Chapter 7. Generating and Organizing an Early Draft

In this Chapter

This chapter will prepare you to:

- Adopt an early-drafter mindset and use a DEAL approach to lower stress and improve writing quality as you compose

- Identify your initial focus or thesis for a writing project
- Use open-ended and structured processes to generate writing for a new project
- Select and adapt organizational structures for a new project
- Apply writing strategies to improve the flow, cohesion, and impact of paragraphs in your project

A blank screen or piece of paper can be inspiring—or stressful. If you have already invested some time in reflecting to predict the goals and strategies as you started your writing project, you may be able to ease into composing with less of a blank-screen jolt, but you will still benefit from approaching this stage with a reflective and open mind. This is also a good point to review some threshold concepts about writing, so that your writing practice isn't limited by beliefs such as "Good writers have an easy time drafting" or "I need to follow Rule X or use Process Z or my writing will fail." Instead, consider whether any of the following research-based concepts will help you gain confidence and motivation:

Good writing adapts dynamically to readers and contexts

Writing—like dancing or judo—is more about evolving actions and interactions than it is about producing a single object.

There is no single definition of a "good writer"

Writers use different techniques or styles to produce "good writing" depending on the writer's goals and the audience's needs.

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 involves strategies more than talent

Writing is usually not a revelation from an invisible muse or a demonstration of innate talent, but is a skill that requires practice, strategic thinking, and flexibility.

There are many ways to solve a writing problem

Because writing is complex and interactive, writers have many ways of getting stuck—and just as many ways of getting back on track.

As with other events in your writing, generating and organizing an early draft is a rhetorical act: writers make decisions to serve our own purposes and to meet our readers' needs. There are no firm rules about what a writer should do first, and no universal signs that a writer is failing at the task. The steps that served you well in a previous writing task may work equally well in the current one—or they may not be a good match for today's writing. Writers make plans, act on those plans, feel satisfaction when the writing goes smoothly, and know that when we get stuck it's not "writer's block" but just a normal problem which we can reflect on, analyze, and respond to.

The sections that follow provide descriptions of strategies that advanced writers use as we compose and organize early drafts, but they are only guides to help you begin to think about your options. You need to choose and adapt strategies that suit your goals and your readers' needs.

7.1 Reflect to Problem-Solve: Adopt an Early-Drafter Mindset

Author Anne Lamott advises that all writers treat their first draft(s) as the "down draft," with a goal of simply getting some kind of writing down on the page or onto the screen, without worrying too much about the quality of it. Once you have a down draft, she writes, you can move to the "up draft," where you fix it up and improve your writing a little at a time. Lamott's approach matches the threshold concept that good writers frequently struggle and revise, and supports writers in having a growth mindset and confidence that writing gets better with reflective practice.

What is an early drafter?

Advanced writers benefit from becoming *early drafters*. An early drafter:

- Starts writing before they are fully ready to write
- Sets reasonable expectations for the quality of the first draft(s) of a project
- Uses first-draft writing to learn more about the project
- Disregards "rules" about writing such as "start at the beginning" or "make sure there's a verb in every sentence" if those rules create too much frustration
- Draws on a blend of generating strategies and organizing strategies
- Applies problem-solving reflection when they feel a little stuck, so they can keep moving forward
- Leaves time to reflect on and revise the document before calling it "finished"

Early drafters aren't just people who are biologically wired to get to work at 6:00 in the morning or wealthy yacht-owners who have plenty of time for writing, and we aren't endowed with anti-procrastination superpowers. Like most writers, early-drafters have to squeeze in our writing when we have time, and we're often writing at the "last minute."

The defining quality of early drafters is that our "last minute" is just a little earlier than one-and-done writers. Instead of thinking of drafting-and-revising as a luxury that we might do someday when we have time, we assume that any significant or important writing project requires a draft-and-revise process for us to succeed. Early drafters follow the research that shows that taking an early-draft approach:

- Lowers stress, and so makes the getting started with a writing project easier
- Allows time for reflection and problem-solving, lessening the experience of "writer's block" and creating opportunities to learn successful strategies
- Encourages experimentation and exploration, and so makes the final project more innovative or fulfilling
- Builds in more opportunity for reflection and rethinking, and so helps the writer improve both the current project and the skills needed for future projects

In a writing class or another course with a writing project, your instructor may structure deadlines that encourage you to experiment with an early-draft mindset. You should take advantage of these opportunities: your goal is not to slack off or intentionally write a poor draft, but to see what you can accomplish when you change your expectations from writing a "perfect" draft to writing an early draft and giving yourself time for experimentation and problem solving.

What is a problem-solving approach to drafting?

Although you can use the problem-solving strategies in this chapter to help you get unstuck when you're doing a one-and-done writing project, advanced writers often use a multiple-draft approach. When you know you will come back and polish a draft later, you can use your early draft(s) to experiment and reflect. Instead of trying to get the structure, content, and cohesion right all at once, early-drafters can select a starting strategy that best creates momentum, and use other approaches later to improve the document.

By taking a multiple-draft approach, you also lower stress and save time while you compose, especially because you can avoid "writer's block." Instead of staring at a blank page or blinking cursor while the clock keeps ticking, reflective writers can stop and DEAL with the challenge: define what's not working, explore

possible solutions, act right then to implement a new approach, and step back to learn from the experience.

Choose a starting strategy

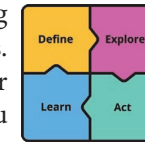
You may be generally comfortable as a writer who outlines or lists the paragraphs you plan to write before you begin composing a document. Or you may prefer to write your ideas down quickly as they occur to you, and rearrange them later. Advanced writers can find both strategies useful.

> **Planning your organization first** can give you speed when you are working on a short or familiar document that you can easily envision. Planning your paragraphs ahead of time—what size, how many, and in what order—can also help you persevere with a long or unfamiliar project, anticipating the knowledge you will need to acquire in order to finish your writing.
>
> If you're taking an organize-first approach, you also need to be prepared to make significant changes as you revise, both during your writing and afterwards, because you will be smarter about the overall structure of your document, and how to signal your readers to help them follow your ideas, after you've actually written some of it.
>
> **Generating your ideas in sentences and paragraphs first** can be useful when you are working on an issue that you have strong opinions about, or on a question that you want to explore as you go without preconceptions. Writing quickly without worrying about the exact structure or order of your thinking can help you gain momentum on a topic that feels intimidating, or help you feel that you are connecting directly to readers.
>
> When you focus on ideas rather than structure first, you need to be ready to make significant changes as you revise: you may need to relocate or delete whole clusters of sentences in order to create deliberate patterns your readers can follow. You will also likely need to add signaling or cohesion sentences to guide your readers.

Sometimes writers combine the two strategies in a single project. One writer might sketch an outline of some parts of the text, and write through the rest; another might decide to generate the first few pages to get started and then create an outline of the key arguments that will follow. For instance, in writing this chapter I first created a list of my main points, and wrote out the paragraphs and sections for an early draft. As I revised, I kept going back and forth between adding to or revising paragraphs like this one, to dig into what I wanted to say, and reviewing my outline and headers, to create an arrangement pattern that you could follow. (Although much of my original structure

is intact, this paragraph has been moved to a slightly different location three times so far!)

Keep your momentum going as you DEAL with challenges



Since all writers struggle and revise, it makes sense to begin drafting your writing project by expecting that you will get stuck sometimes. Rather than assume that you're stuck simply because you're a poor writer or just accept that the document won't turn out very well, you can make a plan in advance about what to do when problems arise, and take difficult moments as opportunities to learn new strategies. The DEAL approach to problem-solving can be particularly helpful while writers are composing.

Define the problem. First, identify whether you are still making progress, even though it may be going more slowly than you hoped for, or whether you are feeling truly stuck and watching your confidence and momentum slip away. When you are stuck, it can help to give the problem a name. You might identify problems that have to do with specific aspects of your project:

- *Rhetorical situation*: these are challenges in knowing what you most want to say, or challenges in making sure that you are meeting your readers' expectations.
- *Subject knowledge*: these are challenges in comprehending the issue well enough that you can explain, analyze, and/or argue convincingly about it.
- *Writing steps or strategies*: these are challenges in deciding what to do next in composing your document (outline or generate? research or compose? stay on this subtopic or add another? go off on a rant or dig into the complications and details?).
- *Dispositions*: these are challenges with your attitude and emotions about this particular writing project, and the stories you tell yourself about your confidence, curiosity, motivation, and opportunities for success.

You may also have another name for your problem—maybe it's a team-project problem, a too-many-assignments problem, a writing-with-unfamiliar-jargon problem—or you may have multiple ways to identify it, since knowledge problems are often linked to rhetorical situation problems. There's no exact right definition, only a definition that lets you move to the next step as a writer (rather than just checking your messages again or looking to see what's in the refrigerator).

Explore strategies that you can practice. You might confidently tell yourself, "I can fix this by creating or changing my project outline, because that strategy usually helps me." You might also find it's useful, though, to consider a few more strategies, especially ones that match your definition of the problem, before you settle on an approach.

Practice

- To practice responding to **rhetorical situation problems**, see
  - Backtalk, Off on a Rant, or Elevator Speech if you're wrestling with what you most want to say.
  - Audience Profile, Believing/Doubting, or Expert/Novice if you're wrestling with how to meet readers' expectations.
- To practice responding to **subject-knowledge problems**, see
  - Question Ladders or Used to Think/Now I Think to consider what you know and need to know.
  - Assumption Inspection or Counterargument Generator to explore how to deepen your analysis of an issue.
  - An active-reading strategy such as Annotation or Snapshot to help you identify key issues as you read complex documents.
- To practice responding to **steps or strategies problems**, see
  - Seven Generations or Six Structures to try alternate ways to generate or organize a next section.
  - Subtopic Generator or Letter to Kermit to help you explore your next steps.
- To practice responding to **disposition problems**, see
  - Growth Mindset, Funny Story, or Values Freewrite to help you change to a positive frame of mind.
  - Deluxe Project Scheduler or Attitude Inventory to help you plan a route toward success.

