Chapter 16. Developing Projects that Analyze

In this Chapter

This chapter will prepare you to:

- Recognize writing projects that require analysis
- Explore writing strategies that support analysis
- Reflect to predict, problem-solve, and improve throughout the process of writing analytically

For some writing situations, your overarching goal will be to **analyze a text, performance, event, data-set, or concept** in order to show how its pieces come

together to create a meaning or experience that is more complicated than most readers initially perceive. While writers who explain and argue often begin writing about a concept or experience we know well, writers who analyze often use our writing and reflecting to increase our own understanding of the event or issue—like forensics experts who analyze a fresh crime scene to determine what happened, or biologists who analyze river water to judge whether pollution is getting better or worse.

As you write to analyze, you might keep some threshold concepts in mind:

Good writers frequently struggle and revise

Since writing is difficult for many writers, and the expectations for success depend on the exact audience or context, a writer's main job is to persist through difficulty.

Writing is a social rather than an individual act

Writing is always connected to a community, and so your choices always do and always should reflect your interactions with other writers and readers.

Writing creates and integrates knowledge

Writing is about representing what you already know, and also about creating new knowledge through the act of putting words onto a page or screen.

In particular, writers can benefit from seeing analysis not just as *reaction* to a situation, but as *creation* of new knowledge: your role as an analyst is to provide insights to readers that they haven't already fully articulated or explored.

Analysis shares some characteristics of other purposes for writing. In writing analytically, for example, you will use explanation but go beyond it. Instead of writing just to *explain how to play the piano*, you could write to *analyze the characteristics of the specific style used by pianist Martha Argerich*, by considering various qualities of her performances. In writing analytically, you might not be arguing directly with your audience (*Argerich is the best pianist performing today!)*. Yet you will need to draw conclusions that readers can debate: analysis provides the writer's judgment about which facts are important and how they fit together, not just a restatement of what is obvious.

Generally, analysis requires writers to examine the separate parts of a situation or issue and draw conclusions about how they interact. In addition, analysts often write from a defined perspective, or apply a professional framework, lens, or theory: analysts are looking *at* some specific elements, looking *for* some specific patterns, or looking at an issue *with* some specific goals. Because of this perspective-taking, each academic discipline or professional field defines "analysis" a little differently. After all, the "parts" of a civil war, a cancer cell, a sonata, and a

small business don't look at all the same, and a biochemist analyzes the effects of long-term illness using a framework that's different from a psychologist analyzing the same illness. Yet writers may use similar steps in each case.

You may find it helpful to consider whether you plan to analyze mostly to *interpret what something means* or to *explore how or why something happens*. **Interpretive analysis** explores the details of a text, data set, or performance, to draw conclusions about what it means or implies, especially when that meaning isn't immediately clear or agreed upon. In daily life, you might interpret a line in a recipe (what exactly does "sauté until softened" mean?) based on what you see in the accompanying photograph; in a report for school, you might analyze your peers' responses to a survey about finals week to interpret what "stress" means to them. Other analysts might give interpretations of:

- A text (or part of a text) such as a poem, novel, film, advertisement, or song lyrics
- A performance or artwork such as a play, jazz concert, sculpture installation, stand-up routine, or Bollywood dance
- A qualitative data set such as interview responses, observer's field notes, or client behaviors
- A quantitative data set such as Mississippi River flood levels, drug side-effects, or the movements of neutrinos

Causal analysis explores a chain of events or behaviors to draw conclusions about how or why one factor leads to or is influenced by another, particularly when the interactions are complicated, obscure, or variable. In daily life, you might try to discover how your new car's carpet gets so wet after it rains; in a psychology case study, you might analyze the effects of cognitive processing therapy for someone suffering from PTSD. Other analysts might examine:

- The motivations of a character, political leader, civic organization, or patient
- The origins of a religious sect, popular music trend, or chemical contamination
- The need for or effects of a public policy, highway expansion, solar flare, or meditation class
- The achievements or malfunctions of an algorithm, drone engine, rehabilitation procedure, or vocabulary lesson

