and get “the strongest effects”?

A WELL-ARGUED SOLUTION: USING COMPARISON-CONTRAST AND CLASSIFICATION

Like O’Malley, Brownell and Frieden use their title to announce the solution they are proposing: the imposition of a tax on certain beverages. They use writing strategies such as comparison-contrast and classification to support their claims. Even the epigraph quoting Adam Smith, the father of free market economics, is a kind of comparison in that it implicitly associates a figure linked to conservative politics with their proposal, which would generally be considered liberal.

ANALYZE & WRITE

Write a few paragraphs analyzing and evaluating how Brownell and Frieden use comparison and contrast as well as classification strategies to support their proposal:

1. Reread paragraphs 3–4. How do Brownell and Frieden use comparison and contrast there to argue for a tax on sweetened beverages?

2. Reread paragraphs 8–9. How do they use classification there?

3. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of using these two strategies to support their proposed solution. How are these two writing strategies effective ways of supporting their proposal? What other strategies might work better?

AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS: HANDLING OBJECTIONS

Proposal writers usually try to anticipate readers’ objections and questions and concede or refute them. How writers handle objections and questions affects their credibility with readers, who usually expect writers to be respectful of other points of view and to take criticism seriously while still arguing assertively for their solution. Brownell and Frieden anticipate and respond to five objections they would expect their readers to raise.
**ANALYZE & WRITE**

Write a couple of paragraphs analyzing and evaluating how Brownell and Frieden respond to objections:

1. Reread paragraph 5. First, summarize the objection and their argument refuting it. Then evaluate their response: How effective is their refutation likely to be with their readers?

2. Reread paragraph 6, in which the authors respond to a number of objections. What cues do they provide to help you follow their argument?

3. Given their purpose and audience, why do you think Brownell and Frieden focus so much attention on the first objection and group the other objections together in a single paragraph?

4. How would you describe the tone of Brownell and Frieden’s refutation? How is their credibility with readers likely to be affected by the way they respond to objections?

**A CLEAR, LOGICAL ORGANIZATION: USING GRAPHS**

Brownell and Frieden include two graphs in their proposal—a bar graph and a line graph. Bar graphs and line graphs can be used to display numerical and statistical information at different points in time and also to compare groups or data sets by using different color bars or lines.

**ANALYZE & WRITE**

Write a paragraph analyzing and evaluating how well Brownell and Frieden integrate these graphs:

1. Highlight the sentences in paragraphs 2 and 4 in which Brownell and Frieden introduce each graph. How else do they integrate the graphs into their argument?

2. Consider the sections in which these graphs appear. How might the graphs help demarcate sections and move readers from one section to the next?

3. Look closely at the graphs themselves to see how the information is presented. What do the graphs contribute? Given Brownell and Frieden’s purpose and audience, why do you think they chose to include these graphs?

**RESPOND**

Consider possible topics: Improving a group to which you belong.

Consider making a proposal to improve the operation of an organization, a business, or a club to which you belong. For example, you might propose that your college keep administrative offices open in the evenings or on weekends to accommodate working students, or that a child-care center be opened for students who are parents of young children. For a business, you might propose a system to handle customer complaints or a fairer way for employees to arrange their schedules. If you belong to a club that has a problem with the collection of dues, you might propose a new collection system or suggest alternative ways of raising money.
Proposals occur regularly in genres and media besides the college essay. For example, proposals to obtain grant funding generally appear as reports, with sections for an executive summary, background, project narrative, timeline, and budget. They may be delivered electronically with links in a table of contents, so readers can click to read each section. Patrick O’Malley thought his target audience (professors) would be more likely to replace a few high-stakes exams with a greater number of lower-stakes quizzes and tests if he remixed his essay as a presentation that laid out the evidence clearly. (A remix takes all or part of a piece in one genre to create a text in another genre or for another purpose or audience.) He planned to deliver it face to face at a faculty meeting and then post his presentation slides online.

In the next section of this chapter, we ask you to craft your own proposal. After composing it as an essay, consider remixing it by presenting it (or a portion of it) in another genre or medium, or using it as part of text with a different purpose or audience.