By taking even a few minutes to explore two or more options, you give yourself more control and more chance for success, even if you eventually decide to go back to your familiar outline.

Act on what you decide. Instead of continuing to write the sentence or paragraph you were on when you got stuck, find a new page or open a new document, and commit 15-20 minutes to writing in a new approach (you can set a timer so you know you're not getting too far off track). Even if this writing doesn't directly end up improving your current project, it will keep you feeling productive and your brain will stay focused in a writing mode—and it doesn't take much longer than scrolling on your phone or making a sandwich.

Look and learn whether the strategy helped. You might gain enough momentum from your alternate strategy that you want to just keep writing along, which is fine. At some point, though, when you come to a place you can pause, you will want to take a few minutes to directly evaluate the strategy you chose. You could do something as simple as give the strategy a score from 1 (not helpful at all) to 5 (extremely

helpful), and write yourself a sentence explaining *what* the problem was and *why* you think the strategy worked or didn't work for you. Remember that your goal is to continue learning as a writer, so closing the DEAL process with this final stage helps you be ready to solve a writing problem the next time you get stuck.

Explore 7.1

In a few sentences, describe your current approach to drafting a writing project. When do you rely on writing just one version, and when do you create time to revise with a second or third draft? Do you generally prefer to begin a project by organizing structures or by generating sentences? What is most challenging for you as a writer, and what do you usually do if you get stuck writing?

7.2 Draft and Revise Your Thesis or Goal Statement

Writers don't always know our main ideas clearly during the first round of writing, since writing creates knowledge as well as reporting on it. So it doesn't always make sense to start by trying to write a perfect thesis sentence, or even to write any kind of thesis sentence.

Even so, writers gain direction and clarity from composing some kind of anchor: this might be a *working thesis* or a *draft introduction* or an *initial claim* or a *preliminary goal statement*. You should draft just enough of an idea to keep you on track, without agonizing over it so much that it holds you back from the rest of your work. (You could even put this statement in italics or another font color, to signal that you know it's a temporary placeholder.)

As you continue with your writing project, you should keep checking in on this statement: the "working thesis" should guide your inquiry, analysis, and writing, but your additional inquiry, analysis, and writing should also help you revise, refine, relocate, and even redirect your working thesis.

Your main point is as rhetorical as the rest of your project, so there is no one kind of thesis statement, focal sentence, or claim. As you compose and especially as you revise your working thesis, you can decide whether your document and your readers would benefit from:

- A more explicit or more implicit statement
- A more subject-oriented or more argument-oriented statement
- A simpler or more complex statement

These scales adjust and overlap: for a letter to the editor, you might prefer *very simple* and *fairly explicit*, while for a laboratory instruction manual you might focus on being *somewhat implicit* and *very subject-oriented*.

Make your thesis more explicit or more implicit

More direct or explicit statements are appropriate when readers will value speed and accuracy of communication over relationship-building, for readers who are already familiar with an issue, and for documents that have a distinct point of view. Explicit statements usually occur at an early, single point. The writer chooses precise, accessible language and provides straightforward indication of his or her goals for the document.

> John Peratrovich's education as an engineer and a lawyer prepared him to lead PCN Corporation, but his childhood experiences in Alaska are the main source of his drive and insight.

More implicit statements are appropriate when writers want to build a relationship with readers or expect readers to explore rather than decide about an issue. Implicit statements often accumulate throughout a document, becoming more evocative or emotionally charged toward the end. The writer uses vivid or highly suggestive language and takes time to build connections with readers at several points throughout the document.

> In some corner of John Peratrovich's mind, the sun never sets . . . Acknowledged by his professors as a capable engineer, Peratrovich is remembered best for leading his team using a cooperative approach he says he learned from his grandfather, who was active in his regional Alaska Native Corporation . . . As he enters the PCN boardroom each morning, John Peratrovich draws on his MIT education as well as the curiosity and commitment to teamwork that he gained from growing up in a tight-knit small town.

Make your thesis emphasize the subject or the argument

More subject- or concept-oriented statements are appropriate for reports, summaries, memos, narratives, or case observations. Even when these documents don't seem to have a "thesis," they still often benefit from having subject-oriented focal statements to assist readers in anticipating and organizing information. Subject-oriented statements emphasize the information provided in the document. The writer often chooses neutral but precise and descriptive language; usually indicates the complete scope of what the document will cover; and often specifies sub-topics or areas of emphasis to be discussed.

> As discussed in this article, any solution to yearly flooding on the Mississippi River will need to consider the interests of farmers, residents of towns alongside the river, barge traffic transporting raw materials and finished products up and down the river, and long-term environmental effects.

More argument-oriented statements are appropriate when writers believe readers need clear advice, recommendations, or changes in their lives. Argument-oriented statements present the writer's position on an issue in such a way that reasonable readers could disagree with it. The writer chooses language to emphasize the risk or value of a particular choice, interpretation, or policy, and often indicates one or more contrasting arguments or positions.

> In order to avoid the no-win choice between flooding cities (such as Cairo) and flooding hundreds of acres of farmland every time the Mississippi waters rise, the Army Corps of Engineers needs to systematically replace levees with wetlands along the upper Mississippi to allow more natural adaptation to variations in rainfall.

Make your thesis statement simpler or more complex

This adjustment has to do with how you interact with readers in framing your argument, not about whether you are thinking deep thoughts. Your *statement* can be simple even when your idea or argument is complex, or vice versa.

A simpler thesis statement can be used to indicate straightforward ideas, to engage busy or uninformed readers, or to conceal underlying complexity. The writer focuses the readers' attention precisely on the core idea, argument, or outcome; chooses accessible, often blunt language; and often defers consideration of alternatives or details until later in the document. A simple statement is not always easy to write; a writer may need several drafts to present the core ideas without overwhelming a reader.

> If universities want to continue to profit from collegiate sports, they should pay a salary to student athletes.

A more complex thesis statement can be used to make the reader directly aware of the layers of an idea or plan, to engage a diverse group of stakeholders, or to overtly acknowledge resistances or challenges that a reader may bring to an argument. The writer should provide sufficient background information to prepare the reader for the set of ideas; represent a logical sequence of problems, complicating factors, and/or consequences; and indicate a clear thought-pathway for readers to follow in their considerations. This work may require a sentence with several clauses, several sentences, or even several paragraphs in a longer document.

> Division 1 universities have long argued that funds raised from high-income sports like football and men's basketball primarily go to support students and student athletes from all sports via scholarships, especially for athletes in less lucrative sports like field hockey or wrestling. However, since budget analyses show that funds often go to fancy stadiums and high-paid coaches, and low graduation

> rates show the burdens student-athletes face, the NCAA needs to step in and change the rules. Universities either need budget caps and stronger ethical regulations, or they need to pay college players salaries commensurate with their sport.

Not all documents need a "thesis statement"—but most documents have a goal for affecting readers, and authors should work to make that goal accessible to diverse readers. Depending on the situation, you might state your argument explicitly in a simple sentence at the end of an introductory paragraph or section, or suggest your main subject indirectly through several sentences or phrases woven into your document. When readers are confident that they know your main point, they will get into the flow of reading more easily.

Explore 7.2

How do you want to convey your main point in your working thesis? Choose at least two descriptors from the six listed in this section—explicit/implicit, subject/argument focused, simple/complex—and briefly explain why you prefer these approaches for your current project. If you have time, try composing a very early draft of such a statement that you can use to anchor your writing.

7.3 Write It Out: Generate Content in an Early Draft

What do you see in your mind when you think of someone who is writing? If you found yourself imagining someone smoothly adding lines and sentences to a piece of paper, or rapidly clicking a keyboard as letters appear and fill up a screen, you're not alone: these images of a writer "getting into the flow" and generating page after page of text are often represented in books, movies, and songs about successful writers. When you find yourself in that kind of flow state as a writer—when you can "just do it!"—it can be exhilarating.

Since all writers struggle and revise, though, you might need to adjust your mental models a bit: even writers who like to begin a draft in a freewriting or sentence-generating mode will compose at different speeds, with different aims, and with pauses to reflect or change our approach. Remember that writing isn't just "copying down what you already think" but involves thinking and generating new knowledge as well as adapting to your readers' needs, so going more slowly can be a sign of a successful writer, not a sign that you are ineffective.

Also, you should be aware that even if you believe you write better "under pressure" or "at the last minute," research shows that that's not usually true. Adrenaline may give you some temporary energy, but it's a fight-or-flight energy, not a complex-thinking energy. Meanwhile, stress increases your cognitive load—the amount of thinking that your brain has to do—so you will actually have less brain

power available to find words and create analyses. And writing at the *actual* last minute means that you are giving up the opportunity to review and revise your writing in ways that will create lasting improvements.

What last-minute writers say:

> I write well under pressure.

What last-minute writers usually *mean*:

> When it's the last minute, my fear of (or discomfort about) not completing this project finally overcomes my fear of (or discomfort about) writing, so I lower my standards and just write what I can.

Writing out of fear isn't a productive or sustainable approach. The good news is that you don't have to wait until you are stressed, exhausted, and fearful to use the underlying strategy: you can "lower my standards and just write what I can" *at any time*, especially when you know you will have time to revise. As you practice using some of the approaches described here, you will become more comfortable at sitting down and generating writing with low stress, even days or weeks before that last-minute adrenaline kicks in.

