Agenda

• How to Start the Writing process
• DEFENDS Strategy
• Thesis Statements
• Paragraph Writing & Organization
• Quoting vs. Paraphrasing
• Tips to Improve Writing
• Editing/Proofreading Tips
• Citations and Referencing
Essay!?! What do you mean I have to write an essay?

Have you said any of the following statements?

• I haven’t written an essay since…
• I can't get my thesis statement right.
• How can I organize all my information and notes?
• I'll never finish on time.
• How do I know this will be ‘good enough’ for the course?
• How do I source the information?
Don’t Worry – Be Happy!

• We have all experienced some level of anxiety about our writing skills
• In this session, we are going to look at a few strategies that may help you when you approach your next writing assignment
• Remember – writing can be fun and allow you to explore your creative side!!
DEFENDS

• Decide on audience, goals and position
• Estimate main ideas and details
• Figure out the best order
• Express position in opening
• Note main ideas and supporting points
• Drive home the message
• Search for errors and correct
Decisions, decisions...

- Consider the Audience
- Instructor
- Peer reviewed
- Employer
Decisions, decisions…

- Language Style
- Formal
- Informal
Decisions, decisions…

Decide your Goal

Why are your writing this paper?

Persuasive essay; expository essay; historical/chronological; cause and effect; book review; comparative essay; business letter; business proposal; science report
Assignment Language

• Review your assignment – think about what are you being asked to do?
  – Explaining a concept
  – Comparing and contrasting ideas
  – Presenting a case study (Cause and effect)
  – Providing a historical summary of an event (Chronological order)
  – Outlining a process (List items in logical order)
  – Research a topic of your choice
Assignment Language

• Examples:
  “In your own words, explain *Opportunity Cost* and provide one example that fits the definition”.


What are you asked to do in this essay question?
What Am I Supposed to Do?

- **EXPLAIN/JUSTIFY:** Present an important concept in such a way that your audience will understand the reasons or the basic principles of your topic. Clarify the idea, using the familiar to explain the unfamiliar.
Case Analysis

What is a 'case'? 

- A case is a scenario that gives you the opportunity to identify problems and recommend a course of action in a business situation. The case may be real or fictional, but will usually represent a complex situation with no ready solutions.

Case Analysis - What is my task?

- identify the problem(s) in the situation presented in the scenario
- analyze the key issues within the context of the theory presented in your course
- develop and compare alternative solutions to the problems
- consider the advantages and disadvantages of various possible solutions
- select the best solution and make recommendations for action
- write up your case analysis in appropriate case analysis report format
Case Report – Structure

• **Introduction:** Describe the situation and identify the main problem.

• **Body:** Analyse the problem and the issues underlying the problem. Present and analyse alternative solutions to the problem.

• **Conclusion:** Identify the best solution.

• **Recommendations:** Identify the courses of action needed to implement the best solution.
E = Estimate Main Ideas

Brainstorm for Ideas
LET’S BRAINSTORM!

- What should be done about public transit?
- Why don’t young people vote?
- Group work is a valuable learning activity.
- Canada should host another Olympic games.
- Technology – friend or foe?
- Cheating in sports: should we care?
- This is the “Golden age of television programming”.
Narrowing the Topic

- Can similar ideas/points be grouped together?
- Am I taking a particular side of an issue?
- Am I listing cause and effect relationships? Persuasion? Explaining? Historical/chronological order?
- To develop a workable topic, don’t narrow the focus too much; The topic has to allow you to develop, and maintain, your argument
Research & Information Gathering
Access Resources

• This is perhaps the most lengthy step of the research process. There are many sources available and it may be difficult to consult all types.

• Sources need to be balanced. Sole reliance on one type of resource (i.e. Internet sources) will make the research imbalanced.

• A good research paper incorporates different types of sources (i.e. journals, books, videos, statistical information, Internet sources, etc.) and demonstrates that an effective information search has been conducted.

http://www.library.nscc.ca/Documents/ResearchAssistance/Research/research_guide.pdf
NOTE: From your current location you do not have to log in to LibAccess at this time [continue to resources]. LibAccess: Login to e-Resources

McMaster Users Only

Try our LibAccess Bookmarklet

First-time users: set up a LibAccess account.
Tip: If you have a MAC ID you can use it to login to LibAccess.
Research: Process Information

- Read and select the best sources
- Take notes
  - Paraphrase
  - Direct quotation
  - Do not COPY the text
- Review and evaluate the best information that supports your topic (i.e. what is the best evidence)
DEFENDS

• Estimate main ideas and details
  – Organize your main ideas
    • Group supporting details below main idea
    • Group sub-supporting details, examples, quotes, statistics
  – Use a formal outline, mind map, index cards
The benefits of a healthy lifestyle

Disease prevention (link to nutrition)
- Reduce risk of cancer
- Heart disease
- Obesity

Balanced Diet – what should we be eating/what is accepted as good nutrition
- Vitamins
- Organic foods
- Canada’s Food Guide

Develop healthy living habits - HOW?
- Education
- Economics of good nutrition
- Geographic location (urban vs rural; developed vs. underdeveloped nations)
Thesis Statement

• The thesis statement provides the main idea of the essay; it provides the purpose of the paper. It is a position statement. It is the argument to be developed in the body of the essay.