**CONSIDER YOUR RHETORICAL SITUATION**

**Purpose:** The purpose of your proposal is to convince your readers that a serious problem exists and persuade them that your solution is feasible. If you remix your proposal, *which genre or medium would best allow you to make a compelling case for your proposed solution?*

**Audience:** The audience for your proposal is your instructor and other students in your class. *What audience will be most affected by the problem you identify or will be able to take action on your proposal?*

**Genre and medium:** The genre of your proposal was the essay; the medium was textual, delivered either in print or online. If your remix you proposal, *what genre or medium would best help you convince your target audience?*
The Writing Assignment

Write an essay proposing a solution to a problem. Choose a problem faced by a community or group to which you belong, and address your proposal to one or more members of the group or to outsiders who might help solve the problem.

This Guide to Writing is designed to help you compose your own proposal and apply what you have learned from reading other essays in the same genre. This Starting Points chart will help you find answers to questions you might have about composing a proposal. Use the chart to find the guidance you need, when you need it.

The Writing Assignment

A Focused, Well-Defined Problem

How do I come up with a problem to write about?

- Assess the genre’s basic features: A focused, well-defined problem. (pp. 285–87)
- Consider possible topics: Representing the voiceless. (p. 302)
- Consider possible topics: Moving the masses. (p. 308)
- Consider possible topics: Improving a group to which you belong. (p. 314)
- Choose a problem for which you can propose a solution. (p. 318)

How can I best define the problem for my readers?

- A Focused, Well-Defined Problem: Convincing the Audience (pp. 299–300)
- A Focused, Well-Defined Problem: Framing the Problem (pp. 305–6)
- A Focused, Well-Defined Problem: Citing Research Studies (pp. 312–13)
- Frame the problem for your readers. (pp. 319–20)
- Test Your Choice: Defining the Problem (p. 321)
- Assess how the problem has been framed, and reframe it for your readers. (pp. 321–22)
- A Troubleshooting Guide: A Focused, Well-Defined Problem (p. 329)
A Well-Argued Solution

- Assess the genre's basic features: A well-argued solution. (pp. 287–88)
- A Well-Argued Solution: Demonstrating Feasibility (pp. 300–301)
- A Well-Argued Solution: Making a Persuasive Argument (p. 306)
- A Well-Argued Solution: Using Comparison-Contrast and Classification (p. 313)
- Develop a possible solution. (pp. 322–23)
- Research your proposal. (p. 324)

How do I construct an argument supporting my solution?

- Assess the genre's basic features: A well-argued solution. (pp. 287–88)
- A Well-Argued Solution: Demonstrating Feasibility (pp. 300–301)
- Explain your solution. (p. 323)
- Research your proposal. (p. 324)
- A Troubleshooting Guide: A Well-Argued Solution (p. 329)

An Effective Response to Objections and Alternative Solutions

How do I respond to possible objections and alternative solutions?

- Assess the genre's basic features: An effective response to objections and alternative solutions. (pp. 288–89)
- An Effective Response to Objections and Alternative Solutions: Anticipating Negative Side Effects (p. 301)
- An Effective Response to Objections and Alternative Solutions: Finding a Way to Bridge Differences (p. 307)
- An Effective Response to Objections and Alternative Solutions: Handling Objections (p. 313)
- Develop a response to objections or alternative solutions. (pp. 324–25)

How can I help my readers follow my argument?

- Assess the genre's basic features: A clear, logical organization. (pp. 289–90)
- A Clear, Logical Organization: Creating Unity (pp. 301–2)
- A Clear, Logical Organization: Creating Coherence (pp. 307–8)
- A Clear, Logical Organization: Using Graphs (p. 314)
- Create an outline that will organize your proposal effectively for your readers. (p. 325)
Writing a Draft: Invention, Research, Planning, and Composing

The activities in this section will help you choose and research a problem as well as develop and organize an argument for your proposed solution. Your writing in response to many of these activities can be used in a rough draft that you will be able to improve after receiving feedback from your classmates and instructor. Do the activities in any order that makes sense to you (and your instructor), and return to them as needed as you revise.

Choose a problem for which you can propose a solution.

When choosing a problem, keep in mind that it must be
- important to you and of concern to your readers;
- solvable, at least in part;
- one that you can research sufficiently in the time you have.