Generate by easing your expectations

One of the best parts of being an early drafter is knowing that since you have already planned time to revise, your first round of composing doesn't have to meet anyone's expectations for quality. In true "freewriting," you write for yourself rather than for any other reader, and the only rule is that you need to keep writing: it doesn't matter if you are correct, use the best vocabulary, stay precisely focused on your main issue, or create smoothly structured paragraphs. (If you get stuck thinking of something to say, you can write "I don't know what else to say" until you think of something!) This kind of open-ended composing takes advantage of the way that writing *creates thinking*: as you put some ideas into words on a page, you frequently discover that you have more ideas that you want to communicate.

Even in more directed composing, when you are aiming to explore a specific topic or issue, or create analyses and arguments, you can keep your standards relaxed. "Writing" can include many kinds of generation: you can make lists instead of sentences, use informal terms or a blend of your home languages, add doodles or images, insert meta-commentary ("Note to self: think more about long-term effects"), include personal or emotional reactions, or describe impossible solutions. In a world full of distractions, simply being able to generate writing for 15 or 20 minutes without stopping to think of a word, fix an error, look up a fact or quotation, or worry that you're drifting off topic can help you

gain momentum, build confidence, and identify crucial ideas that will contribute to your final project.

Practice

- To practice high-energy, **low-stakes writing**, see Backtalk , Off on a Rant, or Seven Generations.

Generate by deepening evidence and reasons

For a little more direction, you might allow one or two very basic reader expectations to filter into your composing, and look for ways to reach out toward those needs. You still don't want to raise complicated expectations about correctness or precision, but since you know that your reader can't read your mind, you can challenge yourself to dig deeper into the details, the causes and effects, and the roots of your arguments.

You might try some very general prompts that can help you provide more—or more interesting—details to help satisfy readers' curiosity. When you use sentence starters like these, you can sometimes provoke your brain into giving you more ideas, so that you build a fuller picture for your reader:

- For example, one time ___ years ago I/we/they . . .
- Another example of ___ is . . .
- There are four types of ___ that we should explore: . . .
- The two most important things about this point/statistic are . . .
- Three things that will surprise / amaze / irritate you about ___ are . . .
- One aspect of this that few people realize/notice is . . .

You might try some other exercises that can help you dig into big ideas and find the vivid details that can give readers a fuller picture of what's in your head. Since you know that readers may also be skeptical—they don't have to believe your argument just because you said so—you might challenge yourself to provide more reasons and explanations as you write your early draft.

Practice

- To practice **generating more details**, see Explode a Moment or Inner Three-year-old.
- To practice identifying more **areas of your topic** or issue, see Subtopic Generator or Three Cubes.
- To practice providing more complete explanations of your **reasoning**, see Cause-Effect Map or Gray-Area Finder.

Generate in conversation with other writers

What if you're conducting research and learning about an issue as you write: should you just make up statistics as you go ("Something like 35% of all US six-year-olds believe in Santa Claus"), or leave placeholders whenever you don't know something ("Add facts about kangaroos here")? You could do either of those if you wish: it's your early draft, and you can set the expectations! (Make sure you put your made-up facts in another font or color, though, so you catch them when you revise.)

But because writing creates knowledge, you might want to create knowledge that aligns with the information or arguments presented by other writers, so that you are getting the most advantage from your own reading and research. This doesn't mean you have to write a sentence, then stop and go read an article, and then come back and write another sentence. Instead, try using strategies that help you balance stating your own ideas with connecting to readers' positions or knowledge. Remember that your goal is to generate steady writing without worrying about the precise order or style of your sentences; in another draft, you can "fix up" your ideas and create smooth, focused paragraphs.

Practice

- To experiment with **general conversations**, see Backtalk, Counter-argument Generator, or Dialogue.
- To focus on more **specific exchanges** of ideas, see Scenarios or They Say + I Say.

Generate by switching gears

Sometimes writers feel intimidated by the structures or situations of a writing task. Maybe you're great at writing fiction, but stressed about writing academic arguments about South Korean economics; perhaps you love writing to your favorite cousin, but the minute you think of writing a report for your lieutenant or an important client, you freeze up. Or you might be completely ready to write your fourth main point, but you're stuck trying to write the first three. Sometimes, you're not even sure what's stopping you from writing.

It's okay to shift gears and try an alternate approach. Remember that there's no one successful process, especially in an early draft:

- You can write in any order, so if you know what you want to write for your fourth point, write that first and see what new thinking it helps you create
- You can write in any style or genre, so if changing your approach lowers your stress or raises your motivation, try that shift

- You don't even have to be writing on the topic of your exact project specifications to be making progress—any kind of *writing* is better than no writing at all!

In each of the alternative writing tasks suggested below, the main point is that *you're still writing*, and you're still writing about ideas that are important to you: you're not fussing with your phone or thinking about dinner or reviewing your performance in yesterday's swim meet. Writing leads to thinking which leads to more writing: soon you can move yourself back to your main project with confidence.

Explore 7.3

In order to generate writing using any of the strategies listed above, you need to be able to tune out your inner critic; otherwise, you'll just get started when some problem will cause you to stop. Sometimes your inner critic is based on things that real people have told you about your writing: it's not ___ enough, or it's too ___, or you don't understand ___. You may even hear these people's voices in your head, or recall a comment written on a document you composed. Sometimes your inner critic draws on your own ambitions or worries—or perhaps you just have a vague sense of foreboding about writing.

Write a few sentences about the criticisms or faults that you most worry about as you write, especially for a school or workplace task. Then finish with a sentence: Knowing what you do about how advanced writers work, what can you tell yourself as you compose that will help you silence, or at least turn down the volume on, these concerns?

Practice

- To write when you **don't know** what to write, see Believing/Doubting or Used to Think/Now I Think.
- To gain momentum by working with a **more familiar** or interesting rhetorical situation, see Audience Switch, Genre Switch, or Stance Switch.
- To loosen up and **silence your inner critic**, see Funny Story, Letter to Kermit, Values Freewrite, or Write the Problem.

7.4 Plan a Structure: Choose and Adapt Organizational Patterns

"It just doesn't flow."

You have probably said this about texts you were assigned to read or review, and you may have said it about your own writing. "Flow" is a vague term; like "writer's

block" it is commonly used but not very helpful in addressing the challenges writers face. Advanced writers who are aiming to create a smooth structure often start by distinguishing *organization* difficulties (like choosing and arranging bricks to form a sturdy wall) from *cohesion* difficulties (like spreading mortar among the pieces to help the pieces connect smoothly).

As you start writing, you may find it helpful to work on choosing your organizational pattern(s): what bricks will go where? Like all other elements of your writing, your organization is rhetorical: writers build structures to serve our own purposes and to meet the needs of specific readers. Therefore, despite what you might have learned or guessed, there are no firm rules about:

- What comes first or last in a document
- How long paragraphs should be
- Where you should use "thesis sentences" or "topic sentences"
- How to arrange the information in the middle of paragraphs
- How many paragraphs or sections you need
- What order your information or arguments should come in

However, writers can become more efficient—and connect better with readers—when we deliberately choose organizational patterns.

Choosing and repeating a pattern helps advanced writers quickly create a paragraph or section that resembles an earlier one. In addition, readers expend less energy and have increased comprehension when they can predict the rhythms and patterns of a document. The pattern(s) you choose may reflect the genre you are writing in, your goals as a writer, and your readers' needs.

Of course, you can vary your patterns once you have chosen them: patterns are not rules, and they are not "one size fits all." As you consider how best to connect with your audience, remember how variations to patterns—a key change in a song, a spicy dish in a buffet—often serve to intensify readers' experiences. Efficiency is one goal best served by a reliable pattern, but writers often also seek engagement, power, and precision, goals that might be best achieved through surprises and adaptations.

Use organizational patterns rhetorically

One reason that many of us struggle to get our writing to "flow" is that there isn't usually a single best approach. Take a "simple" organizational task like deciding how many paragraphs you should have, and how long your paragraphs should be. You might lean on previous patterns: perhaps you learned how to write a "five-paragraph essay," or were taught a rule that a paragraph needs to be eight sentences long.

But advanced writers know the number and length of paragraphs can be a lot more flexible—more like deciding how big a load of laundry can be before you put it in a washing machine. There are limits, of course: if all the paragraphs (or laundry loads) are too small, they can waste a reader's energy, keeping the brain machinery always starting and stopping. On the other hand, if all the paragraphs are too large, they overload a reader's brain and nothing gets processed the right way. So it helps to choose a paragraph size that matches readers' brains (busy managers may prefer smaller paragraphs than English professors do) and mostly stick to that as your pattern.

However, paragraphs are flexible structures of information. Is there ever reason for you to do one tiny laundry load, even if it might waste money or energy? Sure: maybe you've got an important event to attend Friday night and you just need to wash your best black shirt and pants quickly. Is there ever reason to do one slightly oversized load? Absolutely: perhaps there's only time for one load and you need *all* the t-shirts clean.

The same is true for paragraphs: sometimes, you have just one important thing to say, or you want to make a dramatic appeal, so you want a short paragraph—even a one-sentence paragraph. On the other hand, sometimes you have a complex explanation that you want your reader to work through all at once, so you stretch your paragraph a little longer than usual. The same principle holds true for the number and arrangement of paragraphs or sections: if you select a pattern appropriate for your goals and your readers' needs, and you don't vary that pattern too much, readers will still think your document "flows."

Consider linear and point-by-point patterns

As you plan a writing project, you can benefit from identifying a basic pattern that you want to use for the *order* of your information or arguments. Common order patterns—for individual paragraphs and for whole projects—often get grouped into **linear** and **point-by-point** strategies.

You can decide to follow a line through time (**chronological pattern**) or a line through space (**spatial pattern**) to help you solve paragraph problems.

Linear structures often work well for

- Narrating events
- Explaining a process or instructions
- Conveying a sense of progress or action
- Engaging less experienced readers

You can choose a **point-by-point pattern** to help you solve your paragraph problems. Some common point-based patterns include comparisons, category- or

classification-based structures, and reason + counterargument patterns.

