The Scholarship of Writing in Nursing Education: 1st Canadian Edition

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JENNIFER LAPUM; OONA ST-AMANT; MICHELLE HUGHES; ANDY TAN; ARINA BOGDAN; FRANCES DIMARANAN; RACHEL FRANTZKE; AND NADA SAVICEVIC



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This open access textbook is intended to guide best practices in the journey of scholarly writing in the context of the nursing profession. This resource is designed for students in undergraduate nursing programs and may also be useful for students in other health-related post-secondary programs, graduate students, and healthcare providers.

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Level of Organization and Learning Outcomes

Level of Organization

Chapter 1 – Introduction
- Chapter 2 – Reading and Comprehension
- Chapter 3 – Information Literacy
- Chapter 4 – Types of Writing
- Chapter 5 – The Fundamentals of Writing
- Chapter 6 – The Writing Process and Pre-writing
- Chapter 7 – Drafting and Writing a Paper
- Chapter 8 – Revising and Editing a Paper
- Chapter 9 – Academic Integrity and Style Rules (APA 7th edition)

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this book, you will be able to:

- Recognize the importance of writing in the nursing profession.
- Recognize the unique quality of the writing approaches used in the nursing profession.
- Apply critical reading skills when reviewing

literature.

- Analyze competencies related to scholarly writing in nursing.
- Differentiate the types of writing in post-secondary nursing programs.
- Demonstrate reflexivity in writing.
- Demonstrate critical appraisal of literature and writing.
- Demonstrate academic integrity in the scholarship of writing in nursing.
- Demonstrate writing skills for nursing scholarship.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Define scholarly writing.
- Identify the relevance of scholarly writing to nursing.
- Identify post-secondary writing expectations.

Purpose and Audience of this Book

The purpose of this textbook is to facilitate your capacity for scholarly writing. No one is born a good writer: writing is a **journey** that takes skill and practice. Part of this journey involves learning to read and understand scholarly writing, becoming information literate, understanding the nature and types of scholarly writing, and developing your ability to engage in the writing process.



Figure 1.1: The journey of scholarly writing

This textbook is written for students in university-level nursing programs. It may also be useful for students in other health-related programs, graduate students, or healthcare providers. It is designed and co-authored by students for students. It is **written in second person** and in a **conversational tone** because the authors want to

engage and immerse you, the reader, in the journey to becoming a scholarly writer. However, please note that these styles are not generally used in scholarly writing. You will also notice that **gender-inclusive language** is used throughout. For example, the terms "they" and "their" are used purposefully as both singular and plural pronouns.

See **Audio Podcast 1.1** that provides an introduction about what to expect by one of the book's authors.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/scholarlywriting/?p=101#oembed-1

Audio Podcast 1.1: Introduction to textbook [2:41]

Helpful Features

- **Student Tips** with helpful information that will guide your writing.
- Important phrases are **bolded** in the text.
- Some unfamiliar and complex terms are **bolded in blue**; hover your cursor over the word and click on it for a definition. These terms are also included in a glossary at the end of the book.
- **Audio podcasts** from learners and experts about their journey to becoming a writer.
- **Images and videos** to help you connect with the content in a visual way.
- **Activities** to help you evaluate your knowledge.

- Chapter **summaries** along with **"Your Writing Journey" boxes** at the end of each chapter writing.

The textbook has a **self-directed format** and provides an interactive and engaging way for you to learn about and develop capacity in scholarly writing in the nursing context. You can review the full textbook or advance to sections that you have identified as areas you want to work on. This textbook is **best viewed online in the "Read Book"** format available through Pressbooks. The Read Book format enables all accessible multimedia content. You can also download a PDF to read offline.



Figure 1.2: View this textbook online

Introduction to Scholarly Writing

When you first enter university, you may be unfamiliar with scholarly writing. This genre of writing is associated with post-secondary education and many academic fields including nursing. When learning to write in a scholarly way, it is important to consider both the **content of your writing** (what you write) and the **presentation of your ideas** (how you write).

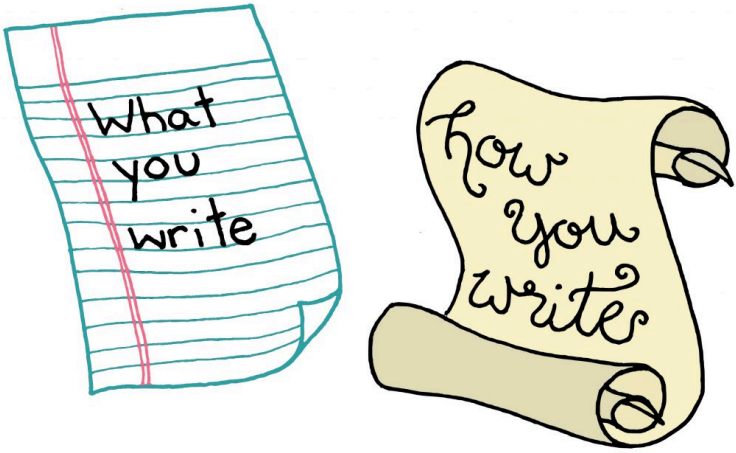


Figure 1.3: Scholarly writing

Fundamentals of Scholarly Writing include:

- Presentation of ideas in clear, succinct, accurate, and congruent ways.
- Incorporation of your original thought and a critical lens.
- Credible evidence to support your thoughts.
- Attention to structure, paragraph construction, grammar,

language, tone, voice, audience, etc.—all of these are addressed in future chapters.

Scholarly writing is completely different from conversations or other types of writing. When you speak, send a text, or write in a diary, you use **informal language**. For example, a phone text typically lacks attention to structure and grammar, is short and conversational in tone, and may include acronyms, symbols, and emojis. These non-scholarly formats often use **colloquial phrasing—**familiar, everyday, slang terms. More to come on that in Chapter 5.

Some of you are enrolled or may choose to enroll in a writing course; if so, this book will complement your learning. The fundamentals of scholarly writing are expanded on in each chapter of this book.

Relevance of Scholarly Writing to the Nursing Profession

Scholarly writing is a **form of communication** and a necessary skill that is important to the nurse's role as a clinician, professional, a leader, a scholar, an educator, and an advocate. As a student, developing skills in scholarly writing will help prepare you for your nursing role.

Types of scholarly writing that you may be involved in as a nurse are:

- Social awareness and advocacy campaigns in which you share knowledge and bring awareness to an issue or a new policy.
- Educating and influencing people and communities. The power of writing provides a means for nurses to state their position and influence others. Nurses are involved in crafting policy ideas to influence stakeholders and government bodies on public health issues.
- Best practice guidelines, standards of practice, and policies and procedures to inform nursing practice.
- Research grants and manuscripts for publication.
- Reflective practice, which is a professional expectation for nurses to demonstrate their commitment to life-long learning and continuing competence by reflecting on their practice (College of Nurses of Ontario, 2018).

Nurses may engage in scholarly writing in ways that **differ from other disciplines**. For example:

- As noted above, nurses engage in many forms of scholarly writing, so you should be prepared to tailor the style of writing

to your audience and your objectives.
- In nursing and other health-related fields, you must incorporate evidence to support your statements.
- It is important that you draw from scholarly sources, such as peer-reviewed journals, as opposed to magazines or books.
- You need to be clear and concise, with a logical flow in your writing from point A to B.
- Scholarly writing allows you develop your capacity as a communicator, a skill that transcends domains of professional and personal life.

References

College of Nurses of Ontario (2018, October). QA Program. Retrieved from https://www.cno.org/en/myqa/

Post-secondary Expectations

In the post-secondary nursing environment, academic expectations differ from what you may have experienced in high school, see **Table 1.1**. You are expected to do more work, and managing your workload may be challenging. This book teaches you strategies for managing your time while reading and writing effectively.

Along with the quantity of work, the quality of your work also changes. It is not enough to understand and summarize course material. You are expected to **engage seriously with new ideas** by reflecting on them, analyzing them, critiquing them, making connections, drawing conclusions, and finding new ways of thinking about a given subject.

Table 1.1: Expectations for high-school versus post-secondary nursing programs.

High-school programs	Post-secondary nursing programs
Reading assignments are moderately long. Teachers may set aside some class time for reading and reviewing the material in depth.	Some reading assignments may be very long. You are expected to come to class and lab having completed the readings and ready to engage in discussion and practice skills.
Teachers often provide study guides and other aids to help you prepare for exams.	Reviewing for exams is primarily your responsibility.
Your grade is determined by your performance on a wide variety of assessments, including minor and major assignments. Not all assessments are writing-based.	Your grade may depend on just a few major assessments. These assessments may include a combination of writing assignments and multiple-choice tests as well as other types of evaluations.
Writing assignments include personal writing and creative writing in addition to expository writing.	You are expected to engage in many types of writing, including reflective writing, summary and synthesis writing, and critical and analytic writing.
The structure and format of writing assignments is generally stable over the high-school years.	Depending on the course, you may be asked to master new forms of writing and follow standards within the profession of nursing and other related fields.
Teachers often go out of their way to identify and try to help students who are performing poorly on exams, missing classes, not turning in assignments, or just struggling with the course. Often, teachers give students many 'second chances.'	Teachers expect you to be proactive and take steps to help yourself. If you are struggling with your course work, make an appointment with your teacher or another support person, such as a learning strategist or counsellor.

Sounds like a lot? Remember, it is **a journey** to developing your

ability as a scholarly writer. Engaging with this textbook is a great first step.

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Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a brief introduction to scholarly writing and its importance to the nursing profession. You will recognize that becoming a scholarly writer is a journey that evolves over the course of your post-secondary nursing program and your career as a nurse. You may be at the beginning of this journey or partway through it; either way, this textbook will help you along your journey. In future chapters, you will further explore how to enhance your scholarly writing ability by reading and writing.

Your Writing Journey

By this time, you have reflected on your writing experience to date and how you have traditionally approached writing assignments. This chapter has explored the culture built around writing for scholarship in nursing. While you may have some experience writing formally or creatively, it is advantageous to learn early on in your post-secondary career how to write for scholarship. Are you a last-minute writer or do you agonize over every sentence? This self-analysis will help you identify your current style in relation to what is needed to write in nursing.

CHAPTER 2: READING AND COMPREHENSION

Chapter 2 Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Identify effective reading skills.
- Recognize distractions that hinder the reading process.
- Identify techniques to critically summarize your readings.

Overview: Reading and Comprehension

Now that you have been briefly introduced to scholarly writing, it is important to reflect on your own **reading and comprehension** skills—these skills are important to develop in order to advance your scholarly writing capacity.

Comprehension is an important part of reading so that you understand and grasp the key ideas. Many strategies are available to help you read so that you optimize your comprehension. Some strategies involve taking certain steps before you start reading a text. Others involve taking notes and learning to read critically. In this chapter, you will learn about these strategies and how to critique a text and reflect and summarize as part of your journey to grasping the ideas.

Let's begin!

Reading Effectively

Every time you read, you're exposed to someone else's ideas and their style of writing: word choice, vocabulary, knowledge base, use of language, etc. **Reading can make you a better writer**. Think about what makes a piece of writing compelling, engaging, believable, and **rigorous** versus dull, unconvincing, sloppy, and mediocre. Many good writers say they became better writers by reading other peoples' work: they try to write like those they respect and avoid making the mistakes of others.

Reading effectively involves understanding, evaluating, and reflecting on a text. These skills are important because various types of literature inform nursing practice – this is what you will learn to refer to as **evidence-informed nursing**. So, how do you become a better reader?