In any analysis, you will want to consider whether your personal or professional perspective provides enough of a framework, or whether you and your readers will benefit if you use a specific theory or concept will help you look beyond the surface to help readers see something new or insightful about your issue. As an analyst, you might look specifically at a **framework** such as:

- The set of **rhetorical strategies** that are used in a text or performance
- The ways a **value** like *endurance*, *cost-effectiveness*, *encouragement*, or *accuracy* is demonstrated in one or more settings
- The ways a **theory** such as *modernism*, *behaviorism*, or *molecular orbital theory* reveals new insights about an object, event, or process
- The insights gained when someone from a new or unexpected **perspective**—*hometown, culture*, *gender*, *profession*, *experience-level*, *sports-team affinity*—reviews a situation or event

It makes sense that writers who analyze can get stuck, feel discouraged, or lose our way: it is often quite difficult to investigate an unfamiliar text or event in depth, select the aspects that we and readers will find most relevant, and write about a complicated issue in a way that helps readers easily understand our new insights. This chapter will help you explore key strategies that analysts use, and use them to help you reflect on your options at each stage of your project, so that you have the skills to successfully navigate the process of writing analytically.

Explore 16.1

Review the list above for ideas, and note down 3-5 times recently when you have had to gather evidence and thoughtfully analyze the options in a complex situation, whether in your daily life or for a school or work project.

16.1 It's Complicated: Exploring Fundamental Analysis Strategies

To prepare for writing an analysis, you should explore strategies that analysts commonly use. Analytical writers face some of the same challenges as expository writers, since our audiences have no mind-reading capabilities, and some of the same challenges as argument writers, since we do not receive a second opportunity to convince a skeptical reader. The main goal of analysis, though, is not just to move ideas into a reader's mind, but to help that reader see how a complex idea or process functions. Like referees watching a slow-motion replay or astronomers using a high-powered telescope, analysts try to identify more details than novices or passersby will see at first glance. The basic proposal of an analyst is, "This is more complicated than you might think, but I can help you understand it."

As writers who analyze, we need to constantly push ourselves to see complications where none are immediately visible and to represent those complications in an orderly manner. In many cases, your readers will have looked at the same text, performance, concept, data, or theory also, but they will not have seen its complexities in the way you are about to present them. You can think of your analytical writing as developing three kinds of "vision" strategies:

- **Strategy 1**: Select a lens and a frame to help you see what's going on.
- **Strategy 2**: Show your work to help readers see all the complicated parts.
- **Strategy 3**: Create a vision of the whole for readers to understand.

Select a lens and a frame

How do you see what's not obvious? In writing to analyze, you may need some specialized tools to improve your vision and critical thinking. You might bring to mind how scientists use telescopes and microscopes to help them see more than the human eye can behold: they have to select the lens they need and then decide where to point it. Likewise, you can improve your analysis when you understand or select an appropriate lens or perspective (*how* you will see something), and deliberately determine your frame or focus (*what* you will look at or for).

Your lens may be literal or more figurative. You know that if you literally change your perspective—you stand on your head, fly in an airplane, visit a new city, or peer through a rose-colored window—you will see things you hadn't noticed before. You may also see people around you differently after you change your mental perspective, perhaps by studying how unconscious bias occurs, or learning how advertising affects what we wear or eat. Academic disciplines and professional fields often use specific theories or frameworks to prompt analysts to look beyond the surface. These frameworks help you temporarily adopt a new perspective: you can choose a psychoanalytical lens to interpret the motives of a character in an August Wilson play, or you can use a systems theory lens to help you examine the commercial activities of a successful business.