Point-by-point patterns often work well for

- Analyzing a concept
- Comparing two ideas or objects
- Arguing about values, causes, or solutions
- Exploring counterarguments or alternatives
- Presenting ideas to expert readers

Adapt a linear pattern to focus on key elements

The play-by-play announcer of a basketball game and a steady panoramic video of a mountain valley provide entirely linear coverage of their subject matter. For writers, linear approaches are still rhetorical: you should let your paragraphs adapt to your goals and your readers' needs, rather than trying to cram what you see or remember into a predetermined format.

Identify clusters or core experiences: Just as photographers decide how to frame a scene and television producers decide where to break for a commercial, you will need to decide how to break up your line of communication into paragraphs that are easy for your readers to digest. Often, events and spaces blur together, so you may have to make some deliberate decisions about what the timeframe or space of each paragraph will be.

Vary the amount of detail: Whether you choose to write about your fourteenth birthday party or a construction site in downtown Reno, Nevada, you will not provide an equal amount of detail about all parts of the event or place. Instead, you will want to go into greater depth about moments of especially high emotion, surprising aspects or connections, or elements that help support your overall goal of moving your readers toward reflection or action.

Vary the linearity occasionally and carefully: You can create interest and emphasis by breaking the line now and then. The most common time break is a *flashback*: a memory of an event that occurred earlier, such as recalling your fifth birthday party while describing your fourteenth. You can also make a *spatial shift*. If you're discussing a new building in Reno from the ground up, you can shift from discussing the rain barrels on the ground floor to noting the special high-tech "green" rooftop that uses the collected water. You may need to increase your signaling—by including

sufficient transitional words and phrases, for instance—to provide cohesion when you are interrupting your chronological or spatial line.

Adapt a point-by-point pattern to emphasize your priorities

When the topic or issue you're writing about has no obvious linear structure, you will need to choose and implement a logical plan. Writers struggle with point-based organization because it involves at least three major decisions: selecting *what's important* to say, dividing the important material into *categories* or *sub-topics*, and choosing the *order of points* overall in the document. As in sorting laundry, there are no absolute right answers: sometimes you might sort clothes by colors (if preventing the reds from seeping into the whites is important), and other times you might sort by popularity (if having the right outfit to wear tomorrow to church or a concert is important).

Plan goal-oriented paragraphs. To choose and reveal your point-by-point structure, you should plan not just for what each paragraph's topic is ("what it says") but for its goal ("what it does"). In a college essay analyzing several key causes of strengthened voting rights in Nigeria, your goal for each paragraph may be quite similar: "*Analyze* the reasons X is a cause. *Analyze* the reasons Y is a cause." In other documents, you may shift goals several times: a laboratory report may move from "*state* the key hypothesis" to "*summarize* the steps taken" to "*analyze* the results, expected and unexpected."

Select a plausible order. Once you've decided you want to write about four influences on Nigerian voting rights, you need to consider how to order them. Perhaps you spot a clear chronology, and you can address earlier efforts first; more often, you will need to create your own point-by-point pathway. Writers often consider arranging subtopics in order of familiarity or agreeableness to readers, in order of importance to the author or reader, or in order of effectiveness or impact on the situation: you can arrange any of these patterns in an increasing order (low to high importance) or a decreasing order (high to low familiarity).

Allow for uneven patterns. You may have been taught that an organized paragraph or essay follows a balanced outline format, in which "You cannot have an 'A' without a 'B'" and in which all your sections should be nearly equal in size and emphasis. However, writing rhetorically usually brings more complications. You may have more information on some aspect of your issue—or you may know that readers want or need more persuading on one aspect. So a "perfect" four-point pattern like the one on the left may not work as well as the plan on the right, which is still *predictable* even though it has *varied emphasis*.

Completely even pattern

A. Sub-topic 1
   1. Supporting detail
   2. Supporting detail
   3. Supporting detail

B. Sub-topic 2
   1. Supporting detail
   2. Supporting detail
   3. Supporting detail

C. Sub-topic 3
   1. Supporting detail
   2. Supporting detail
   3. Supporting detail

D. Sub-topic 4
   1. Supporting detail
   2. Supporting detail
   3. Supporting detail

Pattern with some varied emphasis

A. Sub-topic 1, first part
   1. Supporting detail
   2. Supporting detail
   3. Supporting detail

B. Sub-topic 1, second part
   4. Supporting detail
   5. Supporting detail

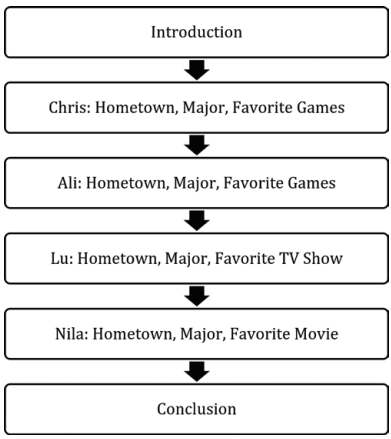
C. Sub-topic 2
   1. Supporting detail
   2. Supporting detail

D. Sub-topic 3
   1. Supporting detail
   2. Supporting detail
   3. Supporting detail

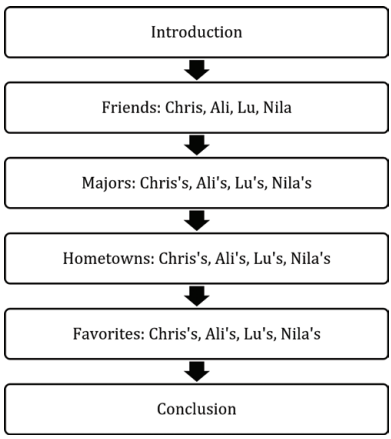
E. Sub-topic 4
   1. Supporting detail, explained at length

Consider a block pattern or a side-by-side pattern for comparing or arguing. When you have multiple details to share about two or more items, texts, concepts, or events, use clear patterns so that readers can follow your thinking. You can imagine two basic patterns for sharing information by considering how you could introduce four friends to your parents. In a block pattern, each friend would have their own block: you say everything about Chris, then everything about Ali, and so on. In a side-by-side pattern, you could state everyone's name, then go around again: in the same order say what each person's home town is, and then say each person's major.

Block pattern: Description

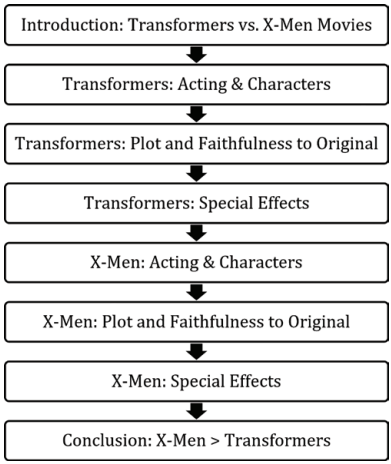


Side-by-side pattern: Description

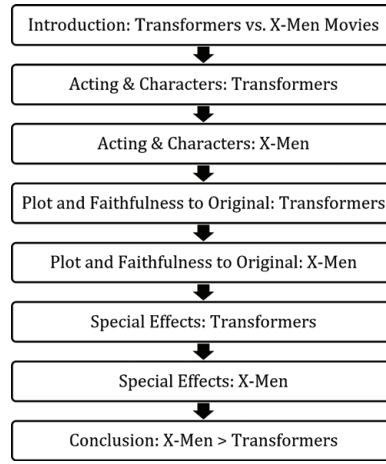


In some writing, the differences between these approaches are subtle: one emphasizes each person separately, while the other may emphasize what they have in common. When you're writing a comparative argument, however, your pattern may be more strategic: choosing a side-by-side pattern, for instance, will help you show readers some very precise distinctions between items that may seem similar on the surface.

Block pattern: Argument
(Useful if differences are easy to spot)



Side-by-side pattern: Argument (Useful if differences are harder to see)



Likewise, when you are presenting arguments, counterarguments, and responses, the structure affects the impression on readers. Readers who are highly skeptical of your proposal may be frustrated if you put all of your supporting arguments first, but more engaged if you consider their counterarguments throughout your document in a side-by-side arrangement.

Block pattern with counter-arguments (Useful with readers who mostly accept your ideas)

Side-by-side pattern with counter-arguments (Useful with readers who mostly resist your ideas)

The models in these diagrams are simplified to help you see how writers establish a rhythm that readers can begin to anticipate. Your goal as a paragraph writer and arranger is to help readers quickly perceive the clusters and connections within the information you are presenting—and yet to allow enough variation that you are truly communicating with readers in ways that meet your core goals, not simply arranging words neatly on the page.

Explore 7.4

To start a writing project by considering its structure, you can certainly use a common approach like an outline. But there are lots of variations of outlining, as well as other ways to plan for a document. Take a look at a couple of the structuring exercises below, and write yourself a few notes. What's one approach that you think might work for you as you start an upcoming writing project? What's an approach that you think probably wouldn't work for you? Add a sentence or two about the kinds of structure-based approaches that are most compatible with your goals and skills as a writer right now.

Practice

- To practice with **more linear structures**, see Cause-Effect Map or Six Structures.
- To practice with **less linear structures**, see 3D Mind Map, Map the Terrain, or Source Synthesis Grid.

Learn

- To learn more about specific **patterns of development** such as narration, exposition, classification, or argumentation, see Chapter 14, Selecting and Combining Composing Moves.
- To learn more about anticipating and addressing **counterarguments**, see Chapter 17, Developing Projects that Argue.

Consider closed-form and open-form paragraphs

In addition to selecting the order of information on a whole-document level, you can also choose a repeating pattern for the structure of your paragraphs. While your paragraphs can vary in size without confusing readers, you may want to make some initial decisions about whether you want them to more strictly lead readers through a topic or argument, or whether you prefer to have readers take a more exploratory route. As you read the examples that follow, try to pay attention to the differences between "closed form" and "open form" paragraph patterns.