First, accept that **becoming a good reader is a journey**. Some of you have loved to read from childhood – keep it up. Some of you have avoided reading and dread reading assignments. Don't worry – this textbook will help. There is hope, and it starts right here! P.S. keep reading.

Second, try to read different things: books, magazines, blogs, and **peer-reviewed** journals. Try reading things that are a little challenging for you. In nursing, you are expected to read many different types of text such as narratives, reflections, research articles, theory-based articles, and book chapters, so exposing yourself to a variety of texts is important.

Third, learn and practice the skills of **reading critically** and **reflecting** – these will be explained later in this chapter.

Fourth, have a **primary goal** in mind with your reading, and then break it down into numerous simple tasks or chunks of reading. It will seem less overwhelming and it will help you stay focused.

Fifth, **keep reading**. Every day. The more you read and the more effectively you read, the easier it'll be, the less time it will take, and

the more you'll enjoy the experience. See **Table 2.1** for more skills related to effective reading, which will be discussed in detail later.

Table 2.1: Effective reading skills

Setting	Start by creating an optimal setting for reading: pick a good time and place without distractions.
Pre-reading strategies	Engage in pre-reading strategies, such as skimming the text, before reading the text in full.
Efficiency	Read material efficiently: pick up a piece of material, engage actively with it, and finish. And yes, you can finish it in a reasonable amount of time and still have time to YouTube a favourite clip of yours before bed!
Annotate	Annotate written texts (in other words, write directly on the texts) or take notes about the main points as you read. By doing this, you enter into a discussion with the text.
Research	Research or investigate content/concepts you don't fully understand.
Discover	Work to discover the central meaning of the piece and ask yourself: What is the author's point? What is the text trying to say? How does the author create and build this meaning?
Reflect	Reflect on what the text means to you, internalizing the meaning: How are you responding to this text? Why are you responding this way? What does this information mean to you?

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Best Place and Time for Reading

Stop for a moment and think about yourself and the act of reading. Whether you read headlines or social media posts on a smartphone, or love to settle in with the Sunday paper, or devour stacks of hard-copy books, or read only when forced to, what does reading look like for you?

Check out some of the following **tips** as you figure out what works best for you:

- Consider your ideal spot for reading. Is it a favourite chair in your living room? Your bed? A coffee shop? The cool green grass in a local park? The library?
- What's your favorite time of day for reading? Try and find when you study best – and then make use of that time.
- Do you read best in silence? Or do you like to have music playing, be around other people, or have some other sort of active distraction?
- Do you prefer hard-copy (printed) books, e-books, or audiobooks?

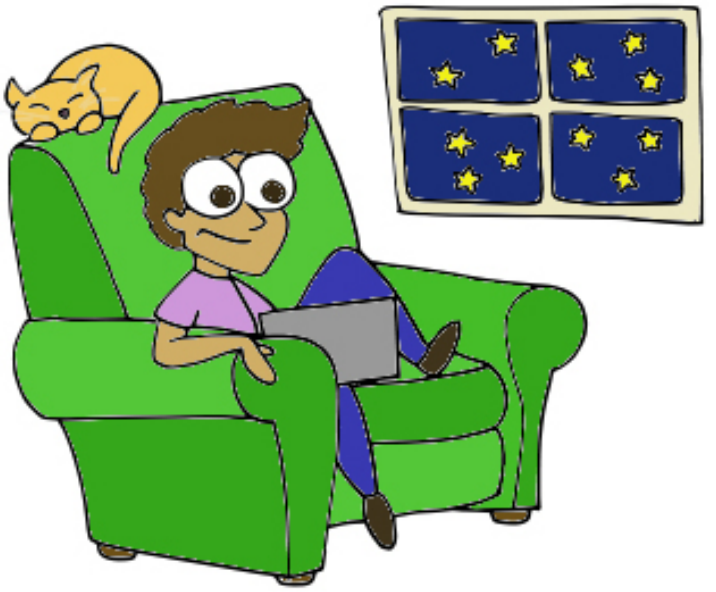


Figure 2.1: Best place and time to read: What works best for you?

Student Tip

Develop a Routine

Once you've found the perfect setting and time, use it. Develop a routine of reading and studying at about the same time and in the same place as much as you can. Doing this helps the activity become a habit, and once that happens, it will be even easier – and more effective.

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The Distracted Reader

So, you have found the best place and the best time for you to do your reading, but "Oh no!" you become consumed with the YouTube clip showing goats yelling "Ahhh!" … and then, of course, you decide to check up on your friends' social media pages and some memes to cheer you up.

It happens to everyone.

Technology and social media are great, but these mediums can also be so distracting from your studies! On top of that, you may also have commitments that pull you in multiple directions including pets, work, family, and friends.

You can't eliminate distractions completely, but you can think about how you can best **minimize the distractions** that are most distracting for you. Listen to the **Audio Podcast 2.1** by a past **nursing student** from **Toronto Metropolitan University** about strategies that she uses to minimize distractions while reading.



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Audio Podcast 2.1: Minimizing distractions [2:59]

Transcript for audio podcast 2.1 at bottom of page.

Student Tip

Minimize Distractions

Put your smartphone in another room or turn it off (yes seriously, really, do it!). Close all social media pages. Find a location where you won't be interrupted, such as the library or a coffee shop. You might find reading on the train or bus works for you if you have a long commute. Give yourself timed breaks: enjoy your break however you wish, but remove all distractions when your break is done so you can refocus.

Self-control Apps

Need help with self-control? Many computer and phone apps can help you minimize distractions. You just need to find the ones that work for you. Talk to your peers and try some out. See **Table 2.2** for some common apps that your peers talk about.

Table 2.2: Self-control Apps

Waste No Time is a popular one because you can personalize everything:

- You can personalize the websites you want to block and allow.
- You can edit the time range: define work hours and how much time you want to allow yourself to visit the blocked sites during work hours and outside of work hours.

Just Focus can help with self-control, and is easily disabled by pressing a button

- You can easily add websites you want to block.
- If you visit the blocked site, you receive an inspiring quote to motivate you to finish your work.

Be Focused – Focus Timer (only available on Apple products)

- This does not block any websites, but it allows you to customize how long you want to work and sets up breaks.
- This helps with knowing how much time you have focused on a task.

These small actions can improve your reading and help you finish faster so you can continue to snap your friends on Snapchat (don't forget to add the dog filter!) or edit some artsy photos for your Instagram.

———————————————————————————

Transcript for audio podcast 2.1 at bottom of page.

Chapter 2, the distracted reader. There are many distractions, such as smartphones or music, that arise when it is time for you to meet each course's content. Here are a few strategies to minimize distractions, whether you are using an online or a hard copy textbook. Number one. You can either turn off your phone, put it on do not disturb, or place it in another room. Your smartphones can be your number one distraction. It holds your favorite apps, your contacts, your favorite music playlist. Thus, once you see the screen light up and messages or notifications, you pick it up right

away. So by turning it off when you pick it up you will not see anything by putting it on Do not disturb, you will not get distracted when the screen lights up, and by placing it another room you will not be tempted to pick it up and check your notifications. Number 2. You can use apps such as be Be Focused or Waste No Time to minimize distractions. Be Focused is a free app that uses the Pomodoro technique, it uses a timer to break down tasks into 25 minute intervals. You will start with 25 minutes, then a 5 minute break, and repeats for 4 times. After that you will be rewarded with a 15 minute break. Using this technique will help you work efficiently. Taking a frequent break, will boost your motivation and keep you creative. Waste No Time is a free app that can be downloaded via Google chrome extensions. It allows you to focus on your work for a period of time with limited Internet access. But you can customize which websites you want to block, such as Facebook or Youtube. However, you can select a predetermined time on each website, for example, between 9 to 5 Pm, you select a predetermined time of 30 minutes for Facebook. Once you use it for 30 minutes, it will block you from the site which will leave you time to focus on your readings. Waste No Time helps you manage the time that you spend on the Internet and increases your productivity. Check out these apps. Number 3, set small and manageable goals. Our brain does not usually retain its efficiency for long periods of time. So small goals will allow you to finish quicker, allowing you to be consistently productive. These 3 strategies will help you minimize distractions from your reading. Try them out.

Learning Preferences

Over the course of your program, you will use a variety of learning styles. It is useful to think about your preferences for certain learning styles, but also be open to all learning styles so that you can become a better reader and better writer.

Do you prefer reading text, looking at images, listening to a lecture, and/or engaging in an activity? Most people have one or two styles of learning that they prefer and help them make sense of new information. Sometimes your learning style is influenced by what you are learning. You will most likely draw upon many learning styles during your studies, but it is important to consider how you best learn and think about how you can apply this to read and write efficiently and effectively. See **Figure 2.2** for a visual depiction of common learning styles.



Figure 2.2: Learning styles

Figuring out your learning style preferences

To figure out what learning styles you prefer, think about how you best learn something in your day-to-day life. For example, how did you first learn to drive a car? If you don't have your license yet, imagine learning to drive a car. What might best work for you? See **Table 2.3** to help you identify your learning style preferences and how this relates to your nursing education. But really, don't limit yourself to one style.

Table 2.3: Types of learner in the context of nursing

Type of learner	Relation to nursing
You might be a **visual learner** if…you begin by reading the driver's handbook so you can figure out the rules of the road, paying attention to the images so that you know what all of the road signs mean. Do you think this is how you would best learn?	If you are a visual learner, you should refer to or create visual formats while you are reading. During your nursing courses, you may want to draw tables, images, and diagrams as you study. You might also engage in notetaking in visual ways, such as highlighting key points and circling and/or underlining words. In the laboratory setting, you will most likely learn best when observing demonstrations by your instructor or observing a nursing skill being performed (such as how to give a medication to a client).
You might be a **verbal learner** if…you read the whole book (might even read it out loud) and then ask questions and engage in discussion with a person about how to drive like an expert. Does this capture how you learn best?	As a verbal learner, you will probably start learning by reading and notetaking. However, you will really advance your learning by engaging in discussion with your peers and your instructors in nursing lectures and labs. This kind of discussion allows you to verbally process and make sense of the information. Therefore, you might benefit from participating in study groups.
You might be an **auditory learner** if…you listen to podcasts about how to drive or ask your parents (or someone else who is a good driver) to explain the rules of the road and how to work a car. Of course, don't ask your parents if they are not good drivers! Is this how you best learn?	You will want to take advantage of attending all of your class lectures because as an auditory learner, you learn best by listening. It is always more effective to do your reading first, and then use lectures to further make sense of and understand the key learning concepts. You will also have some opportunities (albeit limited) to listen to nursing books. Usually, this happens in a course where books or online modules are accessed online and have built-in audio or video components. Another example is listening to podcasts.

You might be a **kinesthetic learner** if…you get inside the car and try to figure out what the buttons and gadgets mean/do and if you start by driving in a parking lot with an expert beside you. Does this sound like the way you best learn?	As a kinesthetic learner, you will probably love courses that have lab components and clinical placements because you will have the opportunity to engage in the physical practice of skills, such as handwashing, bed-making, taking vital signs, etc. Kinesthetic learners tend to learn best through hands-on practice as opposed to sitting and listening in a lecture. As you are reading, think about ways to keep your hands moving: highlighting key information, taking notes, and designing your own study aids including key nursing tips or flashcards related to specific activities. For example, in year two, you might want to create medication cards identifying the therapeutic use of medications and adverse effects.