Choosing a problem affecting a group to which you belong (for example, as a classmate, teammate, participant in an online game site, or garage band member) or a place at which you have worked (a coffee shop, community pool, or radio station) gives you an advantage: You can write as an expert. You know the history of the problem, you know who to interview, and perhaps you have already thought about possible solutions. Moreover, you know who to address and how to persuade that audience to take action on your proposed solution.

If you already have a problem and possible solution(s) in mind, skip to Frame the Problem for Your Readers on the facing page. If you need to find a problem, consider the possible topics following the readings and the suggestions here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Possible Solutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can’t get into required courses</td>
<td>Make them large lecture courses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>No safe place for children to play</td>
<td>Make them online or hybrid courses.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Give priority to majors.</td>
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<td>Work</td>
<td>Inadequate training for new staff</td>
<td>Use school yards for after-school sports.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Get high school students or senior citizens to tutor kids.</td>
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<td>Make pocket parks for neighborhood play.</td>
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<td>Offer programs for kids at branch libraries.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Make a training video or Web site.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Assign experienced workers to mentor trainees (for bonus pay).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Frame the problem for your readers.

Once you have made a preliminary choice of a problem, consider what you know about it, what research will help you explore what others think about it, and how you can interest your readers in solving it. Then determine how you can frame or reframe it in a way that appeals to readers’ values and concerns. Use the questions and sentence strategies that follow as a jumping-off point; you can make them your own as you revise later.

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**WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?**

What do I already know about the problem?

**BRAINSTORM a list:** Spend 10 minutes listing everything you know about the problem. Write quickly, leaving judgment aside for the moment. After the 10 minutes are up, you can review your list and highlight or star the most promising information.

**Use CUBING:** Probe the problem from a variety of perspectives:

- Describe the problem.
- Compare the problem to other, similar problems, or contrast it with other, related problems.
- Connect the problem to other problems in your experience.
- Analyze the problem to identify its parts, its causes, or its effects.
- Apply the problem to a real-life situation.

**FREEWRITE** (write without stopping) for 5 or 10 minutes about the problem. Don’t stop to reflect or consider; if you hit a roadblock, just keep coming back to the problem. At the end of the specified time, review your writing and highlight or underline promising ideas.

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**WHY SHOULD READERS CARE?**

How can I convince readers the problem is real and deserves attention?

**Give an EXAMPLE to make the problem specific:**

- Recently, __________ has been in the news/in movies/a political issue because of [name event].

**EXAMPLE**
The film *Blackfish* compellingly describes many of the reasons why keeping orcas in captivity is—and always has been—a bad idea. (Rose, par. 1)

Sunday is the thirtieth anniversary of the National Organ Transplant Act, but no one wants to celebrate. U.S. policy on organ transplants—especially as applied to kidneys—is a mess. (Posner, par. 1)

**Use a SCENARIO or ANECDOTE to dramatize the problem:**

**EXAMPLE**
It’s late at night. The final’s tomorrow. You got a C on the midterm, so this one will make or break you. (O’Malley, par. 1)

**Cite STATISTICS to show the severity of the problem:**

- It has recently been reported that __________ percent of group A are [specify problem].

(continued)
What do others think about the problem?

Conduct surveys:
- Talk to a variety of students at your school (your friends and others).
- Discuss the problem with neighbors or survey shoppers at a local mall.
- Discuss the problem with coworkers or people who work at similar jobs.

Conduct interviews:
- Interview faculty experts.
- Discuss the issue with businesspeople in the community.
- Interview local officials (members of the city council, the fire chief, the local labor union representative).

What do most of my potential readers already think about the problem?
- Many complain about __________but do nothing because solving it seems too hard/too costly.
- Some think __________is someone else’s responsibility/not that big of a problem.
- Others see __________as a matter of fairness/human decency.

Who suffers from the problem?
- Studies have shown that __________mostly affects groups A, B, and C.

Example: These . . . predators are dangerous to their trainers. But orcas are also directly harmed by being confined in concrete tanks. . . . (Rose, par. 1)

Example: More than 100,000 people languish on the waitlist for kidneys, thousands of them dying before they receive a transplant. In 2012, almost 35,000 people joined the waitlist, while only 17,000 received transplants. Every year the waitlist lengthens. NOTA virtually guaranteed this shortage by shutting down an incipient market in kidneys. (Posner, pars. 1–2)

Describe the problem’s negative consequences:
- According to Professor X, group A is suffering as a result of __________ [insert quote from expert].