1.Strictly closed-form paragraphs are common—and useful—in US academic and professional writing for several reasons. 2.First, writing in colleges and workplaces is often argumentative in nature, and in US culture it is considered helpful for a writer to signal his or her point at the start of a paragraph or section. 3.For example, when this paragraph started, you knew it was going to argue in favor of closed-form paragraphs, and you were prepared to hear the evidence. 4.In addition, US academic audiences are often heterogeneous and reading at a fast pace. 5.Writers who announce their goals clearly at the starts and finishes of paragraphs and sections help even diverse and sometimes inattentive readers stay focused. 6.Moreover, when a writer opens and closes all paragraphs with sentences that mention the sub-point, those sentences help create smoother transitions between paragraphs, because the language and ideas are so similar at the connection points. 7.Finally, writers of closed-form paragraphs often create a repeating pattern with many of their internal sentences. 8.For instance, writers may try always to use a general claim or commentary sentence, like the previous one, and then follow it with a specific example sentence like this one. 9.Of course, some closed-form paragraphs vary the patterns or signals: they state their argument in the second sentence, for instance, or they omit a concluding sentence drawing the paragraph together. 10.Yet even though not all paragraphs need to be as closed-form as this one is, you might be surprised at how successful you can be in using a closed-form paragraph structure in your classes or workplace writing.

The first sentence predicts the topic and arguable claim. (1)

Several sentences identify sub-points or reasons (2, 4, 7, 9); these are followed by exact examples or explanations. (3, 5, 6, 8, 9)

Several sentences begin with transitions that tell readers whether they are reading a sub-point (First, Moreover), an example (For instance) or a counterargument (Of course).

The last sentence reaffirms the opening claim. (10)

1.Some of the most memorable comments I have heard from student writers have to do with their frustration about revising to satisfy the organizational demands of their instructors. 2.A student from Japan once told me, "The way my teacher wants me to write is how we talk to toddlers in my country! Everything spelled out as if readers have no brains of their own!" 3.A student from a rural US high school grumbled, "I came to college to get away from the regulations of formulas and five-paragraph essays, to finally write in my own voice, and now my prof wants to put me right back in chains!" 4.Both of these students understand that writers and audiences might sometimes benefit from writing that holds together and keeps readers interested without a locked-down pattern. 5.Each person might feel more confident writing in a more **open style**, creating paragraphs that evolve toward a point rather than stating it and then hammering away at it, or writing paragraphs that ebb away at the end like a high tide shifting rather than giving a loud trumpet blast. 6.These writers might present evidence all at once; they might mention reasons without giving a first-second-third list. 7.Maybe a writer thinks they can trust their readers to be knowledgeable and careful enough to infer the point of the paragraph without clear guides. 8.Perhaps a writer is writing in a genre or situation in which readers *expect* to provide interpretation on their part—or the writer already established the core arguments earlier in a document, and now wants to ask readers to stretch their brains. 9.Whatever their reason, these writers may find they feel more assured in their writing when they adopt an open-paragraph style, like the student who told me, "Some days, I write to explore an idea and just invite readers to join me."

This paragraph begins with a description, not a claim. (1)

This paragraph provides additional vivid examples all together. (2, 3, 4)

The exact topic of this paragraph is most clearly noted in the middle. (5)

This paragraph finishes with more examples about the same topic. (6, 7, 8)

The final sentence echoes a main idea: more confident writing. (9)

Explore 7.5

Consider the two paragraphs above. In addition to the notes already added, identify 2-3 strategies that you see each paragraph using. You might explore how each paragraph's last sentence resembles or differ from the first sentence; how often key words such as "writer," "closed" and "paragraph" appear; how many different reasons or examples are included in each paragraph; and/or the order of points or examples. Which of these strategies worked best for you as a reader, and why?

Of course, if you have been paying attention, you've probably noticed that this textbook doesn't use either of those paragraph styles precisely. Does that mean there's a third choice? No, and yes.

A lot of this textbook is actually written in closed-form paragraphs, but the paragraphs are visually broken into smaller sections because in the genre of textbooks—as in the overall genre of instruction manuals—shorter paragraphs are expected in order to help busy readers like you. But if you look at the four paragraphs right here (starting with "Of course . . ."), they actually form one closed paragraph: main idea at the start, supporting reasons and counterarguments here in the middle bits, and concluding sentence at the end.

So one answer is "No": Writers need to choose whether we lean more toward a highly structured pattern, or whether we prefer to give our readers interesting ideas woven carefully together but not always directly argued or stated outright.

But the more important answer is "Yes": Writers are always adapting the way our paragraphs look on the page, changing the degree of directness we adopt, and varying the amount of structure we provide to assist their readers. Writers who create paragraphs rhetorically always adjust paragraphs to match the information we need to provide, the arguments we strive to convey, and the demands we anticipate from readers.

Revise honestly to improve organization

Even a writer who is following a carefully balanced outline can create a draft that has some structural flaws. Because writers read our own minds as well as what's on the page, and because we're used to our own thought patterns, we think our document "flows" even when other readers might be truly stumped. Organizational revisions are among the hardest to do, because they can require drastic actions like cutting, moving, or adding large chunks of text, right when writers are the most exhausted from composing. But these changes are often necessary.

Before you decide that your document is finished, check it for the six common organizational flaws below. You might begin by assuming that you have *at least one* of these problems to solve, since most of us do. (As I revised this chapter recently, I had to work a lot on the second, third, and sixth flaws!) To help see your document as readers do, you could try making a new outline, and then be as honest about what you see, and as empathetic as possible with your readers, as you identify areas for revision.

The ends don't match. Since writers learn as we write, sometimes we end up writing about ideas we hadn't planned to address when we wrote the introduction. That's fine for a draft, but readers like a document that is consistent. If you spot this flaw and you still like your beginning best, you need to cut or change some of your end; if you now like your ending best, you need to alter your early writing to bring it in line.

You're off on a tangent. A statistic about dogs may remind you of your beloved dachshund, but that doesn't mean that the three sentences you wrote about little Fido are appropriate for an argument about service dogs in the US Army. Our tangents aren't always so obvious, so it can help to challenge yourself to see your weakest links: if you *had* to cut one sentence per paragraph, or one paragraph in the document, which one would it be? Are you still sure your readers need it?

You're on a crooked path. Once you have a complete draft, it's easier to spot whether your initial order of ideas still makes sense. If you organized point-by-point from least important to most important ideas, but now you think the second idea is actually most important, it's time to move it. To spot an opportunity, try writing the key idea of each paragraph/section on a sticky note, and take a few minutes to try out all the possible arrangements: are you still sure your current path is the easiest to follow?

It's coming around again. If you set a paragraph pattern to alternate evenly between writing about Restaurant Alpha and Restaurant Beta in your review, readers will get into that rhythm. But sometimes a sentence about Alpha will crop up in a paragraph about Beta, or you'll write several paragraphs about Beta and then tuck in an extra point about Alpha, and readers will be confused: didn't we already see this before? To revise, try color coding each sentence with a different highlighter or font color per subtopic, to see how you might reorganize to address each issue once only.

It's a random "box of chocolates." While you *can* successfully use a one-sentence paragraph to emphasize a point, you won't usually want to limit your thinking on a subtopic to one or two sentences. When we compose rapidly, writers often toss several slightly related ideas into a paragraph, or write several very short paragraphs, giving the draft a random "box of chocolates" feel: just one tiny bite of each, when readers are hungry for more depth. To revise, you have several choices: *frame* and develop a paragraph with explanations of how all the parts relate; *expand* your discussion of one or more ideas into full paragraphs of their own; and/or *cut* ideas—like that pickle-flavored chocolate—that turn out to be less interesting than you once thought.

It's the paragraph that ate New York: Writers often underestimate how much readers know, or how much is needed to explain a subtopic. So we can end up writing one huge paragraph on one angle—even without a single tangent—that will completely overload readers' brains. If you spot a monster paragraph, you may have to re-sort it into two sections (like separating the really dirty white clothes from less dirty ones in the laundry room to make two smaller loads); if you're using more of a closed-structure approach, pay attention to how the new paragraphs start and finish.

Explore 7.6

Having a clear structure set up for a writing task makes some writers feel confident but makes some writers feel more constrained, and still other writers like structure but are frustrated when they have to create it themselves. Write a three-sentence letter to encourage yourself in this area: "Dear Me, I know that outlines and structures for writing usually make you/me/us feel ___. One strategy I just read about that I think can help is ___ because ___. And the next time you/I/we get stuck thinking about structures, I think you/I/we should remember that ___. Sincerely, Me."

7.5 Build Cohesion by Signaling Readers

In addition to selecting your *pattern* strategies, you can improve the "flow" of your document by adapting your *signal* strategies, or what sometimes get called cohesion strategies. When you're driving in a strange city, even when you have a map or good GPS, signals are crucial to help you feel that you are moving smoothly along the right route, like signs that indicate that the interstate exit is coming up on your right, or message boards that warn of slow traffic or detours ahead. Similarly, signals help readers feel that they are moving easily through your document.

Signals are rhetorical, too: writers adjust them depending on circumstances. In the US, our communication culture has evolved toward a *writer-responsible* culture: if the reader is feeling lost, we think the writer needs to improve their signals. This responsibility does not always seem fair, just as it doesn't always seem that it should be your fault if your rowdy three-year-old cousin runs off in the shopping mall despite your efforts to keep track of them. Yet every time you have sighed and said, "This article is too hard—I can't follow their arguments!" you have placed responsibility on the writer, much like your aunt putting her hands on her hips and asking you why security had to go looking for her child.