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Types of Texts You Are Expected to Read

In university nursing programs, much of your time will be spent interacting with texts of all types, lengths, and delivery methods. In academic terms, **text refers to anything that conveys a set of meanings** to the person who examines and/or creates it. You might have thought that texts were limited to written materials such as articles, books, magazines, and newspapers. Those items are indeed texts – but so are movies, paintings, television shows, songs, political cartoons, online materials, advertisements, maps, works of art, and even rooms full of people. If you can observe something, explore it, find layers of meaning in it, and draw information and conclusions from it, you are observing a text.

As a student in a university nursing program, the most common types of text that you are exposed to are peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and grey literature. Check out **Table 2.4**.

Table 2.4: Types of nursing texts

Type	Relevance
Peer-reviewed journal articles. Articles in these types of journals have undergone a rigorous and usually anonymous peer review, meaning that experts in the field have reviewed the manuscript for quality. Articles can be classified as primary or secondary. Primary articles are considered the original source of material; these sources usually include research articles and sometimes personal reflections. Secondary articles include literature that refers to the original source material; these usually include review articles that focus on multiple studies.	These journal articles are typically the best types of text used to support your scholarly writing, as these sources are considered to be of high quality. Oftentimes, you are required to use primary sources.
Books are hard-copy or electronic resources that are often used in courses as required reading material. Some books are peer-reviewed, but most are not. Most books are considered secondary sources.	Use of books to support your scholarly writing tends to be inferior to a peer-reviewed journal article because books are secondary sources, and sometimes the quality and current relevance are questionable. However, there are times when books are considered a seminal text and provides a detailed description of a concept or theory.
Grey literature includes various types of text that are produced outside of academic channels. Examples include governmental documents, speeches, policies, blogs, websites, and newsletters. Most would categorize World Health Organization Guidelines, College of Nurses Standards of Practice, and Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario Best Practice Guidelines as grey literature. These types of texts may go through a version of peer review, but it is typically not anonymous.	This type of literature is sometimes used in scholarly writing, particularly when discipline-specific knowledge and statistics are necessary.

Activity: Check Your Understanding



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Pre-reading Strategies

You should **start with pre-reading** before you do an in-depth read of the text. Pre-reading will give you an **overall picture of what to expect** and what the author wants you to know at the end of the reading. Before you begin, develop a clear purpose for your reading. Consider the purpose within the overall context of the course and concepts discussed in class. Keep in mind, how does this reading relate to any writing you may need to do for an assignment?



Figure 2.3: Pre-reading strategies

Consider these steps in pre-reading:

- Start by **considering the title**. A good title will inform you

about the text's content and what's coming up.

- Look at the **authors' names**. Have you heard of the authors? Do you know anything about them? In year one, you probably won't be familiar with many authors in the nursing field, but over time, you will get a sense of common and credible authors. If you don't know the author, check out whether they are from a reputable institution. You can always Google them to look for more details.
- If available, **read the abstract**. The abstract provides a brief summary of the text and is often found at the start of a journal article.
- Skim through the article, **looking for headings** or "pull-outs" (content that is pulled off to one side or highlighted in a box). Headings often give clues about the text's content and can show you how the subject has been divided into sections.
- **Look for images**: photographs, charts, graphs, maps, or other illustrations. Images, and their captions, often provide valuable information about the topic.
- Most academic texts and essays follow a fairly similar structure, including beginning every paragraph with a strong, **focused topic sentence**, which is the main point. You can often get a quick understanding of a text by simply reading the first sentence in every paragraph. Some authors may use the second sentence as their topic sentence; if you notice this pattern, focus on reading the second sentence in each paragraph.
- Some people suggest reviewing the **reference list** so that you can get an understanding of the authors' sources and identify any sources that could be more relevant.

After working through the above suggestions, see if you can figure out the **main purpose of a text simply by pre-reading**. If the pre-reading has worked well, giving you clues to the text's content, your actual in-depth reading will be easier and more effective. You will

also begin reading with your curiosity already aroused, which is a great way to start!

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Reading the Article in Full

Now that your pre-reading is done, you have an overall sense of what to expect when you read the text in full. What's involved in doing a close reading of the full text? Keep reading and you'll find out.

Close reading

Close reading allows you to concentrate and make decisions about what is relevant and what is not. Its main purpose is to help ensure that you **understand what you are reading** and to help you store information in a logical and organized way, so that it is easier for you to recall the information when you need to. Close reading is a necessary strategy in university nursing programs for the following reasons:

- You can effectively summarize what you read by identifying the main concepts/points, key details, and their relationships with one another.
- You read as if you were going to be tested on it immediately upon completion, so recall is important.
- Your ability to answer essay questions improves because the concepts are more organized and understood rather than merely memorized.
- You become more confident because your understanding improves, which in turn increases your enjoyment.

Identify the main point

Regardless of what type of text you are assigned to read, your primary comprehension goal is to **identify the main point**: the most important idea that the writer wants to communicate and usually states early on. Finding the main point gives you a framework to organize the details presented in the reading, and to relate the reading to concepts you have learned in class or through other reading assignments. After identifying the main point, you will find the supporting points, details, facts, and explanations that develop and clarify the main point.

When the text is complex

At the far end of the reading difficulty scale are **journal articles and scholarly books**. These types of text are common in nursing. Because these texts are aimed at a specialized, highly educated audience, the authors presume their readers are already familiar with the topic. The language and writing style is sophisticated and sometimes dense.

In this context, it can be helpful to read slowly, and to pause and reread sections that you don't understand. Also, have a dictionary nearby to look up unfamiliar words. In your nursing program, expect to come across a lot of new terminology. You might even create a list of unfamiliar terms to help you remember them the next time you encounter them.



Figure 2.4: Have a dictionary nearby

Student Tip

Pay Attention to Details

Although identifying the main point is important, for some nursing readings you will also need to identify precise details and step-by-step processes. These detailed processes are important when learning about skills such as

how to do a physical assessment of a client's skin or taking a health history related to a client's immunization status.

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Notetaking

The **objective of notetaking** is to help you enter a discussion with the text, make sense of the reading, and think about how it applies to your nursing practice. You can take notes in many ways when reading, such as annotating and dialectic notetaking—detailed on the next pages.

These two methods of notetaking are done differently, but both help you achieve the same objective. Both methods involve identifying key points of the text and highlighting elements that did not make sense to you or that you have questions about.

Annotating

Annotating involves **physically adding notes** to the text that you are reading. As a nursing student, you are expected to read all sorts of unfamiliar texts detailing thought-provoking, upsetting, interesting, and important information that will influence how you think and how you practice as a nurse. The level of detail in your notetaking may vary if you are reading and taking notes about the step-by-step process involved in handwashing for infection control purposes versus the importance of empathy in nursing. How you go about taking notes also depends on:

- The subject and the level of detail required.
- What works best for you.
- Whether you are reading a hard copy or an e-text.

Writing in your textbooks or on articles as you read is a powerful strategy for engaging with a text and entering into a discussion with it. You might jot down questions and ideas as they come to you. You might highlight or underline important or key points, circle words you don't understand, and use your own set of symbols to highlight portions that you feel are important. You might also use sticky notes to write down points or identify how the reading relates to your clinical practice.

Capturing these ideas as they occur to you is important, because they may play a role not just in understanding the text better, but also in your assignments. **If you don't make notes as you go,** today's great observation will likely become tomorrow's forgotten detail. Many people are more likely to remember something if they write it down. See **Figure 2.5** for an example of an annotated text.

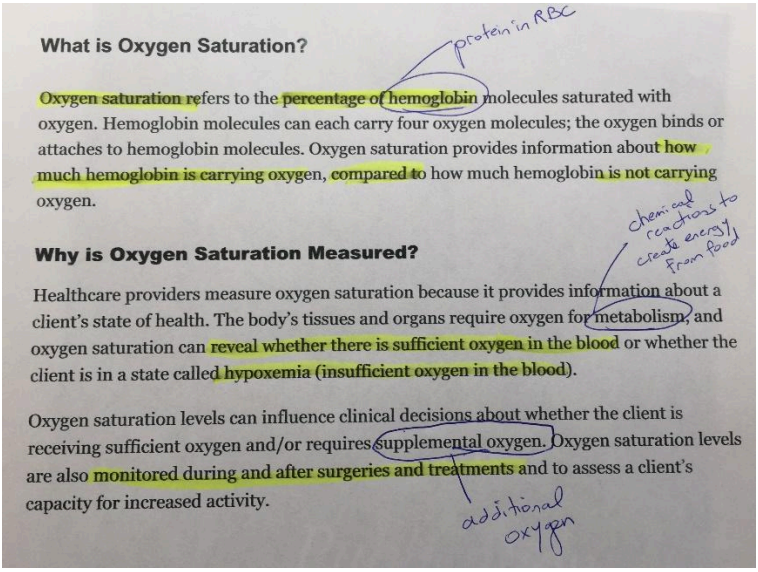


Figure 2.5: Example of an annotated text

Reading online

Annotating in some way is still important if you are reading online. You can do this in a few ways:

- Take notes on paper.
- Use a digital text editor or PDF editor to highlight text and make notes.
- Another option is using: Hypothes.is – this tool allows you to annotate an online text. Depending on your preference, you can set it so that your annotations are private (only accessible to you) or public (anyone using this tool can read your comments).



Figure 2.6: Hypothes.is

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Dialectic Notetaking

A dialectical approach to taking notes sounds much more complicated than it is. **Dialectic just means a dialogue**—a discussion between two (or more) voices trying to figure something out. Whenever you read new material, particularly material that is challenging in some way, it can be helpful to take dialectic notes to create clear spaces for organizing different sets of thoughts.

Start by drawing a **vertical line** down the middle of a fresh sheet of paper to make two long columns—leave some space at the bottom of the page. **Table 2.5** provides an overview of what you should put in the left and right column. It's a good idea to leave space at the bottom of the page (or on the back) for additional notes about this piece or cite the source.

Table 2.5: Dialectic note-taking

Left column – main ideas	**R**
This column is a straightforward representation of the main ideas in the text you are reading. For example: • What are the author's main points in this section? • What kind of support is the author using in this section? • Other points of significant interest? Note the source and page number, if any, so that you can find and document this source later. You can directly quote these points, but write these down as you encounter them, not later. If you quote directly, use quotation marks.	T t

Also, take a look at **Table 2.6** for an example of dialectic notetaking, which demonstrates how to document the main ideas of a text and your comments.

Table 2.6: Example of dialectic note-taking

Main ideas	My comments
• main blood pressure (BP) methods: manual and automatic • both arms (measurements should be within 10 mm Hg) • sitting position with feet flat on floor, "bare arm at heart level" and resting for 5 minutes before measurement • accurate cuff size based on the person's arm: "width of cuff 40% of the person's arm circumference … length of cuff's bladder is 80-100% of the person's arm circumference" (see video) • palpate brachial artery firmly (2 cm medially from bicep tendon and 2-3 cm above antecubital fossa) • place cuff over bare arm with artery marker aligned with the artery	• will need to figure out where to place the client's arm (e.g., on a table) • how much pressure does "firm pressure" involve? • I have had my BP taken and the healthcare provider took it over my clothing. How come? • talk with teacher about how to pronounce "sphygmomanometer"? • >need to re-watch video when I get a chance • does it hurt to have your BP taken?