You may have great freedom to adjust your frame, or you may find your options limited by your context or earlier choices. For instance, the lens you choose may already suggest what you can focus on: from an airplane, you cannot easily focus on the clothing of people on the ground, and from the perspective of a psychoanalytical approach, you will have less ability to address the cultural influences on a character in a play. Alternately, you may need to make your own decisions about how to direct your attention and your readers' attention to just a particular area, type, or selection of evidence so that you have time to examine the complications. Instead of trying to analyze all of a business' financial records, you could narrow the frame to focus just on records of expenses, on records from the past two years, or on records regarding a specific corporate partner.

In an assignment, sometimes your instructor chooses the lens and/or the frame for you. But outside of school, often these choices are up to you. If you need to "analyze the local demand for cybersecurity consulting," you could use your own personal experiences to determine important questions (lens) and then select a few of your colleagues (frame) to interview—or you could use a professional checklist of key factors in cybersecurity (lens) to help you examine the annual financial reports of three

local businesses (frame). Choosing a lens or frame can be as challenging as choosing an overall topic for your writing, and you may want to follow similar guidelines.

- Look for a lens and frame that are the **right choice**: they fit your field, class, or assignment and match your goals as a writer.
- Look for a lens and frame that are a **viable choice**: they address an issue that is debatable enough to provide room for interpretation, narrow enough to let you dig into the complications, and yet broad enough that you can find important aspects and connections to explore.
- Look for a lens and frame that are an **unexpected choice**: they help you show something that most readers in your audience won't have already seen for themselves. (In some scientific fields, you may need to use tools or report data exactly as prescribed for the situation—yet as an analyst, you want always to be ready to acknowledge data that break from the expected pattern.)

Sometimes when instructors or readers say, "We need more/deeper analysis," they mean, "We need to understand how your way of seeing is different from, and maybe better than, the way most people see it." Whether you have free choice or are working within the constraints of an assignment or professional task, you need to begin your analysis by being ready to explain your line of sight: "I am trying to see complications of this issue/event *through a lens of* ___ (or *from the perspective of* ____) and I am going to focus on ____."

Show your work step by step

Analysis is a thought-experiment: you are proposing a series of mental steps that your reader should complete in order to have more insight about this issue. Nobody thinks quite the way you do, and you are providing analysis using your own judgment in a debatable or complicated situation. So you have to show your reader precisely how you come to your conclusions and interpretations, step by step—as if you were showing your work in a calculus class or providing directions on how to complete a laboratory experiment involving potassium and hydrogen peroxide.

To assist your readers and stay organized yourself, you might consider four kinds of mental moves to help you "show your work":

- **Division**: Since analysis is about looking at the parts, you need to focus your and your readers' attention on one part at a time. Most interesting issues, data collections, or problems can be divided in different ways, and each of those divisions can be subdivided further. Each division or subdivision that you identify helps readers know *where* to focus their attention.
- **Claim**: For each of your divisions, you need to present an analytical claim, a debatable statement indicating what you see that's "really going on." Your

claim might emphasize your lens: look *this way*, using *these assumptions*, to understand the issue better. Alternately, your claim can emphasize your frame: it's important to examine *these* data, *this* event. A claim helps your readers know *how* you see and want them to see the issue.

- **Evidence**: For each of your claims, you need to provide precise evidence, from data, quotations, descriptions, explanations, experiences, examples, or connections. Often, analysis will reveal a pattern (of words, data points, or events) or a set of similarities/differences that a casual viewer might miss. Your evidence helps your reader see exactly *what* you are analyzing as clearly as possible, so that they can judge for themselves whether your claim is valid.
- **Interpretation or connection**: Readers cannot understand your line of thinking just by looking at your descriptions or evidence. If you want readers to be able to follow your thinking precisely, you have to explain how each part of the evidence matches your claim, so that readers understand *why* you have come to your conclusions.

Sometimes when instructors or readers say, "We need more/deeper analysis," they mean, "We need more examples of the pattern you see" or "We need to understand how the examples relate to your claims." In some cases, your "how" and "why" will seem very clear to you, because you have become accustomed to your way of seeing these complications. However, readers will often need more guidance in order to see a complicated issue through your eyes.