Thus in the majority of texts that you will compose for US professional and academic audiences, you will be expected to do extra work so that readers do not get lost—not because readers are lazy or ignorant, but because readers are often:

- **Diverse**: readers don't always share a writer's cultural background or intellectual assumptions, so writers often provide extra direction,
- **Impatient**: readers prefer to know what's going on very quickly when they encounter texts, so writers often make key ideas obvious,
- **Disputative**: readers like to test their own knowledge and opinions against new ideas being proposed, so writers often restate their conclusions,

Of course, readers in some situations prefer to be surprised or to take responsibility: we go to horror movies to be shocked, and we read poetry to think hard about our own perspectives. Yet even in horror movies, we get upset over too big a surprise (such as killing off a main character too early). Likewise, we hope a powerful poem will raise questions, but we also value vivid imagery that helps anchor our explorations. Remember, these expectations are culturally and rhetorically based, not absolute: if you are studying in a class with peers from diverse US backgrounds or other countries, or peers who have different workplace situations, you might ask them how readers' expectations differ for writing that they admire.

Cohesion can be important to consider even when you have planned your overall structure in a careful pattern. If you arrange your ideas in order but readers can't spot the pattern you've used, their confidence will drop and they might feel lost, especially in a long document or a complex analysis. When you are working on a familiar writing task, you might be able to build cohesion as you go, using strategies like the ones below. However, most writers need to address cohesion separately as part of our revision process, like city planners adding signs after the roads are paved.

Highlight the "Pink House": Use cohesion signals rhetorically

Consider a common signal like a thesis statement for an essay or a topic sentence for a paragraph. You may have learned that all essays have a single thesis sentence at the end of the first paragraph and a direct topic sentence at the start of each paragraph. There are some rhetorical benefits for this kind of signaling, especially when writing for diverse, impatient, disputative readers. You may find it helpful to imagine a "Pink House" scenario:

> You're driving down an interstate highway at sixty-five miles an hour with four friends from out of town, and you abruptly announce, "Hey, there's that amazing Pink House!" Suddenly there's a lot of whiplash-inducing head swiveling, and someone's elbow ends up in someone else's ribs, and one of your friends gets a glimpse but can't tell if it's pink or gray—and one misses it entirely and accuses you of making things up—and they all mostly blame you for their inability to see the cool Pink House.

A responsible guide could give a better signal: "Hey, heads-up, coming up on the right in about two miles, there's an amazing huge neon Pink House: watch for it!" Your friends would be ready, they'd know where to look and what to look for, and they'd most likely see what you wanted them to see.

Like a driver who is familiar with a road, a writer who is familiar with a concept or document might not realize how quickly readers speed through a text. Writers

need to imagine how important a "heads-up!" can be to direct readers' attention even to something that seems totally obvious. But your Pink House move doesn't always look the same:

- If you're traveling more slowly, or your friends are already the kind of people who look at houses, or you're in the sparsely populated open plains of eastern Colorado, you can give a **later or shorter signal**.
- If you need your friends to notice a particular architectural style detail, or you want them to give their analysis whether they think this Pink House is better than the Green House you pointed out earlier, you may need an **earlier or more extended signal**.
- If it doesn't really matter to you that your friends spot every object on this drive, you might content yourself with a **less obvious signal** such as, "This next neighborhood is pretty colorful," or even, "Do you all like the color pink?"

It's likely that your readers need more signals than you might first guess: as long as you don't end up with readers missing your point, choosing a signal strategy to match your situation can increase readers' sense of "flow."

Sing the chorus: Repeat main ideas and key words

Academic and professional readers in the US are not just impatient (and so they skim documents quickly): they also live in a culture that accustoms them to repetition of key messages, from traffic alerts on phones to repeated advertisements for tacos during televised sporting events. For these readers, a main ingredient of "flow" is repetition: when readers encounter and re-encounter key words and main arguments, they feel confident that the writer is "staying on topic" and are more able to see relationships between specific details and main points.

Of course, writers need to distinguish between ineffective repetition—that is, repeating examples or information as "filler" and thus boring the reader—and repetition that boosts our cohesion. To understand how repeating your key concepts will help your reader stay aware of your main line of thinking, you might consider how we respond to popular music. Take the US holiday song "Jingle Bells," for instance, or whatever popular song everybody is listening to this month: the next time you listen, count the number of times the chorus, or even simply the title phrase, comes up. Do we get bored by the repetition? Not usually. In fact, the chorus is often the only part of the song the listener learns and can sing along with. (Beyond a few phrases like "Dashing through the snow," almost nobody knows all the verses to "Jingle Bells" by heart; we just mumble along until the silly title phrase comes along and we can yell it out again with gusto.) Repeating the chorus helps bring the audience along from verse to verse: the audience thinks, "Aha, right, I *know* this!"

Since what you are communicating is probably more complex than "Winter is fun!" or "I will always love you," your readers will tolerate and even value repetition of your chorus. Sometimes you may need to repeat precise words or phrases; sometimes you will vary the phrasing a little (but not so much that readers forget to "sing along"). Effective repetition may look a little different as you switch audiences or genres, but the principle is similar: consider how to build a strong chorus in three documents with the same main point, "Electric buses will benefit the citizens of El Paso, Texas."

	Effective chorus repetition	Ineffective repetition
Academic essay about overall benefits, using closed paragraphs	• First and/or last sentences of each paragraph that repeat elements of the argument with a little variation: "One advantage of electric buses is cleaner air for El Paso." • Frequent use of synonyms for key terms (*locals*, *residents*, and *taxpayers* all remind readers of who benefits) and pronouns (*they* benefit from this change) as well as repeated key terms, especially ordinary or technical terms with few reasonable synonyms (*buses* will occur a lot).	• Two sentences mid-paragraph that say the same information: "The buses produce less smog. Therefore we will have lower amounts of smog." • Repeated terminology that is of secondary importance: a phrase like "urban heat island" will start to stick out if repeated. • Repeated sentence structure: "These buses are efficient. These buses are inexpensive. These buses are clean."
Memo to city council members recommending bus purchase	• Concluding sentences to paragraphs or sections repeat the goal, with some variation: "Buying new buses will thus save taxpayers' money." • Sub-headings use parallel structure: "Cleaner Local Air . . . Lower Lifetime Cost."	• Data repeated in different paragraphs: "Two-thirds of residents in our poll favored electric buses over diesel buses" and "Polls show 65% of voters recommend this switch."
Poster about new buses at city bus stops	• Repeated tag-line, such as "Bus of the Future" or "Better for El Paso." • Repeated font and/or color, such as a fresh-air blue, to build consistent positive emotion. • Repeated icon, such as a speedy swoosh or child figure, to remind readers of key benefits.	• Repeated reasons, even in different language: "Saves money! Lowers taxes! Cost-efficient!" • Repeated exact images: if readers have seen one bus photo, they may have seen enough.

Of course, however: Use transition words and phrases

Like other signals, transition words and phrases are rhetorical. Many readers want ideas to connect smoothly, but they can disagree about whether connectors like "First . . ., Second . . ., Third . . ." or "In conclusion . . .," provide helpful guidance or make a document's structure too obvious. In general, when readers have little knowledge, limited time, or high skepticism, they tend to prefer more directional signals from writers. So as advanced writers, we can make better judgments about using transition words and phrases during revision and editing, when we know more about our audience and about the tricky parts of our document.

Selecting transition words and phrases for your document is like giving directions to someone who has no map or GPS. These words can give readers extra confidence about their general progress (*In addition* says "keep going straight," and *For example* says slow down and look carefully), but they are particularly important when you are asking readers to change course. A common argument move—acknowledge a counterargument and then respond to it—has two U-turns that could disorient readers. Writers can help readers by framing the opposition with "*Of course*, some scholars object . . ." and the return to our own view with "*However*, more recent research shows . . ." In a complex document or a structure, you might use these transition words in the middles of paragraphs as well as at the beginnings and ends. In these cases, writers often repeat some common signals like *however* or *for example*: the phrases don't stick out to academic and professional readers, and they increase a sense of "flow."

> **NOTE:** Selecting the best transition word requires attention and exploration. The words have different style connotations: although *presently* and *next* have the same general function (indicating a move forward in time), *presently* has a more formal style, while *next* is blunter.
>
> Also, the **boldfaced** transitions below are subordinating or coordinating conjunctions. They must be used to connect two complete sentences: "Chris went to the store *after* the coach canceled practice," or "*After* the coach canceled practice, Chris went to the store." Other transition words may be added to your sentences in a variety of ways, usually set off with commas: "*However*, he was still hungry," and "He was, *however*, still hungry," and "He was still hungry, *however*" are equally correct. Check with a peer reader if you're uncertain about a phrase that best fits your sentence and your style.