Source: Lapum, J., Verkuyl, M., Garcia, W., St-Amant, O., & Tan, A. (2018). Vital sign measurement across the lifespan – 1st Canadian edition. Retrieved from: https://pressbooks.library.ryerson.ca/vitalsign/

Once you have this set of dialectic notes, there are several ways you can use them. For example:

- These notes can help you contribute to class discussion about

this piece and the topics it addresses.
- Significant questions you encountered while reading are already written down and collected in one place so you don't have to sift through the reading again to find them.
- Your observations and thoughts about the piece are already organized, which can help you see patterns and connections within those observations. Finding these connections can be a strong starting point for written assignments.
- If you are asked to respond to this piece in writing, these notes can serve as a reference point as you develop a draft. They can give you new ideas if you get stuck and help keep the original connections you saw when reading fresh in your mind as you respond more formally to that reading.

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Reading Critically

Reading as a writer and reading critically are helpful when entering into a scholarly discussion with a text. It begins with learning to **think critically**. Check out the video below and consider: What new ideas were presented that will help you get more out of your assigned readings?

Watch this video about Critical Thinking [7:38]

"**Reading as a writer**" means approaching a text with a variety of tools that help prepare you to write about it. Tools can include reviewing related assignments or lectures prior to reading, specific notetaking methods while reading, and ways of thinking about and organizing the information after completing the reading. You will learn to **read through the writer's eyes**, seeking to understand the deeper, interwoven meanings layered within a text.

For example, how you read and the types of notes that you take will be influenced by whether you will be required to write a summary, or a critical analysis, or a personal reflection on a text after you read it. If your instructor asks you to write a personal reflection, it is important that you pay attention to how the text affects you as you read.

Sometimes you need to have a more critical eye as you read. When **critically reading**, you should grapple with and immerse yourself into the text to fully interact with it. You might do some or all of the following:

- Analyze the structure of the piece. What kind of organization does it follow? Where is the thesis? What types of sentences and language are used? How are the paragraphs structured?

- Analyze the text itself, exploring its content and its use of rhetoric, i.e., how it uses language to make its message effective.
- Capture the text's main points by summarizing its meaning.
- Critique the text to assess its quality, believability, and effectiveness.
- Reach conclusions (make inferences) about the text.
- Combine your own ideas with the textual analysis to synthesize new ideas and insights.
- Ask yourself how the text relates to what you are studying (or your clinical practice).

The next section shows you how to critique a text.

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Critiquing a Text

When you **critique** a text, you evaluate it, ask it questions. Some people think of critique as being negative or mean, but in the academic sense, doing a critique is not the least bit negative. Rather, it's a **constructive** way to explore and understand the material you're working with. The origin of the word means "to evaluate," and through your critique, you engage in a deep evaluation of a text: when you critique a text, you interrogate it. Check out **Figure 2.7**, which illustrates reflective questions that you may ask yourself. For example, sometimes you want to consider the emotional impact of a text on your thinking.

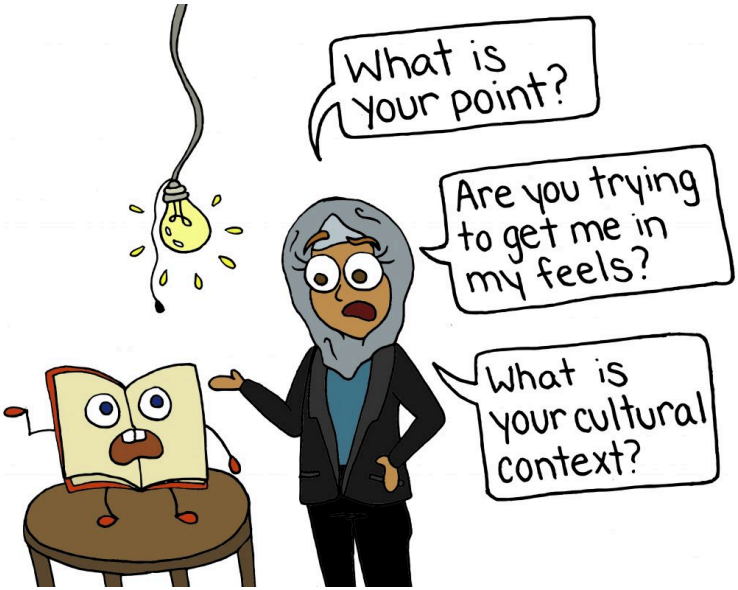


Figure 2.7: Interrogating the text

When you critique, your own opinions and ideas become part of

the textual analysis. You question the text, you argue with it, and you delve into it for deeper meanings. To get you started, see **Table 2.7** for a few ideas to consider when critiquing a text. When you critique, bring in content from the text (textual evidence) to support your ideas while writing for assignments.

Table 2.7: Critiquing a text

Item	Link to nursing
Main point/summary Do the authors make their main point successfully? Is the point made consistently throughout the text, or does it wander at any point? What information does the author provide to support the central idea? Making a list of each point will help you analyze. Hint: each paragraph should address one key point, and all paragraphs should relate to the text's central idea. What kind of evidence does the author use? Is it based more on fact or opinion, and do you feel those choices are effective? Where does this evidence come from? Are the sources credible? Was evidence used correctly, without manipulation? Does the text's flow make sense? Is the line of reasoning logical? Are there any gaps? Are there any spots where you feel the reasoning is flawed in some way? Are the authors' statements clear? Is anything confusing? What worked well in the text? What was lacking or failed completely?	The use of evidence, particularly research evidence, is important in most types of scholarly writing in nursing and other health-related disciplines. Evidence provides support for the claims made in writing. This is important considering that these claims may lead to potential practice and policy changes. Thus, you need to be prepared to evaluate the quality of evidence used.
Tone Describe the tone in the piece. Is the text's tone and language appropriate? Is it friendly? Authoritative? Does it lecture? Is it sarcastic? Do the authors use simple language, or is it full of jargon? Does the language feel positive or negative? Identify aspects of the text that create the tone; spend some time examining these and considering how and why they work.	Jargon (e.g., complex medical language) can be quite common in nursing and other health-related disciplines. Critiquing involves evaluating whether the source's tone is appropriate for the audience. Is the text written for a person with health-related expertise? Is the text written for a student? Is the text written for a client?

Emotion/objectivity Do the authors appeal to your emotions? Do the authors use any controversial words in the headline or the article? Do these affect your reading or your interest? Are the authors objective, or do they try to convince you to have a certain opinion? Why do the authors try to persuade you to adopt this viewpoint? If the authors are biased, does this interfere with the way you read and understand the text? Note that an author may be subjective, or unbiased, or unreasonable! Every type of writing and tone can be used for a specific purpose. By identifying these techniques and considering why the authors are using them, you will begin to understand more about the text.	The use of emotions and objectivity (or subjectivity) depends on the purpose of the writing. For example, prompting the reader's emotion may be very important if the authors are writing an editorial for a newspaper about the lack of funding in pediatrics and mental health. On the other hand, an objective viewpoint that highlights the evidence may be important if the authors are writing a policy paper about needed funding in pediatrics for mental health resources. These decisions are often based on the target audience.
Response How did you respond to the piece? Did you like it? Did it appeal to you? Could you identify with it? Do you believe the authors? Do you accept their thoughts and ideas? Why or why not?	Your response is important to consider in nursing considering that the text's appeal and believability will influence whether you decide to include a source in your own writing and whether the source's claim will influence your practice.
Cultural context What is the **cultural context*** of the text? *Cultural context is a fancy way of asking who is affected by the ideas and who stands to lose or gain if the ideas take place. When you think about this, think of all kinds of social and cultural variables, including age, gender, occupation, education, race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, etc.	These social and cultural variables are important in nursing considering the diversity of clients, families, and practitioners.

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Reflecting and Summarizing

Whenever you finish a bit of reading, it's worth taking time to **stop and reflect** on it. Part of your reflection should involve concisely summarizing the main points. This summarizing will help you think about the content and what it means to you, and also help you remember the main points later so you can apply them in other reading and writing situations.

Here are some ideas for post-reading reflection:

- Write in a **personal reading journal**—A good way to use journals is to write a quick summary of the reading immediately after you have finished. Capture the main points and explore any questions you had or any ideas that were raised.
- Write a **one-minute paper**—Take one minute to jot down a few sentences about something you learned or discovered while reading, or ask yourself a question about the reading and write an answer.
- If applicable, refer back to the **learning objectives/outcomes** at the start of the reading or related to the week's content of the course the reading is related to. Document your reflections related to these objectives/outcomes.

Many times, the purpose of your reading is to shift you into writing a paper or completing an assignment. Thus, you need to consider **synthesizing the ideas** in your summary and your other writing. "To synthesize" means to combine ideas to create a completely new idea. The new idea becomes the conclusion you have drawn from your reading. This is the true beauty of reading: it helps you weigh ideas, compare, judge, think, and explore – and then arrive at a moment that you hadn't known before. You begin with a simple summary, work through analysis, evaluate using critique, and then move on to synthesis.

Student Tip

Reflection

It's a good idea to reflect on the question: How do I want this reading to **influence my thinking and practice** as a nurse? This is an important question considering that you will often be reading about theoretical and empirical ideas related to nursing knowledge and practice. For example, you may read about how to develop therapeutic relationships with clients and families and/or how to communicate with clients who are aggressive. When you finish reading a text, think about this and document your reflections related to how your reading will guide your practice in the clinical setting.

Activity: Check Your Understanding



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Troubleshooting Your Reading

Sometimes reading may seem difficult, you might have trouble getting started, or other challenges will surface. Here are some **troubleshooting ideas**—click on the ones that apply to you and check out the suggestions.



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Students are often reluctant to seek help. They feel like doing so marks them as slow, weak, or demanding. The truth is, **every learner occasionally struggles**. If you are sincerely trying to keep up with the course reading but feel like you are in over your head, seek help. A great first step is to seek clarification from your peers, because they can share their interpretations about the readings and together you can engage in further critical discussions about course content. Additional tips include speaking up in class, scheduling a meeting with your instructor, or accessing the learning resources offered at your university.

Student Tip

Are You Having Problems Reading?

If you are, identify and work to manage these problems as early in the semester as you can. Instructors respect students who are proactive about their own learning. Most instructors will work hard to help students who make the effort to help themselves. Do not let things slide and then promise yourself, "I will do better next week." When next week comes, the accumulated undone tasks will seem even more intimidating, and you will find it harder to get them done.

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Chapter Summary

Developing reading skills is the first step to advancing your scholarly writing capacity. This chapter has provided you with skills to develop your reading and comprehension. In nursing programs, you will be exposed to unfamiliar and complex terminology in your readings, so you will be engaging in a new type of reading. Consider how to be a critical reader and learn how to critique literature. Reading lots, reading daily, and reading from diverse sources will also help you advance your writing skills.

Your Writing Journey

Not sure where to start? Start by consulting what is already known on the topic. Academics often refer to the literature, meaning information already written by others. While you may be tempted to just start writing your assignment, it is always good idea to start by consulting what is already known – this will really pay off later! It will deepen your thinking and help you understand your topic in a more nuanced way. By learning to read and comprehend effectively, you will identify gaps in your understanding and ultimately this will be reflected in your writing. As you consult the literature, try to organize your thoughts by jotting down main insights or questions that emerge.

CHAPTER 3: INFORMATION LITERACY

Chapter 3 Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Describe information literacy.
- Identify search methods to research topics.
- Evaluate the quality of texts.
- Differentiate between various types of sources.