Create a new vision of the whole

Finally, sometimes when instructors or readers say, "We need more/deeper analysis," they mean, "We need you to identify what's new or improved about what you see or how you see it." Analysts need to identify a debate, a complication, or a "gray area" (where an interpretation or decision "could go either way"), and provide insight that changes how readers understand the overall event or issue. If you only summarize what happens in a movie scene, report that three businesses use cybersecurity consultants, or list two ways that the counselor in a case study is using behaviorist principles, you don't add your own new views.

You or your instructor may think of this final step, in short-cut form, as the "*so what?*" step: *so, what* does it all add up to? When you look closely, how do the parts you see add up to an insight that not all readers would reach on their own, and why is that insight helpful or relevant for those readers? Your answer provides a kind of argument, but in analysis, your emphasis is usually more on providing *one possible reasonable answer* rather than advocating for *the best* answer or *the one right* answer.

A key final step in an analysis is to articulate how "what's really going on" is different from—and usually more complicated than—"what seems to be going on."

You then need to decide how that new, more informed vision will benefit your readers.

- **Emotional richness**: When readers see more of the complexity of how other people act—whether they are fictional characters or real community residents—they often gain empathy, increase their enjoyment, lower their stress, or increase their own self-awareness.
- **Better decisions**: When readers see more of the causes, effects, or implications of a complicated event or situation, they can identify reasonable options and make more productive decisions about how to respond.
- **Broad applications**: When readers see a new pattern, an unexpected cause/effect, or surprising interrelationships among the parts or events of one complex situation, they may apply that knowledge to other situations to increase their understanding or prepare for well-reasoned action.

We are constantly analyzing the world around us. When writers sit down to compose an advanced analysis, we need strategies that help us to take the time to:

- Choose a lens and a frame that will help us see more details and connections than are immediately apparent
- Divide the issue into pieces, and then show our mental work explaining and connecting them so that readers can see what we see and how we see it
- Answer "so, what?" to help readers see how our analysis adds up to a relevant and useful idea

Explore 16.2

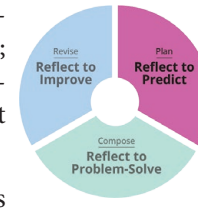
Consider an idea you wrote about earlier in this chapter, or pick a movie, activity, job, event, or class topic that you believe is more complicated than many people think. Using the models above, write a three-sentence analysis prep:

"I could investigate the complications of _____ *through a lens of* ____ (or *from the perspective of* _____) and I would narrow to *focus specifically on* _____ . I can *divide* this issue into at least two parts: _____ and _____. My readers will benefit from this analysis because _____."

Learn

- To learn more about **choosing a right, viable, unexpected topic**, see Chapter 5, Planning a Writing Project.
- To learn more about strategies for **division and classification** or about **argument**, see Chapter 14, Selecting and Combining Composing Moves.
- To learn more about connecting to **readers who can't read your mind**, see Chapter 15, Developing Projects that Explain.

16.2 Reflect To Predict: Exploring Your Analysis Project



All advanced writers benefit from planning a project, perhaps by writing an outline or identifying a research process; reflective writers take some additional steps to deliberately explore a range of options and predict which ones will be most successful.

Remember that you can DEAL as you explore and predict aspects of your project. Predicting as an analyst requires many of the same considerations as you will encounter in other writing tasks: you will want to **define** your audience and your goals, **explore** your own subject knowledge and consider your dispositions, **act** to acquire resources and develop early insights, and **learn** how you can combine new strategies with previous ones that have been successful for you as a writer.

Because you will need to *identify and clarify what's complicated* in an analysis, you may want to take some time with the explorations explained here.

Explore your readers' assumptions

To show readers new complications or insights, you need to know not just who your readers are generally, but what they already *think* the issue or event is about—their assumptions. Otherwise, you may only describe what they already understand rather than analyzing more complex, less obvious patterns. While some readers will need you to present a little information about all the factors, in many analysis projects readers will benefit from a deeper exploration of a few key subtopics. After all, you don't want to analyze why a sports team had a lousy season if the reason is obvious to everyone.