• It is a statement, not a question.

• Thesis statement will be found in the introduction of the essay
There are some negative and positive aspects to the Banana Herb Tea Supplement.

A. Strong
B. Weak
Thesis Statement – Examples

• This is a weak thesis statement. First, it fails to take a stand. Second, the phrase *negative and positive aspects* is vague.

• Because Banana Herb Tea Supplement promotes rapid weight loss that results in the loss of muscle and lean body mass, it poses a potential danger to customers.
Companies need to exploit the marketing potential of the Internet, and Web pages can provide both advertising and customer support.

A. Strong
B. Weak
This is a weak thesis statement because the reader can’t decide whether the paper is about marketing on the Internet or Web pages. To revise the thesis, the relationship between the two ideas needs to become more clear. One way to revise the thesis would be to write:

Because the Internet is filled with tremendous marketing potential, companies should exploit this potential by using Web pages that offer both advertising and customer support.
In this paper, I will attempt to demonstrate the causes and effects of World hunger.

A. Strong
B. Weak
This is a weak thesis statement for two major reasons. First, *world hunger* can’t be discussed thoroughly in seven to ten pages. Second, *many causes and effects* is vague. You should be able to identify specific causes and effects. A revised thesis might look like this:

- **Hunger persists in Glandelinia because jobs are scarce and farming in the infertile soil is rarely profitable.**
Business Writing

• **Introduction** - Your introduction should include the following:
  • An identification of the subject ("the What") and context.
  • A description of relevant background material or problems or issues to be reported on.
  • The report objectives/purpose ("the Why")
  • The overall solution to the query explored in the report.
  • The scope or extent of investigation of the report.
  • The limitations of the report and any assumptions.
**DEFENDS**

- **F**igure out the best order

Look at the order of your main ideas and supporting details and move to an order that is more organized and logical.
Organization

- **Chronological order**: Paragraphs separate the process or series of events into major stages.

- **Classification**: Paragraphs divide the material into major categories and distinguish between them.

- **Increasing importance**: Paragraphs are arranged so that the most important point comes last, thus building the essay's strength.

- **Cause and effect**: Indicates causal relationships between things and events.

- **Comparison and contrast**: Involves lining up related ideas for a detailed account of similarities and differences.
Express position in opening

- Write an introductory paragraph
  - The introduction is the place where the essay has to make a good impression, informing the reader what is to come and encouraging him or her to read further
  - Introduce the topic (general concept)
  - Narrow the focus to your thesis statement
  - Outline the Main ideas – Tell the audience what direction the essay is going to follow
  - You don’t have to write the introduction first…you may wait until the body of the essay is complete
Defends - “N”

- Note main ideas and supporting points
- Create your paragraphs using the broad main idea and supporting details
- All points in the paragraph must be connected to the main idea
- Use Transition words to connect sentences
- Use Quotes or paraphrase ideas from outside sources
- Conclude the paragraph and lead to the next
• Paragraph Writing

(Broad)
Main Idea

(Specific)
Supporting Detail

(Very Specific)
Sub-supporting details (example, quote)
Essay Structure

- Introduction
  - Paragraph 1
  - Paragraph 2
  - Paragraph 3...

- Conclusion

- Topic sentence.
  - Supporting point 1.
  - Supporting point 2.
  - Supporting point 3...
  - Transition
The Second “D”

• Drive home the message
• This is the conclusion for your essay
• This is your last opportunity to prove your thesis
• You need to ask yourself two questions when you are writing your concluding paragraph:
Two Questions

• SO WHAT?

• WHO CARES?
DEFEND “S”

• Search for errors and correct
• Use your spell check and grammar check
• Leave the essay/report for one or two days. Then go back and re-read
• Read it aloud! What does not sound right?
• Make your changes.
• Editing Checklist
• GRAMMARLY
How to Make My Writing More Interesting

• Use Transition words – Look to how you are organizing your essay and how your paragraphs are organized.
  – Chronological
  – Cause and effect
  – Logical order
  – Problem - solution

• Include a counter argument – but be sure you are not disproving your thesis!
Editing

Some Common Errors in Writing:

• Sentence fragments/incomplete sentences
• Comma splice/run-on sentences
• Punctuation
• Wordiness
• Paragraphs too long/short
• Use of transition words/phrases
• Passive vs. Active Voice

http://www.school-house-rock.com/
Wordiness

- Avoid overusing **relative pronouns** such as *which* and *that*.
- Avoid overusing **meaningless qualifiers** such as *quite*, *extremely* and *very*. Use a stronger word instead (*exhausted* rather than *very tired*).
- Avoid **excessively tentative language** such as *it seems that* and *appears to suggest*. Not only is it wordy, it also makes your argument appear weak.
- Avoid redundancies.
- Avoid the **passive voice** which is possibly the greatest cause of wordiness.
Avoid redundancies

- equal (to one another)
- enclosed (herein)
- during (the course of)
- crisis (situation)
- commute (back and forth)
- (component) parts
- blend (together)
- ask (the question)
- (added) bonus
- (advance) planning
Circle the Prepositions
Too many prepositions can drain all the action out of a sentence. Get rid of the prepositions, and find a strong active verb to make the sentence direct.