Overview: Information Literacy

You probably know the words "information" and "literacy," but the term **information literacy** may be unfamiliar. Simply put, information literacy means having the skills to competently evaluate various types of knowledge. See **Figure 3.1**.

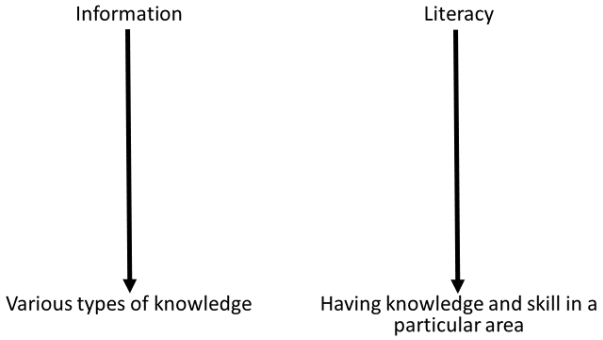


Figure 3.1: Information Literacy

Becoming information literate is a professional expectation. You are expected to "seek new information, knowledge and best practices for use in the provision of nursing care" (College of Nurses of Ontario, 2014, p. 7). Information literacy is an important skill because there are vast quantities and varying qualities of nursing and health-related information. At times, the information that you discover through literature searches may be contradictory. As a nurse, you need to determine whether the information you are reviewing is **high quality, reliable,** and **relevant** to your practice. Additionally, clients and their families will sometimes ask you about something they have heard about from friends, or found on the

Web, or heard on the news. You need to know how to sift through information and critically evaluate it.



Figure 3.2: Using information literacy skills

You will use information literacy skills to **evaluate** the quality and relevance of information. Ultimately, information literacy is a combination of skills that involves:

- Recognizing when information is needed.
- Identifying relevant information.
- Searching and locating the information.
- Evaluating the information.

In this chapter, you will learn how to become information literate!

Reference

CNO (2014). Entry-to-practice competencies for registered nurses. Retrieved from: https://www.cno.org/globalassets/docs/reg/41037_entrytopracitic_final.pdf

Finding Texts

Finding and using quality texts is an **important component of information literacy** and vital to nursing and other health-related practices. For example, if you are learning to take blood pressure, you should read a text authored by someone who has expertise in doing so and is familiar with the best evidence. This person might be someone with multiple degrees and expertise in nursing practice. If you are learning about how to best care for someone who is dying, you might want to read a text authored by an expert practitioner and researcher in this field. Texts that include and/or are authored by clients and families may provide personal narratives that inform your writing and practice.

A starting point to finding quality texts is to **physically or virtually visit the library** and check out the library website and resources such as workshops that you can access.



Figure 3.3: University bookshelves

Researching the Topic

Many written assignments in your nursing program will require you to research your topic before drafting and writing your paper. Although researching a topic is not the main focus of this book, here are a few ideas related to this stage of your journey to becoming a writer:

- **Consult library resources**—there are many workshops you can participate in and online resources such as research guides, information sheets, and tutorials that you can access on the library website. As an example, check out the Toronto Metropolitan University library resources: Research help guide or check out your own library research resources.
- **Talk to librarians**—they have a wealth of information about how to research topics. Librarians can teach you how to best use literature search tools such as databases and search engines that organize the information that you will be looking for throughout your nursing program. As part of your post-secondary education, you will have free access to these search engines and many articles and resources.
- **Take a research course** during your post-secondary nursing education that will further expose you to researching your topic.

Think about your research journey as an **ongoing and iterative process** in which you move back and forth between the stages (see **Figure 3.4**). You begin by choosing a topic, then brainstorm relevant keywords to search in the databases, and then evaluate your resources. Now, you need to reflect on and develop skills in how to identify keywords and search databases.

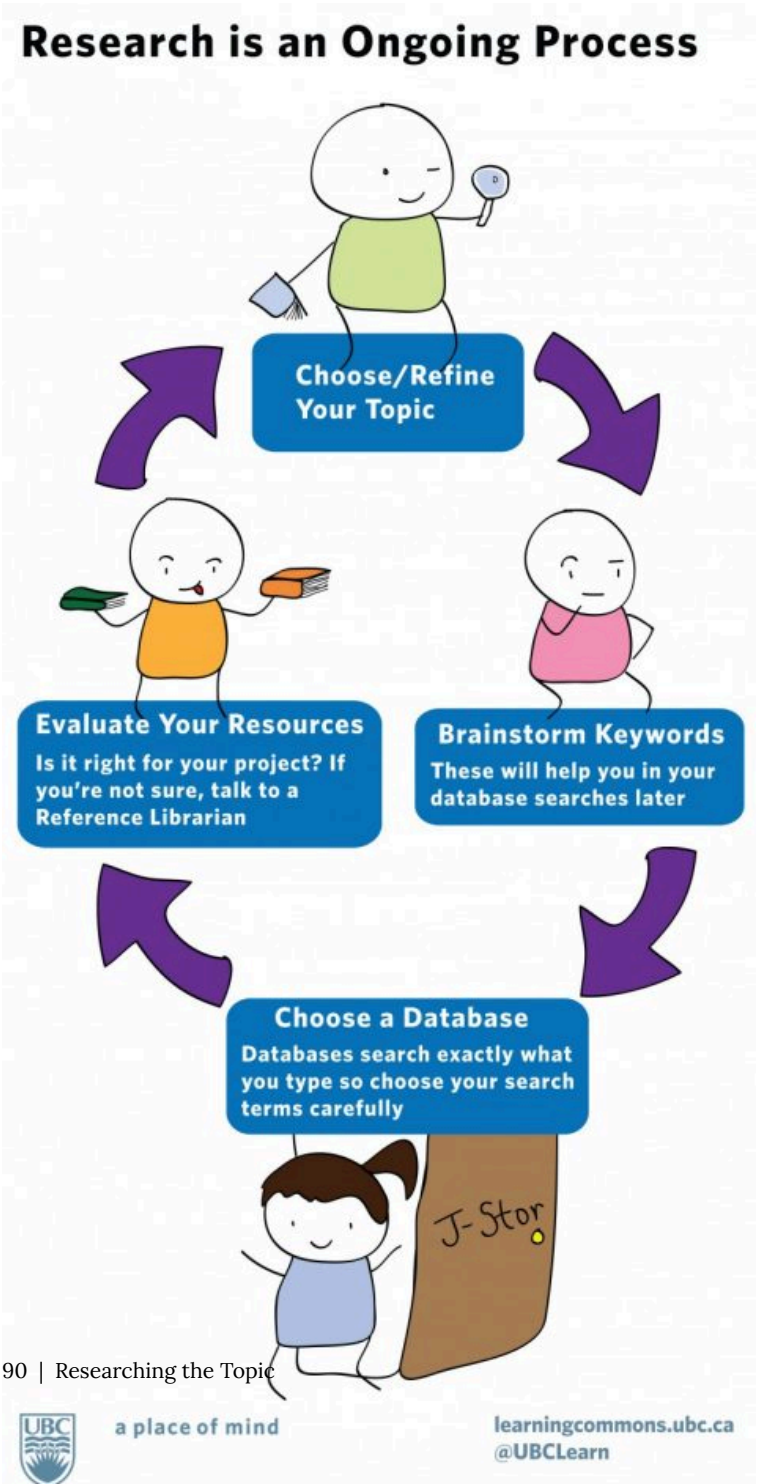

Research is an Ongoing Process
Choose/Refine Your Topic
Brainstorm Keywords
These will help you in your database searches later
Choose a Database
Databases search exactly what you type so choose your search terms carefully
J-Stor
Evaluate Your Resources
Is it right for your project? If you're not sure, talk to a Reference Librarian
a place of mind
learningcommons.ubc.ca
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Tips to consider as you research

Here are a few tips for you to consider as you are researching a topic, choosing keywords, and searching the various databases:

- Search specific peer-reviewed journals and review the issues and volumes of that journal.
- Become familiar with common databases to search for information related to a topic. In nursing, common databases include CINAHL, Medline, Proquest Nursing, and Evidence Based Medicine (EBM) Reviews. More information can be found at: Top Databases for Nursing.
- Decide on the keywords to search. For example, if you are writing a paper about nursing interventions related to helping patients manage stress, you might search keywords such as "stress management" with a related word such as "coping." Check out this link to help you reflect on keywords to help you narrow your search to a specific concept. You can also look at the keywords used by the authors in the journal articles that you are reviewing.

Search Operators

Search operators are tools to help you optimize your searches. Senior-level students will tell you that they **wished they had known about this in year one**.



Figure 3.5: Senior student using search operators

Search operators including **Boolean operators** (AND, OR, and NOT) as well as **truncation** and **quotation marks** are so important! See **Table 3.1** for a description and examples on how to use these operators. You might also want to use **parentheses** (what you might refer to as round brackets) to group similar terms that you are searching. Here is an example: (older OR elderly) AND (isolation OR loneliness) AND illness.

For more information about conducting a more efficient and effective search with various **search operators**, check out the following film clip about Boolean operators, quotation marks, and the asterisk/star symbol.

Online research: Tips for effective search strategies [3:04]

Table 3.1: Search operators

Operator	Examples
AND In capital letters, AND is used to combine terms so that your search reveals sources that have both terms in it.	You might be interested in searching for articles about compassion in nursing. You don't just want to find articles related to nursing only or compassion only. You can search **nursing AND compassion** to find sources that use both terms.
OR In capital letters, OR is used to combine more than one keyword that you are interested in and both words have similar meanings. But, note that both words won't necessarily be in the articles together.	You might be interested in searching for articles related to young people and you are aware that this term has many related words. You can search **youth OR adolescents OR teenagers** to find sources that have at least one of these search terms, but don't necessarily include all three search terms.
NOT In capital letters, NOT is used to filter out certain keywords that you are not interested in.	You might be interested in dance therapy, but not interested in certain types of dance. You can search "**dance therapy" NOT "hip hop" NOT ballroom** to find sources about all types of dance therapy except hip hop and ballroom.
Truncation Use the asterisk/star at the end of a word if you are interested in a word with variations or alternate endings.	You might be interested in all sources related to nursing, but are aware that there are many variations in how this word ends. You can search **nurs*** to find sources using terms including nurse, nursing, and nurses.
Quotation marks Use quotation marks surrounding phrasing to group words together so that individual words are not found separately.	You can use quotation marks to find specific phrases. For example, if you are interested in chronic diseases specifically and not just all diseases, then you should place quotation marks surrounding "chronic diseases" – this will ensure that other types of sources related to **chronic** only or **diseases** only are excluded.

See **Figure 3.6** for an example of a search done using Boolean operators "and" and "or."

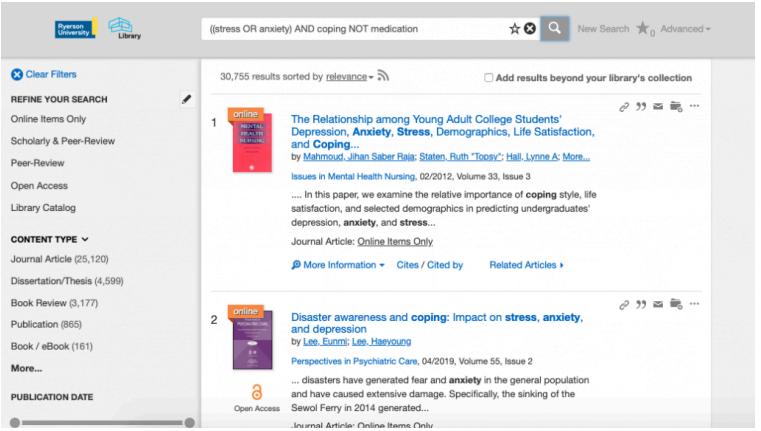


Figure 3.6: Search using Boolean operators

Activities: Check Your Understanding

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Evaluating Quality

Evaluating your sources is critical to the process of academic research. One common tool is called **CRAAP**. Yes, you read that correctly! The CRAAP test is an evaluation tool that helps you determine a source's quality and provides you with a way to **analyze your sources** and **determine if they are appropriate for your research.** You will come across various versions of CRAAP, but for the purposes of this chapter, the acronym stands for:

C: Currency

R: Relevance

A: Authority

A: Accuracy

P: Purpose/point of view



Figure 3.7: Dissecting CRAAP

Time to dissect CRAAP a bit more!