Example: Sian Beilock, a psychology professor at the University of Chicago, points out that “stressing about doing well on an important exam can backfire, leading students to ‘choke under pressure’ or to score less well than they might otherwise score if the stakes weren’t so high.” (O’Malley, par. 2)

Why should readers care about solving the problem?
- We’re all in this together. __________is not a win-lose proposition. If group A loses, we all lose.
- If we don’t try to solve __________, no one else will.
- Doing nothing will only make __________worse.
- We have a moral responsibility to do something about __________.
Defining the Problem
Ask two or three other students to help you develop your plan to frame the problem.

Presenters. Briefly explain how you are thinking of framing or reframing the problem for your audience. Use the following language as a model for presenting your problem, or use language of your own.

- I plan to define the problem not as __________ but as __________ /in terms of __________ because I think my readers will share my concerns/values/priorities.

Listeners. Tell the presenter what response this way of framing the problem elicits from you and why. You may also explain how you think other readers might respond. Use the following language as a model for structuring your response, or use your own words.

- I’m also/not concerned about X because __________, __________, and __________.
- I agree/disagree that __________ because __________.

Assess how the problem has been framed, and reframe it for your readers.

Once you have a good idea of what you and your readers think about the problem, consider how others have framed the problem and how you might be able to reframe it for your readers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW HAS THE PROBLEM BEEN FRAMED?</th>
<th>HOW CAN I REFRAME THE PROBLEM?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sink or Swim Argument</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teaching Should Not Be Punitive Argument</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXAMPLE Providing tutoring for students who are failing a course is wrong because students should do what they need to do to pass the course or face the consequences. That's the way the system is supposed to work.</td>
<td>EXAMPLE Providing tutoring for students who are failing a course assumes the purpose of education is learning, not testing for its own sake or punishing those who have not done well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Don't Reward Failure Argument</strong></td>
<td><strong>Encourage Success Argument</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXAMPLE Providing tutoring for students who are failing a course is like a welfare system that makes underprepared students dependent and second-class citizens.</td>
<td>EXAMPLE Providing tutoring for students who are failing a course encourages students to work hard and value doing well in school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Develop a possible solution.

The following activities will help you devise a solution and develop an argument to support it. If you have already found a solution, you may want to skip this activity and go directly to the Explain Your Solution section (p. 323).

One way to generate ideas is to write steadily for at least five minutes, exploring some of the possible ways of solving the problem. Consider using the following approaches as a jumping-off point:

- Adapt a solution that has been tried or proposed for a similar problem.
  
  **EXAMPLE** Rose’s proposal for an orca sanctuary is based on a similar proposal for a dolphin sanctuary that is being developed by Merlin Entertainments.

- Focus on eliminating a cause or minimizing an effect of the problem.
  
  **EXAMPLE** O’Malley’s solution to stressful high-stakes exams is to eliminate the cause of the stress by inducing instructors to give more frequent low-stakes exams.

- See the problem as part of a larger system, and explore solutions to the system.
  
  **EXAMPLE** Posner’s solution to the problem of organ waiting lists is to reform the system for compensating donors.

- Focus on solving a small part of the problem.
Brownell and Frieden’s solution to obesity is to reduce the consumption of sugared beverages through taxation.

Look at the problem from different points of view.

Consider what students, teachers, parents, or administrators might think could be done to help solve the problem.

Think of a specific example of the problem, and consider how you could solve it.

O’Malley could have focused on solving the problem of high-stakes exams in his biology course.

### Explain your solution.

You may not yet know for certain whether you will be able to construct a convincing argument to support your solution, but you should choose a solution that you feel motivated to pursue. Use the questions and sentence strategies that follow to help you put your ideas in writing. You will likely want to revise what you come up with later, but the questions and sentence strategies below may provide a convenient jumping-off point.

**How can I explain how my solution would help solve the problem?**

- **It would eliminate a cause of the problem.**
  - Research shows it would reduce ______________.

- **It has worked elsewhere.**
  - It works in ______________, ______________, and ______________, as studies evaluating it show.

- **It would change people’s behavior.**
  - ______________ would discourage/encourage people to ______________.

**How can I explain that my solution is feasible?**

- **It could be implemented.**
  - Describe the major stages or steps necessary to carry out your solution.