Explore your options for framing and supporting analysis

If you are writing a school assignment, check to see whether your lens (*how* you will look at the issue) or your frame (*what* issue or part you should look at) has been chosen or suggested for you. If you are choosing an analysis topic for yourself, you might start by identifying two or three possibilities so that you can decide which one is most *right*, most *viable*, and most likely to provide *unexpected* or useful insights for your readers. Remember that you are likely to adjust this plan as you write and learn.

In some analysis projects—analyzing a text, performance, or dataset—your evidence is already available, and your role is to use your lens and frame to decide how to explore the ideas and which parts to focus on. For those cases, you will want to look carefully for patterns (repeated or trending events) and for small details that match or diverge from the pattern, so that you can identify aspects that are complicated or nuanced to focus on for your analysis

In other analysis projects, you may need extra time to identify and gather evidence (from interviews, documents, observations, or published research) before you can analyze it. Often, analysts take time to gather or observe more data than we can reasonably write about, in order to be sure that we see trends and patterns clearly before we begin to write. Finally, although you will be selecting data that illustrate your insights, you also want to be truthful in showing the complications: what is your plan to address outliers, gaps, or contradictions in your evidence?

Once you understand frame and lens, you might also experiment with phrasing your initial claim: you can focus readers' attention with an explicit statement or experiment with a more implicit or subject-oriented statement, but remember that analysis usually involves high complexity from the start.

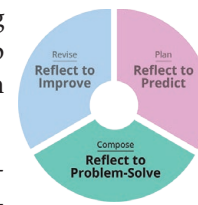
Exercises to consider as you reflect to predict

Before you set out to write the actual first pages of your analysis, you will want to acquire resources that will help you meet the challenges you've identified, and practice some of the strategies you may use as you compose. You already know of actions that can help you: perhaps you like to outline or freewrite, to review sources and take notes, or to map out a schedule that meets your needs. As an analyst, you may also find the exercises below particularly helpful.

Practice

- To practice **framing your analysis**, see Assumption Inspection, Cause-Effect Map, Date My Topic, Magic Three Choices, Six Structures, or Subtopic Generator.
- To practice **identifying support that isn't obvious**, see Evidence Garden, Gray-Area Finder, Out on a Limb, Source Synthesis Grid, They Say + I Say.

16.3 Reflect To Problem-Solve: Exploring Sticky Analysis Problems



Advanced writers often take steps to solve problems during the composing process; reflective writers look for ways to step back from a problem to explore likely alternatives rather than staring at a blinking cursor or "just doing it."

As you compose your analysis, you may encounter challenges that feel familiar to you: generating material, staying organized and focused, providing sufficient evidence, managing your time or finding a stronger motivation boost. When you get stuck, you can DEAL with your problem: define it, explore possible solutions, act to try out a new approach, and make a note of what you learned (did your strategy help?).

In composing an analysis, you might find that you get stuck in trying to balance your efforts between modes of thinking and writing: analysts need to switch their attention between the parts and the whole, the patterns and the diversions, the quick insights and the careful documenting of a thought experiment. You may want to explore the balancing acts and strategies noted here, so that you have some new approaches ready to try.

Balance between openness and focus

Analysts study their issue or subject carefully before writing *and also* gain more insight as a result of their writing process. You might get stuck as an analyst if you try to start a project or a section without sketching your frame and focus—but you might also get stuck if you hold too tightly to your original plan. You can use a focused outline at the start to help you divide up your subtopics, or sketch a new outline for a paragraph or section to help you get unstuck as you compose. Meanwhile, exploratory freewriting or mind-mapping can help you spot unexpected connections at any point in your writing process. You will alternately need to lean into your curiosity and speculate ("what else could be going on here?"), and then turn around and confidently walk your readers through your reasoning step by step. Managing your dispositions of *openness* and flexibility alongside your dispositions for *persistence* for thinking systematically will also support your work here.