The CRAAP test uses a series of questions that address specific evaluation criteria like the authority and purpose of the source. This test should be used for all of your sources. It is not intended to make you exclude any sources, but to help you analyze how to use them to support your own arguments. You will find that some sources are of such low quality that it wouldn't be helpful to your argument if you used them. See **Table 3.2**. for an overview of the CRAAP test.

Table 3.2: Overview of the CRAAP test

Criteria	Relation to nursing

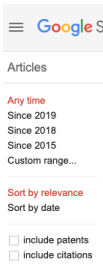


Figure 3.8: Search on how man

C = Currency: The timeliness of the information.

When was the information published or posted? Based on this date, will the material accurately reflect your topic?

Has the information been revised or updated?

Does your topic require current information, or will older sources work as well?

What is considered current and how current does a resource have to be? This is a complex question. Some say a current text was written within five years, and some say within ten years. If currency is not noted in your assignment guidelines, ask your instructor.

Currency will vary based on the topic. There are evolutions in knowledge that inform thinking and practices based on the most current research. For example, if you are exploring cannabis use in Canada, the currency of this information is important because so much has changed in the last few years. For this topic, you would probably search for texts produced within the last one or two years to ensure currency.

Sometimes, you'll also need to consider **seminal literature**. This type of literature refers to a pivotal study or theoretical article that is foundational to a discipline. How do you know if a text is seminal? One clue is when you see the same article cited in the literature over and over again. Frequency of the citation usually indicates that an article has had a major influence. For example, Dr. Heather Laschinger's nursing work on empowerment from the 1990s and early 2000s has been cited thousands of times. Although this work is older, it is considered seminal in this topic. To find out how many times an article has been cited, search the article title

y t i m e s a n a r t i c l e h a s b e e n c i t e d

R = Relevance: The importance of the information for your needs.

Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?

Who is the intended audience?

Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e., not too elementary or advanced for your needs or audience)?

Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining the ones that you will use?

You should consider various factors when considering the relevance of your sources. Does the source align with the topic that you are studying? For example, if you are studying parents' grieving experiences after their child dies, your sources need to focus on this topic. A source that documents nurses' grieving experiences after a client dies is not relevant, as the relationships are quite different.

Also, if you are exploring the nurse's role in medical assistance in dying, for example, it is important to consider legislation in the related country and province/territory/state. For example, the nurse's role in Ontario is different than other locations.

You will review sources from a wide variety of locations and written for a wide variety of audiences. You need to consider whether your reader will believe that the sources you have chosen are relevant.

A = Authority: The source of the information.

Is the author qualified to write on the topic?

Do you trust the author?

If applicable, what are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations?

Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source? For example: .com .edu .gov .org .net

Is the journal or textbook publisher reputable or well known?

Often, an author with one or more degrees is accepted as being an authority. For example, does the author have a Master of Nursing and/or a PhD in Nursing or a related field?

Does the author have experience and/or expertise in the area that they are writing about? Have they published multiple articles in this area? Are they from a reputable university, college, hospital, or healthcare organization? Try Googling the author to find out where they work and their publication record.

Depending on your topic, you might also draw upon sources in which the expert is the client or the family. This shift has recently become more common, particularly in Canada, where patients are encouraged to collaborate in health research – this is sometimes required when applying for research funding. There has also been a shift toward incorporating narratives, so patients, families, and students make important contributions to various bodies of literature.

It is also important to examine whether the publisher and/or journal is reputable, particularly in this era of open access publishing, where access to many journals is free – but the quality of these journals is sometimes questionable. Open access can be of great benefit to students who don't have access to an institutional library database. However, the risk is that many predatory journals are emerging – they may be focused on making money. As a result, the quality of articles published in these journals may be lacking. You need to make sure that the article that you are reading is from a reputable journal.

How do you figure this out? Start

	by Googling the journal name. Find its homepage and check whether the editor and editorial board members are from reputable institutions and whether the journal has a **peer-review** process (peer review is discussed later in this chapter). You can also check out websites such as: Beall's List of Predatory Journals and Publishers. Your university librarians can also help you figure out whether the article is from a reputable journal.
A= Accuracy: The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content. Where does the information come from? Is the information supported by evidence? Has the information been reviewed or refereed? Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge? Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion? Are there spelling, grammar, or typographical errors?	You must evaluate and ensure that your researched sources are both reliable and truthful. Again, assess whether the article underwent peer review. Usually, the "About" or "Journal Info" section of the homepage will specify whether the journal has a peer-review process. Unfortunately, some predatory journals and publishers are getting smart and falsely claiming to use a peer-review process. Check out the editorial board members. Are they real people from real institutions? Check out the authors' citations if the article refers to claims or facts that seem questionable. Also, if the article presents the results of a study, you will need to evaluate the research methods. You will develop the skills to evaluate research methods in a research course as part of your nursing program.

P = Purpose/Point of view: The reason the information exists.

What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, teach, sell, entertain, or persuade?

Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear? Do they identify the overall goal, research aim, or paper's objectives?

Is the information fact, opinion, or propaganda?

Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?

Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases? For example, are they trying push their own agenda? Do they have a bias? Are they trying to convince you to buy something?

These are all important questions to consider when you are evaluating the sources that you plan to use when writing a paper. Your source's purpose should be clear and informative.

You should avoid incorporating sources that have any kind of underlying bias. Avoid journal sites with **click-bait** . Many of you will be familiar with this from social media. Usually, these types of sites are trying sell something and/or push an agenda related to a particular topic.

Checklist Source Evaluation

Here is a checklist that you can use to evaluate your sources:

1. Have you applied the CRAAP test to your sources?
2. Is the type of source appropriate for your purpose? Is it a high-quality source or one that needs to be looked at more critically?
3. Can you establish that the author is credible and the publication is reputable?
4. Does the author support ideas with specific facts and details that are carefully documented? Is the source of the author's information clear? (When you use secondary sources, look for sources that are not too removed from primary research.)
5. Does the source include any factual errors or instances of faulty logic?
6. Does the author leave out any information that you would expect to see in a discussion of this topic?

7. Do the author's conclusions logically follow from the evidence that is presented? Can you see how the author got from one point to another?
8. Is the writing clear and organized, and is it free from errors, clichés, and empty buzzwords? Is the tone objective, balanced, and reasonable? (Be on the lookout for extreme, emotionally charged language.)
9. Are there any obvious biases or agendas? Based on what you know about the author, are there likely to be any hidden agendas?
10. Are graphics informative, useful, and easy to understand? Are websites organized, easy to navigate, and free of clutter like flashing ads and unnecessary sound effects?
11. Is the source contradicted by information found in other sources? (If so, it is possible that your sources are presenting similar information but taking different perspectives, which requires you to think carefully about which sources you find more convincing and why. Be suspicious, however, of any source that presents facts that you cannot confirm elsewhere.)

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Peer-Reviewed Sources

Earlier, you read the term "**peer review**"—this term is probably new to you. Peer review means that experts have anonymously reviewed, critiqued, and recommended (or not recommended) an article for publication. It is important to know what this term means, because you should incorporate peer-reviewed sources into your scholarly writing about nursing and health-related issues. Time to delve deeper and better understand the peer-review process.

The peer-review process

The **peer-review process** typically applies to journals as opposed to books or websites. Journals focus on a specific discipline or a field of study (e.g., nursing) and are published on a regular basis (monthly, quarterly, etc.). The intended reading audience is other experts, usually not the general public. Journals are considered scholarly publications and each issue contains many articles mainly written by professors, researchers, practitioners, and other experts.

In nursing, authors are considered experts based on the following:

- They have a PhD or other graduate education.
- They have specialized in-depth knowledge.
- They have expertise and training in research and analysis and/or nursing practice.
- Occasionally, they are a student or a patient with first-hand experience to share (e.g., a patient narrative)

Many journals are not peer-reviewed, and these sources are generally not considered scholarly. When an author writes an article, they may submit it to a peer-reviewed journal to be published. Before the journal accepts the article, it is reviewed by

experts in the same area of study: their peers. If the reviewers consider the research or work to be lacking quality or relevance, the author is asked to make changes or the manuscript is rejected. If the reviewers consider the work to be of high quality and relevant, the manuscript is accepted. This is why **some assignments require you to use articles published in peer-reviewed journals**—these sources contain rigorous research and/or theoretical work.



Figure 3.9: The peer-review process

Some experts, such as professors, also publish their evidence-informed research in non-peer-reviewed sources like books and newspapers. These sources may still be considered authoritative and contain expert research and are often reviewed by editors for accuracy, but they do not count as peer-reviewed sources. It is

important to know the difference, especially if your instructor specifically requests that you use articles from peer-reviewed journals.

The need to remain critical

Overall, even though the peer-review process is used to evaluate research and other scholarly work, **you as the reader need to remain critical** and conduct your own evaluation of what you are reading. Remember, the CRAAP evaluation tool helps you remain critical.

The peer-review process is the agreed-upon method for checking credibility in the academic world, but it is not without its flaws. Articles with inaccurate research methods, and therefore flawed conclusions, have been published. Fortunately, most of these papers are retracted and the research is removed from the journal. For example, The Lancet (a prominent medical journal) retracted a 1998 study linking vaccines to autism due to ethical misconduct, serious study flaws, and a biased sample. The work of researchers can also be funded by outside corporations, and many journals require authors to state any conflicts of interest within their paper. If you come across an admission of conflict when reading an article, it will be up to you to evaluate whether or not you feel the research was influenced by the corporation's own agenda.

Student Tip

WARNING

You also need to be vigilant when using Google and Google Scholar to find peer-reviewed journals, because some non-credible journals falsely claim to be peer reviewed. Your library provides you with access to databases that contain authorized peer-reviewed journals and filter out the non-credible ones.

Also, not all articles in peer-reviewed journals are "peer-reviewed". For example, some journals publish conference abstracts; these are not considered peer-reviewed articles. In addition, the journal editor often writes and includes a short editorial on a current topic at the start of each journal issue; these are not considered peer-reviewed.

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Popular Sources and Grey Literature

In addition to scholarly sources, popular sources and grey literature are other types of information that you may review and consider using in your writing. See **Table 3.3.**

Table 3.3: Other sources of information

Type	Examples	When to use
Popular sources Popular sources are intended for a more general audience and range from entertainment magazines to well-researched investigative articles from the New York Times. These sources usually do not have a specific structure and rarely contain references. With most scholarly sources, you can rely on the peer-review process to evaluate the authority and credibility of the research presented to you. With popular sources, it is up to you to determine whether the source is appropriate for your own research.	The New York Times Scrubs Magazine The Wall Street Journal Nursing blogs The Economist	Use of these sources will depend on the purpose of your writing or your assignment and whether you are permitted to use popular sources. Sources such as magazines and newspapers are very useful for current commentary on a topic or issue. However, you should be aware that some newspapers, blogs, and non-government organizations, such as policy think-tanks, have specific political viewpoints. It is up to you to evaluate whether or not it is appropriate to use a popular source in your assignment.