Original: In this passage is an example of the use of the rule of justice in argumentation.

Revised: This passage exemplifies argumentation using the rule of justice.
• **Circle the "is" forms.** Using "is" in a sentence gets it off to a slow start, and makes the sentence weak. Replace as many "to be" verbs with action verbs as you can, and change all passive voice ("is defended by") to an active voice ("defends").

**Original:** The point I wish to make is that the author did not prove her point.

**Revised:** The author did not prove her point.
Passive vs. Active Voice

Passive voice – The entrance exam was failed by over one-third of applicants.

– *Edit to active voice*

• A sentence is more effective when it centres on a subject that is doing something, rather than a subject that is being acted upon.

• When you are providing examples, avoid passive constructions such as:
  – This is also seen when . . .
  – "It can be seen that . . ."
  – "It is shown that . . ."
Use of Quotations

• **Myth:** Writing appears to be more academic when many quotes are used in a paragraph.

• Not so – take a look at your textbooks – how many quotes are used in one paragraph?

• Quotes are used in order to add to your arguments-proof points. Think of the quotation as an example to back up your point.
Proper use of quotation:

• According to Palladino and Wade (2010), “a flexible mind is a healthy mind” (p. 147).

• In 2010, Palladino and Wade noted that “a flexible mind is a healthy mind” (p. 147).

• In fact, “a flexible mind is a healthy mind” (Palladino & Wade, 2010, p. 147).

• Palladino and Wade’s (2010) results indicate that “a flexible mind is a healthy mind” (p. 147).
What is wrong…?

This was stated by Jones (1998). "Students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time" (p. 199). This is proven true in many student papers.
A paraphrase is...

• your own rendition of essential information and ideas expressed by someone else, presented in a new form.

• one legitimate way (when accompanied by accurate documentation) to borrow from a source.

• a more detailed restatement than a summary, which focuses concisely on a single main idea.
Paraphrasing is a valuable skill because...

• it is better than quoting information from an undistinguished passage.

• it helps you control the temptation to quote too much.

• the mental process required for successful paraphrasing helps you to grasp the full meaning of the original.
Steps to Paraphrase

• Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning
• Set the original aside, and write your paraphrase
• Use a statement that credits the source somewhere in the paraphrase or summary, e.g., According to Jonathan Smith, ....
• Check your paraphrase with the original to make sure you are accurately expressing the essential information in a new form.
• Use quotation marks to identify any unique term or phrase you borrowed exactly from the source
• Record the source (including the page #) in your notes

From: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/03
How to Avoid Unintentional Plagiarism

• **Don’t cut and paste from the web** – instead print the page and note from what site you got it. Otherwise you may get confused and think you wrote something that you pasted into the paper and forgot to reference.

• Have a reference sheet of the citation system used by your instructor (APA, MLA)

• Keep all your reference/research material

• Keep copies of your drafts

• Separate doing research from writing the paper

http://mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/typeofad/plagiarism/index.html
One author (name not in sentence)

The dispute between the two countries was a result of the unfair trade practices due to the governmental policy of…. (Smith, 2003).

One author (name in sentence)

Smith (2003) argues that unfair trade practices between the two countries resulted in ….
Works Cited/References vs. Bibliography

• Your essay should include a “Works Cited or References” page
• This lists all of the sources you referenced in the body of your essay
• List sources in alphabetical order by authors’ last name
• Try to keep a “running list” as you are writing your essay/project
APA – Works Cited Page

- Books
  - Author, A.A. (Date). *Title of book. Place of publication: Publisher.*

- Chapter in a book
  - Author, A.A. (Date). *Title of essay/article/chapter. In E. Editor (Ed.), Title of book (pp. xx-xx).*

- Article in a journal
  - Author, A.A. (Date). *Title of article. Journal Title, vol (issue), xx-xx.*

- Visual images need to be sourced (i.e. logos, graphs)
APA Style Guide

• McMaster library
  http://library.mcmaster.ca/guides/apa-style-guide

• All text is double spaced

• One inch margins

• Work Cited page included at the end of the essay (do not need endnotes or footnotes)

• Indicating the source within the sentence

• Title page

• Page numbers (not on title page)
Conclusion

• The key to successful writing involves organizing your ideas and allowing for some time to review and revise your work.

• There are resources available to you at McMaster
  – The Student Success Centre (Academic online videos)
  – McMaster Libraries (sourcing material and reference sheets)
Thank-you!

• Thank you for taking the time to attend this workshop.

• Happy Writing!!