- **We can afford it.**
  - Explain what it would cost to put the solution into practice.

- **It would not take too much time.**
  - Create a rough schedule or timeline to show how long it would take to make the necessary arrangements.
Research your proposal.

You may have already begun researching the problem and familiarizing yourself with alternative solutions that have been offered, or you may have ideas about what you need to research. If you are proposing a solution to a problem about which others have written, use the following research strategies to help you find out what solutions others have proposed or tried. You may also use these strategies to find out how others have defined the problem and demonstrated its seriousness.

- Enter keywords or phrases related to your solution (or problem) into the search box of an all-purpose database, such as Academic OneFile (InfoTrac) or Academic Search Complete (EBSCOHost), to find relevant articles in magazines and journals; in the database Lexis/Nexis to find articles in newspapers; or in library catalogs to find books and other resources. (Database names may change, and what is available will differ from school to school. Some libraries may even combine all three into one search link on the library’s home page. Ask a librarian if you need help.) Patrick O’Malley could have tried a combination of keywords, such as learning and test anxiety, or variations on his terms (frequent testing, improve retention) to find relevant articles.

- Bookmark or keep a record of the URLs of promising sites, and download or copy information you could use in your essay. When available, download PDF files rather than HTML files, because these are likely to include visuals, such as graphs and charts. If you copy and paste relevant information into your notes, be careful to distinguish all material from sources from your own ideas.

- Remember to record source information and to cite and document any sources you use, including visuals and interviews.

Develop a response to objections or alternative solutions.

The topics you considered when developing an argument for your solution may be the same topics you need to consider when developing a response to likely criticisms of your proposal—answering possible objections to your solution or alternative solutions readers may prefer. The following sentence strategies may help you start drafting an effective response.

**HOW CAN I DRAFT A REFUTATION OR CONCESSION?**

To draft a refutation, try beginning with sentence strategies like these:

- Some people think we can’t afford to do X, but it would only cost $__________ to put my solution in place compared to $__________, the cost of doing nothing/implementing an alternative solution.

- Although it might take X months/years to implement this solution, it would actually take longer to implement solution A.
Create an outline that will organize your proposal effectively for your readers.

Whether you have rough notes or a complete draft, making an outline of what you have written can help you organize your essay effectively for your audience. Compare the possible outlines below to see how you might organize the essay depending on whether your readers agree that a serious problem exists and are open to your solution—or not.

If you are writing primarily for readers who acknowledge that the problem exists and are open to your solution:

I. **Introduce the problem**, concluding with a thesis statement asserting your solution.

II. **Demonstrate the problem’s seriousness:** Frame the problem in a way that prepares readers for the solution.

III. **Describe the proposed solution:** Show what could be done to implement it.

IV. **Refute objections.**

V. **Conclude:** Urge action on your solution.

If you are writing primarily for readers who do not recognize the problem or are likely to prefer alternative solutions:

I. **Reframe the problem:** Identify common ground, and acknowledge alternative ways readers might see the problem.

II. **Concede strengths, but emphasize the weaknesses of alternative solution(s) that readers might prefer.**

III. **Describe the proposed solution:** Give reasons and provide evidence to demonstrate that it is preferable to the alternative(s).

IV. **Refute objections.**

V. **Conclude:** Reiterate shared values.

For more on outlining, see Chapter 11, pp. 490–94.
Whatever organizational strategy you adopt, do not hesitate to change your outline as necessary while drafting and revising. For instance, you might find it more effective to hold back on presenting your solution until you have discussed unacceptable alternatives. The purpose of an outline is to identify the basic components of your proposal and to help you organize it effectively, not to lock you into a particular structure.

**Write the opening sentences.**

Review what you have written to see if you have something that would work to launch your proposal, or try out one or two of these opening strategies:

*Begin with an engaging scenario:*

It’s late at night. The final’s tomorrow. You got a C on the midterm, so this one will make or break you. Will it be like the midterm? Did you study enough? Did you study the right things? It’s too late to drop the course. So what happens if you fail? No time to worry about that now—you’ve got a ton of notes to go over. (O’Malley, par. 1)

*Cite a recent event or film demonstrating the seriousness of the problem:*

The film *Blackfish* compellingly describes many of the reasons why keeping orcas in captivity is—and always has been—a bad idea (Magnolia). (Rose, par. 1)

*Use statistics to demonstrate the seriousness of the problem:*

Sunday is the thirtieth anniversary of the National Organ Transplant Act, but no one wants to celebrate. U.S. policy on organ transplants—especially as applied to kidneys—is a mess. More than 100,000 people languish on the waitlist for kidneys, thousands of them dying before they receive a transplant. (Posner, par. 1)

*Offer a quotation that highlights support for your solution:*

Sugar, rum, and tobacco are commodities which are nowhere necessaries of life, which are become objects of almost universal consumption, and which are therefore extremely proper subjects of taxation.

— Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776 (Brownwell and Frieden, par. 1)

But don’t agonize over the first sentences, because you are likely to discover the best way to begin only after you have written a rough draft.

**Draft your proposal.**

By this point, you have done a lot of research and writing to

- focus and define a problem, and develop a solution to it;
- support your solution with reasons and evidence your readers will find persuasive;
- refute or concede objections and alternative solutions;
- organize your ideas to make them clear, logical, and effective for readers.

Now stitch that material together to create a draft. The next two parts of this Guide to Writing will help you evaluate and improve that draft.
Evaluating the Draft: Using Peer Review

Your instructor may arrange a peer review session in class or online, where you can exchange drafts with your classmates and give each other a thoughtful critical reading, pointing out what works well and suggesting ways to improve the draft. A good critical reading does three things:

1. It lets the writer know how well the reader understands the point of the draft.
2. It praises what works best.
3. It indicates where the draft could be improved and makes suggestions on how to improve it.

One strategy for evaluating a draft is to use the basic features of a proposal as a guide.

**A PEER REVIEW GUIDE**

**A Focused, Well-Defined Problem**

How well does the writer establish that the problem exists and is serious?

**Summarize:** Tell the writer what you understand the problem to be.

**Praise:** Give an example where the problem and its significance come across effectively such as where an example dramatizes the problem or statistics establish its significance.

**Critique:** Tell the writer where readers might need more information about the problem’s causes and consequences, or where more might be done to establish its seriousness.

**A Well-Argued Solution**

Has the writer argued effectively for the solution?

**Summarize:** Tell the writer what you understand the proposed solution to be.

**Praise:** Give an example in the essay where support for the solution is presented especially effectively—for example, note particularly strong reasons, writing strategies that engage readers, or design or visual elements that make the solution clear and accessible.

**Critique:** Tell the writer where the argument for the solution could be strengthened—for example, where steps for implementation could be laid out more clearly, where the practicality of the solution could be established more convincingly, or where additional support for reasons should be added.

(continued)
Before concluding your peer review, be sure to address any of the writer’s concerns that have not been discussed already.

**Making Comments Electronically**  Most word processing software offers features that allow you to insert comments directly into the text of someone else's document. Many readers prefer to make their comments this way because it tends to be faster than writing on hard copy and space is virtually unlimited; it also eliminates the process of deciphering handwritten comments. Where such features are not available, simply typing comments directly into a document in a contrasting color can provide the same advantages.
Improving the Draft: Revising, Editing, and Proofreading

Start improving your draft by reflecting on what you have written thus far:

- Review the Test Your Choice responses and critical reading comments from your classmates, instructor, or writing center tutor: What are your readers getting at?
- Take another look at the notes from your earlier research and writing activities: What else should you consider?
- Review your draft: What else can you do to make your proposal more effective?

Revise your draft.

If your readers are having difficulty with your draft, or if you think there is room for improvement, try some of the strategies listed in the Troubleshooting Guide that follows. It can help you fine-tune your presentation of the genre’s basic features.

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**A TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE**

**A Focused, Well-Defined Problem**

My readers aren’t convinced that my problem is serious or even exists.

- Change the way you present the problem to address readers’ concerns more directly.
- Add information—statistics, examples, description, and so on—that members of your audience are likely to find persuasive or that they can relate to.
- Consider adding visuals, such as graphs, tables, or charts, if these would help clarify the problem for your audience.

**A Well-Argued Solution**

My readers aren’t convinced that my solution is a good one.

- Try to make your solution more convincing by discussing similar solutions used successfully elsewhere or by demonstrating more clearly how it will solve the problem.
- Add evidence (such as facts, statistics, and examples) to support your reasons.
- Review the steps needed to enact your solution; if necessary, lay them out more clearly.