Grey literature Grey literature are sources of information that are not published through traditional means and are often not peer reviewed. These are typically excluded from databases, making the information difficult to locate. The best way to locate it is often through Google searches and consulting experts in the field.	Reports from and websites such as Health Canada, World Health Organization, College of Nurses of Ontario, as well as speeches and newsletters.	These types of sources can be useful to provide current information. Credible websites such as Health Canada can provide current statistics.

Popular sources and grey literature may be appropriate to combine with the peer-reviewed literature that you have reviewed depending on your purpose. To further understand what grey literature is and how to locate it, see **Film Clip 3.2**.



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Film Clip 3.2: Locating Grey Literature [2:39]

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Primary and Secondary Sources

Scholarly sources can be classified into primary sources and secondary sources. See **Table 3.4**.

In nursing, **primary sources** are typically used because they are a direct source as opposed to what might be referred to as second-hand information (secondary source). In scholarly writing, it is usually best to go to a direct source. Thus, if you are reading a secondary source that refers to another author reporting something really important, it is best to search out the primary source. However, some **secondary sources** are appropriate in scholarly writing. For example, when you are trying to get an overall sense of a topic, you might find it helpful to read a secondary source such as a literature review. Secondary sources can also help you understand current statistics or standards of practice.

Table 3.4: Primary and secondary sources

Sources	Examples
Primary sources are direct, firsthand sources of information or data. In nursing, primary sources are typically research articles.	Research articles (direct, firsthand sources) Literary texts Historical documents such as diaries or letters Autobiographies or other personal accounts
Secondary sources are one step removed from the primary source of information and discuss, interpret, analyze, consolidate, or otherwise rework information from primary sources. In nursing, common secondary sources include literature reviews	Magazine articles Biographical books Literature reviews (e.g., scoping reviews, systematic reviews) Encyclopedias Television documentaries Textbooks

Now, let's say you are reading a journal article that you have identified as a primary source because it is presenting the findings from a research study about the impact of music to relieve pain. Within that article, you see that the author has cited another author's work referring to other modalities to relieve pain, such as meditation. If you decide to incorporate the other author's work

about relieving pain through meditation, that is considered a secondary source, even though the article that you are reading is a primary source. You would be better off locating the source that is cited so you can access the original article.

Whether primary and/or secondary sources are appropriate, remember to use them purposefully to support your writing and provide a rich and contextualized argument to your writing.

Student Tip

What type of source is acceptable?

Always consult the assignment guidelines when determining what type of source is acceptable and useful in your writing. Most times, your instructor will specifically ask for peer-reviewed and primary sources. Occasionally, your instructor may allow secondary sources and other scholarly sources, but popular sources are rarely permitted in scholarly writing.

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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As a rule, Wikipedia and other "Wiki" sources are **not acceptable sources** for university work. The beauty of Wikipedia is its **egalitarianism**—it's billed as a public encyclopedia for everyone. The problem with this is that anyone can create a Wikipedia entry and anyone can edit entries. Unfortunately, "anyone" is usually not an authority. Remember, you're looking for sources that meet the CRAAP criteria and that are written by people with degrees, education, and/or expertise in the field. Wikipedia doesn't follow this model, so you shouldn't rely on it as a reliable source.

Many nursing websites provide current information. Although these are **not considered peer-reviewed** and are usually **not primary sources**, the information on these websites can often provide context and guidelines related to health issues. See **Table 3.5** for some of the common websites applicable to nursing.

Table 3.5: Common websites related to nursing

Website	Relevance to your scholarly writing
The College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) is the provincial governing body in Ontario for nurses (CNO, 2017)	The CNO can help you articulate practice standards and guidelines when writing about nursing interventions and professional practice. The CNO's Quality Assurance Program can assist you in writing your reflective analysis paper during clinical practice.
The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO) is an association that represents nursing students, RNs, and NPs in Ontario.	The RNAO has a useful website to learn about best practice guidelines, nursing policies, political activism, eHealth, and technology. It also publishes a non-peer reviewed journal called the Registered Nurse Journal.
The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) is an organization focused on advancing the national and global professional voice of Canadian nursing.	The CNA has a useful website to learn about healthy public policy, advocacy, nursing leadership, and nursing excellence.
The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) is a provincial organization.	The MOHLTC website provides information related to health services, provincial wait times, and access to care and care in the community.
The Health Canada website is managed by the Government of Canada. This federal website supports Canadians' health decisions and choices by providing health resources and information.	The Health Canada website is based in scientific research, statistics, and current health information that focuses on Canadians' health and well-being. It provides current strategies for addressing financial concerns and health inequities.
The World Health Organization (WHO) is an international organization in 150 countries that promotes health for all people worldwide.	The WHO publishes information about international health issues, policies, and statistics: topics include prevention, health strategies, treatment, and guidelines. These sources that can help you support your arguments.

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Other References

College of Nurses of Ontario (2017). About the College of Nurses of Ontario. Retrieved from http://www.cno.org/en/what-is-cno/

Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. About RNAO. Retrieved from https://rnao.ca/about

Health Canada (2019). About Health Canada. Retrieved from https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/about-health-canada.html

World Health Organization (2019). About WHO. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/about

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you have learned about information literacy and how to recognize when information is needed. Searching and finding various sources of information and learning how to evaluate them are important skills to develop. Even if a journal is identified as peer-reviewed, it is important to be critical when reviewing an article to determine its quality and suitability for your paper. Search for a journal's homepage through Google and check the "About" or "Journal Info" sections to see whether it uses the peer-review process. You can search for individuals on the editorial board to verify that they are real people. Remember, do NOT reference or use Wikipedia and other similar websites when writing scholarly papers.

Your Writing Journey

Now that you have figured out your assignment and read all there is to know about a topic, you will need to find quality sources to support your writing. This chapter introduced you to the process of finding good evidence and how to be selective in what you include in your paper. Learners commonly write their papers and then seek citations to support their argument, but this approach limits you to a narrow understanding of the topic. Instead, be open to new ideas and really absorb what others have written. Take detailed notes about what you find in the literature and don't forget to include citations, so that you don't lose track of where you found the information. This is

a good time to get started on a reference page to house all the sources you have found for your paper.

CHAPTER 4: TYPES OF WRITING

Chapter 4 Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between different types of writing.
- Develop skills associated with each type of writing.

Overview: Types of Writing

Now that you have had the opportunity to develop your skills related to reading and comprehension and information literacy, it is time to shift to writing. In your post-secondary nursing program, you will be expected to engage in a variety of **types of writing**.

Early on in your academic trajectory, you may be asked to simply describe or summarize a text and/or construct an annotated bibliography. You might be asked to do some simple evaluation/critique/analysis of a text. Throughout your program, you will consistently be required to engage in reflective writing. As you progress in your program, you will be asked to engage in more challenging forms of writing including advanced **synthesis** and critique.

You will often be required to use a **combination of types of writing** within one assignment. For example, reflective writing will require you to reflect and sometimes analyze. See **Table 4.1** for a brief description of common types of writing. Each type of writing is described in more detail in the next sections.

Table 4.1: Common types of writing

Type of writing	Explanation
Descriptive	You **write a summary** about a text you've read. Descriptive writing includes a description of the main points and usually does not include your personal opinion or critique.
Reflective	You **think deeply** and write about an experience or an event or something you have read. In nursing, you are expected to engage in reflective writing related to your clinical practice.
Analytical	This genre of writing moves beyond description and involves **examining** the issue or text closely and looking at its parts to understand the whole.
Persuasive	Your job is to **persuade, influence, convince,** and **inspire** your audience to believe in your point of view on a topic that involves multiple viewpoints and opinions.
Critical	This genre of writing involves a **detailed assessment or evaluation** of a text. To some degree, this is the highest level of writing because it is both analytical and persuasive.
Editorial	This is sometimes referred to as an opinion or perspective piece in which you incorporate an **educated opinion** from a unique viewpoint on a particular issue.
Literature reviews	There are many types of writing associated with literature reviews. Overall, you will **synthesize a body of literature** on a particular topic.

Student Tip

Know what is expected of you

The most important starting point is that you **understand what type of writing is expected** for a course or an assignment. Start by closely reviewing and highlighting keywords in the assignment guidelines and if provided, the marking rubric. What verbs do the guidelines use? Reflect? Analyze? Critique? Or something else? These starting points will point you in the right direction.

Listen to the **Audio Podcast 4.1** about various types of writing by Kerry McNamara, M.Ed., MFA, Composition Instructor, Tidewater Community College.



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Audio Podcast 4.1: Various types of writing by Kerry McNamara [6:18]

See audio transcript at bottom of page.

The following discussion provides more details about each type of writing for your assignments.

Transcript for Audio Podcast 4.1

Throughout the nursing program you'll be asked to engage in variety of different types of writing. So it's important to know what you are being asked to do and how we do it. You will often be asked to combine the various kinds of writing so it's important that you're familiar with the characteristics for each kind, and be able to combine them to meet the specific needs for your given assignment. So let's begin by doing a quick review of the different kinds of writing and the various words associated with each kind, be sure to use table 4.1 as a quick reference guide to help you. The first kind of writing is descriptive writing. So for this kind of writing, really, the goal here is to summarize what you have read. No personal opinion should be given. However, you should use very vivid details and strong verbs in order to summarize the information and be sure to include all main points while excluding minor details that aren't essential to the text. This, should be an overview, and your voice should remain neutral throughout. The second kind of writing is reflective writing, in this kind of writing you wanna think about the article that you're being asked to write about and include your own personal thoughts and experiences here. Certainly personal opinions are fine, as this is your own reflection, but you should be thoughtful, honest, and vulnerable in your voice. However, you do want to present as an educated person, so you certainly can draw on other experiences that you've had in order to help validate your reflection. The next kind of writing is analytical writing. So for this kind of writing, you are really examining the article and or experience in your and or experience, and you're offering some thoughtful criticism, you may want to connect with other theories or experiences to help deepen your own analysis but definitely, you should be critical and not opinionated, here in this kind of writing you want to present a balanced view in your writing and in your writing voice. The next kind of writing is persuasive writing. The goal here is to convince readers that what you are writing about is true. So you want to make sure that you present valid information, and certainly you can compare other studies or theories to the article in which you're writing about. You want to persuade readers

not just by your personal opinion, but also by referring to valid experiences and other research. Perhaps make reference to studies or any other experiences that you've had. Critical writing. This kind of writing is certainly the most advanced form, and it often combines or draws on all the other kinds of writing. Here, you want to examine the article or experience by using analogies, studies, and previous experiences. This type of writing certainly combines analytical and persuasive, and can even employ descriptive and reflective. Here, you want to make sure that you have a very strong, clear voice, and that you are presenting a dominant view that is your own. The next kind of writing is editorial. So this form of writing looks more like a report, and it's certainly should be substantiated by your opinion on what you're writing about, so it doesn't good personal opinion. But that opinion always needs to be qualified with experiences and/or theories. It is assumed here that you have some expertise in the field, so be sure to present in a professional and informed manner. The last kind of writing is a literature review. So for this, you need to make sure that you follow the prescribed format that was given to you by your teacher. You'll summarize the literature you've read, analyze it, and then usually compare it to other theories and/or articles. Be sure to follow the format and do exactly what your professor has asked you to do. As you can see within the textbook that there are a variety of different forms of literature reviews. So you just need to make sure that you are following the kind of review that your professor wishes. So overall the most important part of this chapter is that Number one you realize that there are many different kinds of writing, and that you need to be able to shift back and forth between them, and know exactly what it is that you're being asked to do. Some of the kinds of writing certainly overlap with each other. However, you want to make sure that you hit on the key words. So, for example, if you're simply asked to do a description of a piece, and that you are summarizing and not critically analyzing. However, if you're asked to do a critical piece, then that you are following the specific requirements for that kind of writing at the end of the day, all

writing needs to be strong your language needs to be appropriate and you want to make sure that you are always making valid educated statements. So good luck with your writing, and certainly we refer back to that table 4.1 as a quick reference.