Balance evidence and judgments

Although analysis doesn't feature typical "for" or "against" arguments, you will need to include your own judgments alongside the evidence you gather. You may get stuck when you have written several sentences describing evidence, but lost your train of thinking about what it adds up to, or you may realize you have made several generalizations in a row and realize you need to back up and write about specific examples to show your work.

There is no single formula for balancing these modes, but readers often prefer writing that follows some kind of recognizable pattern, such as a closed-form paragraph or a point-by-point overall structure. Will you alternate evidence and judgment sentence-by-sentence or paragraph-by-paragraph, or do several rounds of one and then a few of the other? Will you use paragraph opening or closing sentences to connect to your lens and judgment? Often as you remind yourself and readers of your point by repeating key ideas, you will spot new insights you can share.

Exercises to consider as you reflect to problem-solve

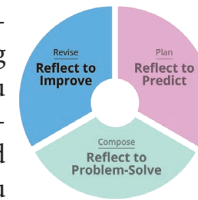
When you get stuck composing your analysis, you may use strategies you've used before: taking a break, reviewing the assignment directions, talking to a friend,

working on a different part of the writing task, or connecting to a value that motivates you. If you're stuck because you are balancing analysis modes, you may also find the exercises below helpful.

Practice

- To practice **generating openness**, see Magic Three Choices, Mind the Gap, Old Wine/New Bottles, Question Ladders, Scenarios, or Six Degrees.
- To practice **focusing** and structuring your analysis, see 3D Mind Map, Elevator Speech, Six Structures, or Subtopic Generator.
- To practice **strengthening your evidence**, see Evidence Garden, Gray-Area Finder, Inner Three-Year-Old, or Reason Appallingly.
- To practice **forming judgments**, see Believing/Doubting, Off on a Rant, They Say + I Say.

16.4 Reflect To Improve: Exploring Your Growth as an Analyst and a Writer



As you complete a draft or finalize your project, you will benefit not just from making a few final edits, but from taking time to reflect on your work: you will want to define what you learned from this project, explore how to complete your revisions and identify key principles for writing, anticipate and adapt to meet the needs of future projects, and learn how you will keep improving as a writer.

You might also find that you want to explore some of the ways that you can improve your analysis writing specifically, for this project and for future projects. Successful analysis documents require a particular blend of vision, structure, and flexibility that you may want to add to your repertoire. You could thus give some extra time to the explorations explained here, so that you take full advantage of the opportunity to grow as a writer.

Assess your insights to improve your analysis

Since you will often learn about your topic or issue as you analyze, you will want to pause after completing an initial draft to make sure that your final ideas are consistent with your early ones. You should also take steps to ensure that your overall judgments—your "so, what?" statements—are visible. Do you expect your readers primarily to gain a richer experience or viewpoint, or to take particular action?

Often analysts need to revise earlier paragraphs, and even revise their original thesis or framework, to help readers see all the complications they discovered,

right from the start. And rather than saving all your main judgments for your final paragraphs, you can use your revision process to ensure that you have included connections to your conclusions throughout your document, so that your whole project benefits from your learning.

Identify analysis strategies to expand your writing story

Reflecting on how you balanced the nuanced details with the big picture insights in this analysis project—and identifying the places where you still got stuck—can help you transfer your improved analysis skills to another project. It can be useful to remember that even when nobody tells you to "analyze this," most academic writing projects and many professional writing tasks require at least some analysis to show *how* or *why* an idea is valuable.

On a concrete level, you may discover that completing an analysis project helped you discover some new strategies or principles that can become part of your writing story. For instance, although "frame and lens" is particularly useful for analysis, that approach could be applied to other writing tasks if it helped you here; similarly, "stay open to new learning" could be a principle you want to consider adding to your theory of good writing.