(continued)
Edit and proofread your draft.

Several errors occur often in essays that propose solutions: ambiguous use of *this* and *that*, and sentences that lack an agent. The following guidelines will help you check your essay for these common errors.

**Avoiding Ambiguous Use of This and That**

**The Problem** Because you must frequently refer to the problem and the solution in a proposal, you will often use pronouns to avoid the monotony or wordiness of repeatedly referring to them by name. Using *this* and *that* vaguely to refer to other words or ideas, however, can confuse readers.

**The Correction** Add a specific noun after *this* or *that*. For example, in his essay in this chapter, Patrick O’Malley writes:

Furthermore, professors could help students prepare for midterm and final exams by providing sets of questions from which the exam questions will be selected. . . . *This solution* would have the advantage of reducing students’ anxiety about learning every fact in the textbook. . . . (par. 13)
Improving the Draft

O’Malley avoids an ambiguous this in the second sentence by adding the noun solution. (He might just as well have used preparation or action or approach.) Here’s another example:

Students would not resist a reasonable fee increase of $40 a year if that would pay for needed dormitory remodeling.

**Revising Sentences That Lack an Agent**

**The Problem** A writer proposing a solution to a problem usually needs to indicate who should take action to solve it. Those who are in a position to take action are called “agents.” Look, for example, at this sentence from Patrick O’Malley’s proposal:

To get students to complete the questions in a timely way, professors would have to collect and check the answers. (par. 12)

In this sentence, professors are the agents. They have the authority to assign and collect study questions, and they would need to take this action in order for this solution to be successfully implemented.

Had O’Malley instead written “the answers would have to be collected and checked,” the sentence would lack an agent. Failing to name an agent would have made his argument less convincing, because it would have left unclear one of the key parts of any proposal: who is going to take action.

**The Correction** When you revise your work, ask yourself who or what performed the action in any given sentence. If there’s no clear answer, rewrite the sentence to give it an agent. Watch in particular for forms of the verb to be (the ball was dropped, exams should be given, etc.), which often signal agentless sentences.

Your staff should plan a survey
A survey could be planned to find out more about students’ problems in scheduling the courses they need.

The registrar should extend
Extending the deadline to mid-quarter would make sense.

**Note:** Sometimes, however, agentless sentences are appropriate, as when the agent is clear from the context, unknown, or less important than the person or thing acted upon.
Patrick O’Malley’s Revision Process

This section focuses on student writer Patrick O’Malley’s successful efforts to strengthen his argument for the solution he proposes in his essay, “More Testing, More Learning.” Compare the following three paragraphs from his draft with paragraphs 4–7 of his final essay on pp. 291–93. As you read, take notes on the differences you observe.

The predominant reason students perform better with multiple exams is that they improve their study habits. Greater regularity in test taking means greater regularity in studying for tests. Students prone to cramming will be forced to open their textbooks more often, keeping them away from long, “kamikaze” nights of studying. Regularity prepares them for the “real world” where you rarely take on large tasks at long intervals. Several tests also improve study habits by reducing procrastination. An article about procrastination from the Journal of Counseling Psychology reports that “students view exams as difficult, important, and anxiety provoking.” These symptoms of anxiety leading to procrastination could be solved if individual test importance was lessened, reducing the stress associated with the perceived burden.

With multiple exams, this anxiety decrease will free students to perform better. Several, less important tests may appear as less of an obstacle, allowing the students to worry less, leaving them free to concentrate on their work without any emotional hindrances. It is proven that “the performance of test-anxious subjects varies inversely with evaluation stress.” It would also be to the psychological benefit of students if they were not subjected to the emotional ups and downs of large exams where they are virtually worry-free one moment and ready to check into the psychiatric ward the next.

Lastly, with multiple exams, students can learn how to perform better on future tests in the class. Regular testing allows them to “practice” the information they learned, thereby improving future test scores. In just two exams, they are not able to learn the instructor’s personal examination style, and are not given the chance to adapt their study habits to it. The American Psychologist concludes: “It is possible to influence teaching and learning by changing the type of tests.”