Chronological transitions:			
presently,	next,	from then on,	**before/after**
at length,	first,	by that time,	**since**
afterward,	soon,	subsequently,	**while/during**
meanwhile,	later,	earlier,	**when**
eventually,	now,	then	
Comparison transitions:			
likewise,	similarly,	once again,	
at the same time,	once more,	in like manner,	
compared to X,	again,	in much the same way,	
Continuation or addition transitions:			
furthermore,	in fact,	as a matter of fact,	**____(,) and**
moreover,	then, too,	for that matter,	**____(,) or**
in addition,	again,	in the first place,	
as noted earlier,	also,	in other words,	
indeed,	lastly,	besides that,	
Evidence or example transitions:			
for example,	frequently,	similarly,	
for instance,	generally,	in order to X,	
in particular,	in general,	to illustrate,	
specifically,	usually,	that is,	
in other words,	occasionally,	namely,	
Contradiction transitions:			
however,	even so,	conversely,	**although/[even] though**
nevertheless,	unlike X,	on the other hand,	**whereas**
on the contrary,	instead,	in spite of (despite) X,	**____(,) but**
in contrast,	still,	otherwise,	**____(,) yet**
Counterargument or concession transitions:			
of course,	after all,	to be sure,	
certainly,	doubtless,	indeed,	
granted,	naturally,	no doubt	
Cause-effect transitions:			
therefore,	thus,	as a consequence,	**since**
consequently,	then,	for this reason,	**because**
on the whole,	due to X,	accordingly,	**____, so**
as a result,	finally,	subsequently,	**____, and so**

Conclusion transitions:

therefore,	in a word,	to summarize,
on the whole,	in short,	in conclusion,
to conclude,	in summary,	in brief,
all in all,	finally,	

Create known-new patterns with paragraphs and sentences

A fast way to disorient a reader is to present completely unfamiliar information with no preparation. You already know some strategies for presenting familiar ideas first: often you have introduced a document by outlining a general concept or presenting a personal story about a common experience in order to engage readers. That principle can apply to your document organization overall: your early paragraphs can either address angles or arguments your readers might already be familiar with or provide background that readers need to prepare for your claims and explanations. Writers who argue or recommend change sometimes take this a step further by using a pattern that acknowledges resistant readers' own counterarguments first, then presents our evidence or analysis in response.

You can also smooth readers' experience by moving from known to new ideas at the sentence level. Since sentence-level choices can slow writers down while composing, we often pay attention to these patterns during revision and editing. Consider how the following cluster of sentences in an essay about eating local food can be revised so that each sentence begins either with a previously known general concept or with a newly known idea—perhaps one that readers just learned from the previous sentence.

Early draft	Revised draft	Known-new strategy
Genetic diversity in crops is a goal to be supported. To create uniformly ripening peaches and tomatoes that can travel a thousand miles, today's high-tech agriculture focuses on just a few varieties of foods. Along with breeding diverse livestock, environmentally aware farmers on smaller farms grow a wider array of crops that they can sell in season to meet local demand.	1.By eating local food, we can help increase genetic diversity in agricultural crops. 2.Today's high-tech agriculture limits food diversity in order to create a few varieties of uniformly ripening peaches and tomatoes that can travel a thousand miles. 3.Small local farms can grow a wider array of crops and breed diverse livestock that they can sell in season to meet local demand.	1. Adds information to start with the essay's overall known topic, "eating local food," rather than a new topic, genetic diversity. 2. Flips the order to start with "agriculture" as known from sentence 1, rather than leaping to uniformly ripening peaches. 3. Rearranges to start with "local farms," which echoes known information from sentence 1 and provides an easy contrast to "a thousand miles" in sentence 2.

Add and adapt signals as you revise and edit

Much of your cohesion-signaling work will happen during revision. As writers who are reading our own minds, we tend not to include enough signposts as we first compose, since our logic is perfectly clear to us. As revisers, then, writers often need to take extra steps keep readers from getting lost in the giant shopping mall of our thinking. Also, since you will likely revise your working thesis or preliminary focus statement, you will need to update your signals to match. Checking on specific cohesion moves as you revise will also help you see if you really are working on one idea at a time: if it feels awkward to connect two sentences or paragraphs together with repeated terms or transition phrases, perhaps they don't belong next to one another. If possible, you can ask a peer tell you whether you're being "too clear"; if you're revising on your own, remember that it's often better to give US academic and professional readers a little extra help, even if it feels "too obvious," than to have them miss your point.

Explore 7.7

Cohesion strategies often get phrased as rules or instructions rather than options: an instructor will say "Writers should always ___" or a supervisor will say "Try to avoid ____ in your writing." Write a few sentences about a cohesion strategy discussed in this section (topic sentences, repetition, transition words, known-new) or another approach for making your writing "flow" that you learned about as a rule or expectation: where did you learn this? in what ways does it help or frustrate you as a writer? what scenario can you think of where it might be better rhetorically to use an alternative approach?

Learn

- To learn more about how **genres** influence our need for signs and signals, see Chapter 13, Applying and Adapting Genres.
- To learn more about **revising** strategies, see Chapter 10, Revising from Feedback and Reflection.
- To learn more about strategies for **editing** rhetorically, see Chapter 11, Editing in Context

7.6 Introduce and Conclude Your Early Draft

In US academic and professional writing, openings and closings perform crucial rhetorical tasks: they engage readers, emphasize vital information, and/or present an author's final arguments. Since these sections have to accomplish so much, they can be difficult to write—and since they are so difficult, often teachers and writers try to reduce the difficulty by devising rules and procedures for the

paragraphs. If you have been told that "Your introductory paragraph must begin with a 'hook' sentence" or that "Your concluding paragraph needs to re-state your thesis sentence," you have encountered one of these rules. But you also know that openings and closings are rhetorical and dynamic just like all paragraphs, so rules won't cover every situation. The more you know about the rhetorical functions and typical patterns of these sections, the smarter your writing decisions about them will be.

Think rhetorically about introductions

First impressions are vital, and so writing your introductory paragraphs or sections constitutes some of the most important and challenging rhetorical work of any project. These are the moments when you most need your readers to attend to your goals—and they are the moments at which your readers may be least likely to do so because their attention is elsewhere, or because they are confused by or even opposed to the issues you are writing about. This is high stakes work: if you are writing to someone besides an instructor or supervisor, readers might not even continue reading if your opening fails to make this connection.

Here's one rule-based description of how to write an introductory paragraph:

> Start off generally, perhaps with an anecdote, surprising fact, or question; provide two sentences of background information; and then narrow to your thesis sentence.

Like most rules about writing, this recommendation is useful in some circumstances, but won't apply to others. What if you're writing a travel blog that doesn't have a thesis, or an annual report that doesn't have room for stories? To turn rules into more adaptable, rhetorical introduction strategies, advanced writers can consider a few broader moves. Writers should also make a plan to revise any introductory material after the complete document is drafted rather than trying to get it right the first time.

Meet your readers and engage their attention

Although *you* are interested in and motivated by your topic, readers have their own busy lives, their own fields of knowledge, and their own priorities. When you are convinced you have something worthwhile to communicate, you will need to meet them where they are and persuade them to invest time in your project. Identifying where their interests and yours connect, or even overlap, is a key first step.

Occasionally, readers are similar to you and inclined to like your topic, so you don't need much effort to establish your connection. For instance, if you are a

computer programmer writing about a new software update on your Tech News blog, your very first words can be on a narrow issue in specialized language: "The current operating system build fixes the wi-fi issues, lessens the interface lag, and stabilizes system interaction with major applications." Your readers either follow your blog already or they have landed on your page by a search for this exact topic, and so they don't need you to start with a memorable anecdote.

However, if you are writing an article for an online magazine for teenagers about how to choose the best tablet computer, most of your readers will not be technical specialists, and most of them will be distracted. They will be scrolling up and down on their phone, worrying about an upcoming class or whether that cute student in the red shirt likes them. You need to reach out a little further into your readers' current lives, so you might start with statistics about how tablets are cheaper and faster than ever, or even a story about teenagers scrolling on their phones.

If your readers are not just distracted but skeptical—you're trying to persuade cautious parents that video games have beneficial qualities—you may need to use your opening words to identify common ground, rather than diving into your exact issue. You can look for the nearest space where you and your readers might have a shared interest, understanding, curiosity, or value, such as the benefits of practicing problem-solving skills from an early age.

To strengthen the connection, you can link with readers' self-interest, enjoyment, or curiosity. When you explain from the start how video games are being used to support neurodiverse students, astronauts, and new nurses, you may make your writing more relevant to the interests of your readers. When you tell a compelling or humorous story or provide a vivid description early in your document, you provide a satisfying emotional moment that readers may seek to extend by reading further. You should also remember how much people like puzzles. All of the writers of "clickbait" headlines online are counting on readers' appetite for surprises: "You'll Never Guess What 5 Animals Justin Bieber Wants To Adopt Next." When you suggest a puzzle, identify a problem, or provide a startling fact, you engage readers who want to find an answer.

Whichever engagement strategies you choose, your goal is to use some of your opening words to persuade busy, distracted, even resistant readers to invest some of their precious time with you and your document.

Align your reader with your main goals

You don't just have a topic as a writer; you have a goal, a way that you hope to move your readers' minds with your writing. Introduction writers do sometimes need to provide some general background to help readers identify key people, concepts, or events; sometimes readers need some information about the issue in order to see how it connects with them or why there's a puzzle. But writers also

have a perspective to convey. As soon as you've met and engaged your readers, then, you can begin tugging them in toward your way of thinking.

Your opening sentences should give readers a good sense of your specific angle and goal—even before you get to an outright thesis or statement of purpose. "Provide background" is a situational recommendation: if you're not writing about the entire American Civil War but only analyzing the military strategies of a single battle near the end of it, you don't have to summarize the whole war in your introduction section. It's more important that readers understand your goal of examining strategies and how they fail. After providing some context about the time and place of the specific battle, you could focus readers' attention on your angle, by describing why success was vital and indicating what factors affected the outcome.

Even if you mostly just want your readers to explore an issue with you, they should be able to perceive your exploratory goal—what elements are of most interest to you?—and your initial direction from your introductory moves.

Help your reader predict how to read your document

Readers who know what ideas and approaches they're about to encounter—like shoppers with a list—are often more efficient, more capable of learning, and more satisfied. You read a humorous narrative differently than you read a financial report that directly affects your business. Moreover, US academic and professional readers often prefer to know from the start what a text's main idea is going to be, especially if it's complex or posing a new argument, so that they can decide if the document is worth their time, and then read quickly and effectively.