At a more abstract level, completing an analysis project can help you understand some of your strengths, preferences, and growth areas as a writer. Sometimes writers are very comfortable looking for patterns and tiny details; other times, writers may feel frustrated by the analysis expectations in a particular field, or may wish for more opportunity to make bold statements or recommend direct action. Most fields and professions depend on analysis to map out complex problems, so deciding how you want to maintain, improve, or highlight your analysis skills can help you map out your lifelong learning as a writer.

Exercises to consider as you reflect to improve

When you are trying to decide what to keep and what to improve in your analysis, you might find that familiar strategies help: checking on feedback from your readers, using highlight colors to help you see patterns, or connecting to your core values for motivation. You may also find it helpful to explore the resources below to see which ones might support your work:

Practice

- To practice **highlighting analysis insights**, see Conclusion Transplant, Elevator Speech, Letter to Kermit, Ten Directed Revisions, Used to Think / Now I Think.

Learn

- To learn more about **revising**, see Chapter 10, Revising from Feedback and Reflection.
- To learn more about **paragraphs, organizational patterns, and cohesion**, see Chapter 7, Generating and Organizing an Early Draft.
- To learn more about **improving future writing tasks**, see Chapter 12, Creating Your Writing Theory.

16.5 Sample Writing Projects that Rely on Analysis

Experience-based writing project: Analyzing how expertise is developed

Recently, it's become commonplace to estimate that it takes 10,000 hours to develop expertise in an area. Yet clearly being the best takes more than just putting in time. Consider what it takes to be an expert—or just really good—at a task, sport, job, or performance that you're familiar with, and give your analysis of how some actions, knowledge, and/or attitudes contribute to mastery.

Write from an insider perspective, as someone who does or studies this kind of work, to help a novice decide how to plan their next several months or years. Consider your frame: you can't explain everything about expertise. Identify your subdivisions: what particular steps or categories do you want to emphasize? Then decide whether you already know enough to provide evidence of how experts in this area work, or if you will need to inquire further about some categories in order to show what's "really going on."

Practice

- To practice **analyzing** a situation based on your experiences and expectations, see Assumption Inspection, Audience Switch, Authority/Curiosity/Annoyance List, Cause-Effect Map, Gray-Area Finder, Inner Three-Year-Old, Subtopic Generator, Used to Think / Now I Think.

Learn

- To learn more about **additional writing moves,** see Chapter 14, Selecting and Combining Composing Moves, regarding
  - Narration to provide examples from your experience;
  - Definition of what "mastery," overall or in part, looks like
  - Classification to help you identify and organize the parts
  - Causal argument to show how the pieces contribute to the whole

Learn (continued)

- Chapter 7 on implicit/explicit thesis statements and organizational patterns
- Chapter 11 on editing to create an appropriate and consistent style

Writing-about-writing project: Analyzing a text

Select a piece of writing—writing you admire, writing that annoys you, a peer's draft for an assignment, or an example of a genre you'd like to understand better—and analyze that writer's strategies. (Sometimes this is called *rhetorical analysis* of a text.) You'll use the perspective of an advanced writer who can see how another writer solves rhetorical problems (such as making their goal clear, connecting with the audience, or providing credible evidence), solves knowledge problems (such providing enough depth and addressing possible erroneous assumptions), and solves process or disposition problems (how the organization or design help readers stay engaged).

Choose your frame carefully: which aspects of writing do you most want to focus on? Consider what divisions you can use: what factors will best explain the document's success (and/or reveal its problems)? You may direct your analysis to the author, to a peer who wants to learn strategies to try or to avoid, or to yourself as you consider how this document affects you.

Practice

- To practice **analyzing** a text, see Audience Profile, Believing / Doubting, Genre Ethnography, Gray-Area Finder, Off on a Rant, Subtopic Generator, or They Say + I Say.