One difference you may have noted between O’Malley’s draft and revised paragraphs is the sequence of reasons he offers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Draft</th>
<th>Revision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Improve study habits</td>
<td>1. Learn more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Decrease anxiety and improve performance</td>
<td>2. Perform better on tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Perform better on future tests</td>
<td>3. Improve study habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Decrease anxiety</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

O’Malley made learning more his first reason after a classmate commented that professors (the target audience) would probably be more convinced by students’ learning than by their improving their study habits or decreasing their anxiety. Here are some other improvements you may have noticed:
Reflecting on What You Have Learned

- **O’Malley’s revised paragraphs are better focused.** For example, in the first draft paragraph, O’Malley switches from study habits to procrastination to anxiety. The revised paragraph (par. 6), by contrast, focuses on study habits. Also, reduced anxiety as a result of less procrastination is discussed in a single paragraph in the revision (par. 7), whereas in the draft it is mixed in with intellectual benefits in the first two paragraphs.

- **O’Malley’s language is more precise.** For example, he changes “predominant reason” to “main reason” and “future tests” to “major exams, projects, and papers.”

- **O’Malley’s supporting evidence is more relevant.** For example, in the first draft paragraph, O’Malley includes a quotation that adds nothing, whereas in the revised paragraph (par. 6) the quotation he uses from the Harvard report provides convincing support for his claims and offers an effective conclusion to the paragraph.

Can you find other examples of better focus, more precise language, or relevant support? Did you notice any other improvements?

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**THINKING CRITICALLY**

To think critically means to use all of the knowledge you have acquired from the information in this chapter, your own writing, the writing of other students, and class discussions to reflect deeply on your work for this assignment and the genre (or type) of writing you have produced. The benefit of thinking critically is proven and important: Thinking critically about what you have learned will help you remember it longer, ensuring that you will be able to put it to good use well beyond this writing course.

**Reflecting on What You Have Learned**

In this chapter, you have learned a great deal about this genre from reading several proposals and writing one of your own. To consolidate your learning, reflect not only on what you learned but also on how you learned it.

**ANALYZE & WRITE**

Write a blog post, a letter to your instructor, or an e-mail message to a student who will take this course next term, using the writing prompt below that seems most productive for you:

- Explain how your purpose and audience influenced one of your decisions as a writer, such as how you defined the problem, the strategies you used in presenting your solution, or the ways in which you attempted to counter possible objections.
Discuss what you learned about yourself as a writer in the process of writing this particular essay. For example, what part of the process did you find most challenging? Did you try anything new, like getting a critical reading of your draft or outlining your draft in order to revise it?

If you were to give advice to a friend who was about to write an essay proposing a solution to a problem, what would you say?

Which of the readings in this chapter influenced your essay? Explain the influence, citing specific examples from your essay and the reading.

If you got good advice from a critical reader, explain exactly how the person helped you—perhaps by questioning the way you addressed your audience or the kinds of evidence you offered in support of your proposed solution.

Reflecting on the Genre

No matter how well researched and well argued, many proposals are simply never carried out. In choosing among competing proposals, decision makers—who usually hold the power of the purse strings and necessarily represent a fairly conservative position—often go for the one that is cheapest, most expedient, and least disruptive. They may also choose small, incremental changes over more fundamental, radical solutions. While sometimes the most pragmatic choice, such immediately feasible solutions may merely patch over a problem, failing to solve it structurally. They may even inadvertently maintain the status quo. Worse, they can cause people to give up all attempts to resolve a problem after superficial treatments fail.

Analyze & Write

Write a page or two explaining how the genre pushes writers to select problems that are easy to solve or that reinforce the status quo. In your discussion, you might consider one or more of the following:

1. Consider how proposals, because they invite us to select problems that are solvable, might inadvertently push us to focus on minor problems that are only a small part of a major problem. Do any of the proposals you have read or written reveal this misdirection? If so, what do you think is the major problem in each case? Is the minor problem worth solving as a first step toward solving the major problem, or is it perhaps an unfortunate diversion?

2. Reflect on arguments that we should not try to solve fundamental social problems by “throwing money at them.” Do you think this objection is a legitimate criticism of most proposals to solve social problems, or is it a justification for allowing the rich and powerful to maintain the status quo? What else, besides money, is required to solve serious social problems? Where are these other resources to come from?

3. Write a page or two explaining your ideas about the frustrations of effecting real change. Connect your ideas to your own essay and to the readings in this chapter.