Of course, you do not have to write a single thesis sentence or put that sentence at the very end of your first paragraph. It's true that US academic essay readers often look for a clear indication of your goals at some point in your opening paragraph or two, the way that you always look for your keys and ID card in the tray next to the door where you leave them each night. But just as you are capable of finding your keys if you left them on the kitchen table—or if you leave them in your backpack when you stay at a friend's house—readers can be satisfied with your academic essay if you vary this pattern, and in other genres they might even expect a different pattern. You might not have a thesis sentence at all, or you might use two or three sentences to convey your proposal.

Likewise, you do not always need to list three reasons that neatly line up into your five-paragraph essay. Yet you can assist your reader if you explain your thinking beyond the basics of "Sea turtles need to be protected." If you add a "because" or "therefore" clause, you show your upcoming reasoning ("Sea turtles need to be protected *because* they are crucial in sustaining shallow-water ecologies"). And if you think readers are less knowledgeable or less attentive, you can provide an even

more direct blueprint or "road map" statement (which may be, but doesn't need to be, as obvious as "In this essay I will discuss A, B, and C"). Readers who see an overview of your structure at the start are less likely to get lost in the middle.

Overall, your opening section should function the way a good movie preview or channel guide does. If you've ever watched a movie preview that turned out to be nothing like the movie, you were probably pretty frustrated: "That wasn't a romance, it was all war and explosions!" Your introduction helps set readers' expectations for your whole document, so the more you can use it to convey your goals, values, and approaches, the more readers will think your whole document "flows."

Write a temporary introduction

Unless you are writing a very simple document to very familiar readers, you probably will not know how best to meet, steer, and inform readers at the moment you begin composing. Writers who try to write a perfect introduction right at the start often get stuck; this is a common point of feeling "writer's block."

But this is also a solvable writing problem: many writers compose a "placeholder introduction" and plan to revise it later. It can be helpful to articulate your draft thesis and a few simple sentences about why your project will interest readers, to give yourself direction—and leave yourself a note to "revise later." This two-step process makes sense: after all, you wouldn't get up on stage and introduce a famous person before you'd read their biography, so why would you expect to write the final version of your introduction to your essay or report before you've even written it? Professional writers don't know any more than you do what their whole document will be at the start; they've just learned how to revise their introductions to make it look like they knew all along. Imagine how much easier it will be to write a thesis statement with a "because" once you have already written all of your reasons, or to provide a "blueprint" list of your main points once they're already drafted!

If you're stuck, of course, there's no rule that says you need to write any introduction first; just start writing what you already feel comfortable with, and come back to work on your opening later when your confidence and knowledge have increased.

Think rhetorically about concluding

Every writer or speaker knows that their final words are important, whether these are as dramatic as a deathbed confession or as simple as "I'll miss you so much!" in a text to a friend as you leave town. Like introductions, conclusions are high-stakes writing: they provide your last and best chance to ensure that you have moved readers to new thinking or actions. If someone reads your document but

doesn't change, all your efforts may seem for naught. Indeed, in academic and professional writing, the challenges of concluding can be so tricky that writers sometimes just stop without concluding, or go overboard by drawing large profound conclusions not supported by the rest of the document.

Some popular formulas for writing conclusions may be frustrating for writers as much as they help:

> Start by restating your thesis. Then restate your major sub-points, in the order you made them. Finally, write a "kicker" or broadening sentence that connects your issue to a much wider topic—particularly if it echoes the idea or scenario of your introduction.

In a timed essay exam or a blog post you're writing quickly for your friends, these steps might work. But what if your profile of a famous cricket player never had a single thesis sentence, or your senior project on wedding planning has a dozen sub-points that would take forever to restate? You'll gain more widely applicable strategies—and feel less stuck—if you consider some of the rhetorical approaches that advanced writers use, and prepare to revise your essay once you've articulated your final points.

Help your readers recall your key points

Unless you have a very short document or you're working in a genre that doesn't generally use conclusions (such as an office memo or website landing page), it makes sense to help your reader remember your major points. So you can use a sentence or a few sentences to review not just your topics, but your own angles, emphases, and or arguments. (By this point, readers should be familiar with your chorus, and they may feel proud to discover that they remember the key ideas along with you.)

Readers aren't entirely clueless, though, so if you only *restate* what you already said, you might bore or annoy them; they might still be thinking, "So, what?" While your conclusion is not a place to take up a whole new issue, it can *amplify* your earlier writing, bringing a fresh power to your ideas. This is where the idea of a conclusion "kicker" comes from. If you think of it as a kicker, though, you can be tempted to apply too much force: your single essay about Sigmund Freud's early theories won't reveal the secrets to all of psychology, and the light-rail system you've proposed isn't the only way to stave off climate change, poverty, or a post-petroleum economic crash. You might think of this move more as giving readers a gentle nudge between the shoulder blades: you want to provide just enough direction and motion to change readers' inertia, but not slam them into a wall.

Rather than reaching for a huge, life-changing proclamation, consider adopting at least one of the other three strategies below: synthesizing a whole vision, suggesting expansion, and/or giving direction.

Make your message whole and memorable

Once you have finally written all the parts of your document, you can finally step back and see how they all connect. Part of concluding is synthesizing ideas to show readers how the pieces form a whole new idea. From an overview perspective, you can help your readers see:

- A pattern of causes or effects: what events or choices lead to what main consequences?
- A consensus of experiences, data, or experts: what do most people agree?
- A trend, theme, or overall lesson learned: what do the pieces add up to?
- A new understanding: how do unexpected connections shed light on a complicated issue?

You might not even have had this overall idea in mind when you started to write; you might have learned it as you composed and revised. When you articulate a pattern of connection, readers will have an integrated, memorable takeaway point, rather than having to remember lots of small subpoints.

Expand your readers' vision

If you have so far engaged and convinced readers through the evidence, analysis, and explanations you have provided, then readers may be ready to make a mental move. But they need your help to imagine a next step: how can readers step to a new level of understanding or a clearer view of how to integrate your ideas into their lives? Remember you're nudging rather than kicking a reader: try to expand your reader's vision by just one or two steps.

- How might understanding the concept, theory, or scenario you discussed help readers encounter one related concept or one set of new data?
- How would the principles you articulated apply one level out: from your family to your community, from today to next week, from your city to your state, from one experiment or performance to a follow-up event?
- How are your analyses or solutions relevant to one less-expected part of your readers' lives: can artwork affect psychology, does energy conservation connect to brand loyalty, can adenovirus cancer treatments give insights about treating immune-system illness?

As your readers gain broader vision of a wider context from your document, they can imagine carrying your insights forward into one aspect of their daily thoughts and choices.

Direct readers to a new route

If you are arguing for a more specific proposal—if you want readers to change their priorities or behavior—then your conclusion provides one final opportunity

to overcome readers' inertia. Since actual change is hard, whether it's changing an opinion or changing an action, you can use your closing words both to indicate *what* readers can do and emphasize *why* they should be motivated to act.

Few readers will leap up after finishing your document ready to completely agree that villains like Shakespeare's Iago are just victims of circumstance who deserve our sympathy, to switch to a vegan diet forever, or to start learning R as their main computing language. Instead of only directing readers to a single change that might feel too overwhelming to undertake, you can provide some initial smaller steps or some less drastic views to adopt (or adopt *first*), so that readers can see a feasible pathway toward change.

The larger the change you call for, the more you will need to provide relevant, reasonable motivation. Not all readers will immediately respond to general calls to act morally or eat healthily; not all readers will believe that their action alone will prevent teen suicides or improve a company's efficiency. When you connect your recommendation to readers' values and realistic opportunities, you can explain both the need and the likely success of readers' changes.

For both of these moves, you need to imagine a full trajectory: where were readers when you met them, what values and challenges affect their willingness and ability to change, and what alterations would be plausible and satisfying kind do you want them to be going when they finish? As you find a balance between grand, inspiring gestures and smaller, achievable alterations, you help readers go forward on a sustainable new trajectory.

Revise backward from your conclusion

Conclusions can be as hard to write as introductions: working on this high-stakes, reader-focused section can cause even very experienced writers to feel stuck. One problem may be that you're expecting the final section of the document to do all your most powerful reasoning for you. You can't turn your reader 180 degrees all at once, so ideally your whole document should work to bring readers toward the insights you have achieved. Now that you know what you most want to share with readers, you're in a much better place to go back and plant some clues that will lead them to your big ideas.

- **Align your introduction**. When writers start a project, we don't know exactly how it will turn out, even if we plan carefully. The placeholder introduction you composed earlier might now seem too broad to help readers know what to aim for, and a draft thesis might be too tentative to start them thinking about the mental moves you really want them to make. Consider transplanting some of the arguments, ideas, and key phrases from your conclusion to your introduction to strengthen the focus and cohesion of your document—and take some pressure off your final sentences.
- **Strengthen your evidence**. If you want to be bold in your conclusion, you

need bold evidence or reasonings earlier in the document. You might need a second or third cycle of research to help find information you can add earlier in the document that will help readers accept your final proposals.

- **Conclude throughout the document**. If you're using a closed paragraph structure, the final sentence or two of each paragraph should push readers' thinking toward your conclusion; if you're using a more indirect or open structure, you might weave more key phrases or provocative suggestions into earlier paragraphs. When you drop enough hints, each paragraph or section will nudge readers toward the new thinking or action you envision.

Writing or revising those whole-document nudges will create a pattern of concluding and thus increase readers' sense that your document is organized and cohesive. These additions can also help you finalize and articulate your goals so that you can more directly communicate them to your readers in your final sentences—and seal the deal powerfully in those all-important "last words."

Explore 7.8

Which is harder for you as a writer: writing your introductory paragraph(s) or writing your concluding paragraph(s)? Are they both equally hard or easy, just in different ways? Why? How could you use one of the strategies discussed in this section to help you out with the start or finish of an upcoming writing task?

Practice

- To consider key elements of your introduction, see Boil Down or Conclusion Transplant.
- To consider key strategies for your conclusion, see Elevator Speech or Out On a Limb.