Learn

- To learn more about **additional writing moves,** see Chapter 14, Selecting and Combining Composing Moves, regarding
  - Summary of some parts of the text
  - Definition of key rhetorical terms
  - Classification to help you identify and organize the parts
  - Causal or evaluative argument to frame your "so, what?"
- To learn more about **additional writing strategies** to help you analyze a text, see
  - Chapter 13 on predicting and questioning genre patterns
  - Chapter 6 on reading actively
  - Chapter 7 on implicit/explicit thesis statements and organizational patterns
  - Chapter 11 on editing to create an appropriate and consistent style

Source-based writing project: Analyzing media coverage of an event

Review several stories that have been in the news recently about something "close to home" for you, such as your school, region, job, sport, or family heritage. (You can do a quick online search for *News About* ___.) Choose one issue or story that interests you and that you suspect is more complicated than a short article online or quick video can represent, and analyze several sources to help you identify complications. Your perspective might depend on the frame and divisions you select. For instance, as you review both short and longer reports, you might look for complicated components (many parts or events to consider); complicated sides, stakeholders, or values (more than just "pro" and "con"); or complicated causes or effects (not just what happens here and now, but what happened earlier or farther away).

You can bring an insider perspective or use a premise or theory you know from your work or major. Your goal is not to argue right or wrong, but to show your peers—and other people reading the news—that there's a lot more going on than they will find from reading just one short source. Remember your "so, what?": why should busy people take time to keep track of all these complications? You could write this as a typical essay, or consider creating your own news-video script or opinion blog.

Practice

- To practice **analyzing** how an event was represented, see Assumption Inspection, Audience/Stakeholder Mapping, Evidence Shopping List, Gray-Area Finder, Six Structures, Source Synthesis Grid, Subtopic Generator, Used to Think / Now I Think.

Learn

- To learn more about **additional writing moves**, see Chapter 14, Selecting and Combining Composing Moves, regarding
  - Summary of the simplified news story;
  - Classification of the types of components you are revealing
  - Exploration of how some components can be significant to a full understanding of the issue
  - Synthesis of source material to build credibility and detail
- To learn more about **additional writing strategies** to help you analyze other writers' perspectives, see
  - Chapter 5 on choosing a topic and focus
  - Chapter 6 on reading actively
  - Chapter 7 on implicit/explicit thesis statements and organizational patterns
  - Chapter 11 on editing to create an appropriate and consistent style

Community-engaged writing project: Analyzing an organization's outreach

Choose a student group or service on campus that you don't (yet) belong to or use much, but one that is related to a personal, academic, or professional interest of yours, and analyze some of the ways they are currently serving—or not serving—a student like you. You may want to review any website or flyers they have; request and review any mission statements, event plans, meeting agendas or minutes; and/or interview some leaders or members.

Establish your perspective: what makes you someone whose insights they might value? What principles, priorities, or theories will help you and them see what's not obvious? Also establish your frame: will you address a single question such as recruitment or events? Will you consider just events from this year or review several years' worth of events? Write a report to the current leader(s) of that group (using a genre they will actually read/watch) identifying their strengths, weaknesses, and possible new opportunities for connecting with and supporting students like you.

Practice

- To practice analyzing the impact of the organization, see Assumption Inspection, Audience Profile, Gray-Area Finder, Six Structures, Stance Switch, Subtopic Generator, Values Freewrite.

Learn

- To learn more about **additional writing moves,** see Chapter 14, Selecting and Combining Composing Moves, regarding
  - Narration of your own experiences or perspectives
  - Classification of the factors you are analyzing
  - Exploration of how some components can be significant to a full understanding of the issue
  - Evaluative argument to frame your "so, what?"
- To learn more about **additional writing strategies** to help you analyze how well the organization serves its clients, see
  - Chapter 20 on gathering primary and secondary data
  - Chapter 8 on designing and analyzing multimodal documents
  - Chapter 6 on reading actively
  - Chapter 7 on implicit/explicit thesis statements and organizational patterns
  - Chapter 11 on editing to create an appropriate and consistent style