Descriptive Writing

What it is?

Have you ever been asked to describe or summarize a text?

In **descriptive writing**, you **describe** or **write a summary** of a text you've read. This type of writing usually does not include your personal opinion or critique. Rather, it focuses on a summary of what the authors said.

You will be asked to engage in many types of descriptive writing for different purposes. In post-secondary nursing programs, you are often asked to concisely and comprehensively summarize the key ideas of a text. For example, you may be asked to provide a 250-word summary of a journal article as a way for the instructor to evaluate your capacity to understand the main argument or ideas contained within a text. Other times, your instructor may request you to write a summary of a research study. In this case, the audience may be a group of practicing nurses and the summary provides a brief overview of the current research.



Figure 4.1: Illustration of descriptive writing

How to do it?

So, how do you write a summary and where do you start? See **Figure 4.2**. Here are a few pointers:

1. Consider the **reason** why you are writing the summary and the **audience** you are writing for; these will influence how you write the summary. Is the summary for your own benefit? For example, are you trying to summarize the main points of a text to ensure you understand it and help you study? Are you writing the summary for a specific audience (e.g., your instructor) to demonstrate your knowledge? Are you summarizing a text so that other groups (e.g., practitioners) have a short text to reflect upon?

2. To effectively summarize a text, you should do some **pre-reading** followed by a close and full reading of the text. While reading, you should take notes either by annotating the text or engaging in dialectic notetaking (see *Chapter 2*).

3. Then, **document in point form** the main points and the supporting points of the text. For a research article, for example, you should indicate the study purpose, the study approach (i.e., the methods), and the study findings. If you are writing for an audience of practitioners, you should summarize the clinical implications. For example, how does this text or this research influence nursing practice?

4. It is now to time to write the summary. Remember, a summary provides a **general overview of the text** and **excludes minor details** or details that are not central to the text. Use language that reflects a summary such as: "The authors explain…", "The authors claim…", "In this article, it is suggested that…", "Brown et al. report that the clinical implications include …"

5. You will often be expected to begin the summary by identifying the text source (e.g., the authors and text title) and to complete the summary with a bibliographic citation of the text.

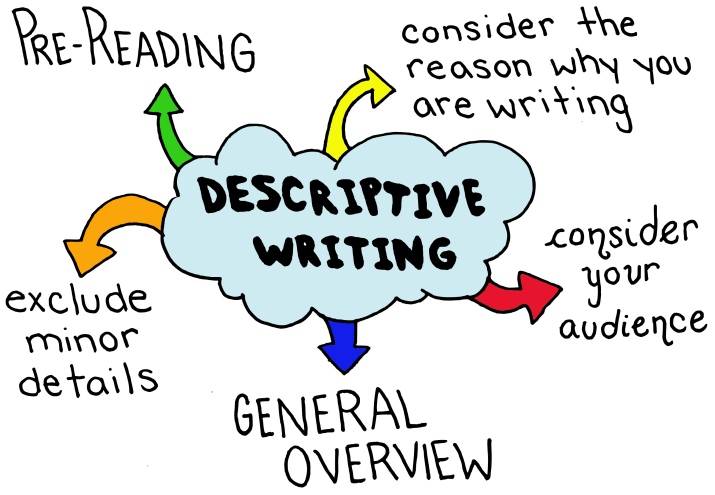


Figure 4.2: Steps of descriptive writing

What to Keep in Mind?

Some key points to keep in mind as you are writing a summary:

- Use complete sentences.
- Write the summary in a **neutral voice** and avoid incorporating your opinion or critique of the text.
- **Paraphrase** the text in your own words and avoid the use of direct quotations.
- The length of the summary varies depending on the reason for completing it and the audience – generally, a summary may range from a few sentences to a couple of pages.

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Reflective Writing

What it is?

Have you ever found yourself reflecting on an experience and analyzing why it happened the way it did and what you could have done differently? Have you ever been asked to reflect on a text or an experience?

Reflective writing is used by different healthcare professions in various ways, but all reflective writing requires that you **think deeply and critically** about an experience or a text. At the centre of reflective writing is the "self" – including a deep analysis of **you** in relation to the topic. Reflective writing is a process that involves recalling an experience or an event, thinking and deliberating about it, and then writing about it.

You may be asked to engage in reflective writing related to an array of topics: the reading you are doing for a course, your experience working in a group, how you solved a problem, how you prepared for class or for an exam, a healthcare issue or a new theory. You will be expected to reflect on your clinical practice often throughout your nursing studies and for the rest of your nursing career to grow, learn, and demonstrate your continuing competence.

In nursing, reflective writing is part of what is called "**reflective practice.**" Early in your nursing program, you will become familiar with the College of Nurses of Ontario requirements for nurses to engage in reflective practice: this legislated professional expectation involves an intentional process of reflecting to explore and analyze a clinical experience so that you can "identify your strengths and areas for improvement" with the aim of strengthening your practice (College of Nurses of Ontario, 2019). Reflective

practice requires continuing competence requirements and self-reflection for the purposes of ongoing professional development.

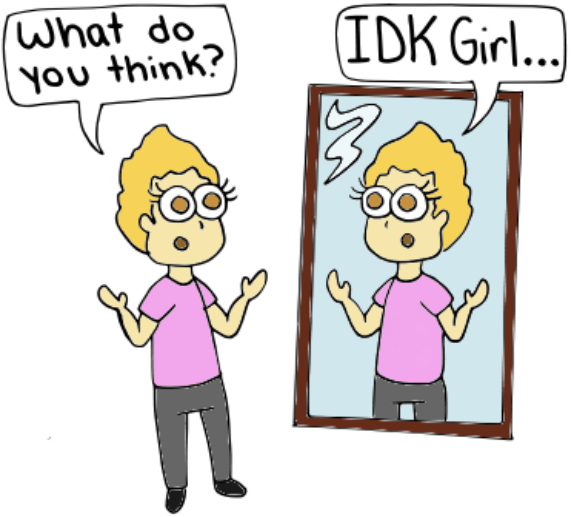


Figure 4.3: Reflective writing

How to do it?

There are many approaches and frameworks to guide reflective writing as related to reflective practice in nursing. These approaches guide you to reflect on an experience, what happened, how you felt, what actions you took, what you learned, and how you might do things differently in the future (Mahon & O'Neill,

2020). One common framework called **LEARN** was developed by the College of Nurses of Ontario (1996). See **Figure 4.4**.



Figure 4.4: Writing reflectively

Variations of this acronym have been taken up, but it essentially stands for:

1. Look back. Recall a situation that was meaningful to you in your practice.
2. Elaborate. Describe the situation from both an objective and subjective perspective (e.g., what did you see, hear? Who was involved and what interactions were observed? What did you think and feel?)
3. Analyze. Examine how and why the situation happened the way it did. Think about it in the context of your nursing courses and the literature.
4. Revise. Consider how and why your practice should remain the same and how it should be changed.

5. New trial/perspective. Think and move forward. What will you do differently when a similar situation arises?

More recently, reflective writing has been described in the context of narrative writing in which you engage in personal and professional storytelling. A narrative approach to reflective writing asks you to think about storied elements (e.g., characters, events, setting) of an experience: What happened? How did the situation begin? Who was involved? Where did it take place? What emotions were people feeling? How did the situation end? As you can see, these types of questions can easily be integrated into the LEARN framework too.

What to keep in mind?

You will be expected to engage in reflective writing throughout your nursing program. Sometimes you will be asked to use the LEARN framework or another approach. Here are some tips on good reflective writing:

- If possible, **choose a topic or situation that is meaningful to you.**
- **Be vulnerable** in your writing and share your thoughts and feelings (you don't need to write about a sanitized version of yourself – it's okay to ponder mistakes or areas for improvement).
- Description is important, but so is analysis so that you can gain new insights.
- **Think critically** about your experience and be open to new perspectives.

Student Tip

The growth of reflection

Graduates or senior-level students will tell you that reflective writing changes over the course of your program. As you advance, your forms of reflective writing will evolve from descriptive to more analytical. You will be expected to refer to the literature to explain your analysis and support your claims. You should also always engage in reflection in the context of the courses that you are taking. Some courses focus on the personal self; others focus on the professional self, as well as nursing in the community or on a broader societal level.

Activity: Check Your Understanding

Think about a healthcare event that you encountered or a health and illness experience of a friend or relative that is meaningful to you. In reflecting on this experience, how could you apply the LEARN format?



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College of Nurses of Ontario (2019). Self-Assessment. Retrieved from: http://www.cno.org/en/myqa/self-assessment/

College of Nurses of Ontario (1996). Professional profile: A reflective portfolio for continuous learning. Toronto: CNO.

Mahon, P., & O'Neill, M. (2020). Through the looking glass: The rabbit hole of reflective practice. *British Journal of Nursing*, *29*(13), 777-783. https://doi.org/10.12968/bjon.2020.29.13.777

Analytical Writing

What it is?

Have you ever been asked to analyze a text or an experience or a concept?

There are many types of **analytical writing**, but fundamentally it involves a **detailed examination** of multiple elements related to your topic. The purpose of the analysis is clarify a complex topic: if there was a clear dichotomy (e.g., right/wrong), there would be no need for an analysis.

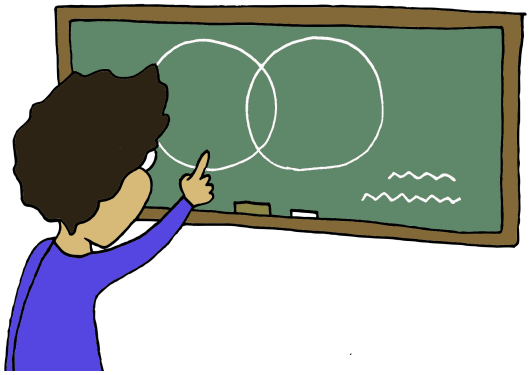


Figure 4.5: Analytical writing

Because nursing is a human science, you will often analyze nuanced and complex issues (e.g., the development of healthcare policy, the implementation of harm-reduction clinics) or concepts (e.g., grief, loneliness) and how they are taken up in practice. Unlike other sciences, there are rarely absolute truths in nursing. Therefore, consideration of all perspectives is important in developing a robust analysis.

How to do it?

Conducting an analysis depends on what you are being asked to analyze or say about a topic. In general, analysis involves the following steps:

1. Start with a **question or debate**. For example, what is known about safe consumption sites or the concept of quality of life? Establish a clear goal or thesis that you can adhere to throughout your paper.
2. **Review the literature** to gain a preliminary understanding of what is known about your topic. Establish criteria that will assist you in assessing the literature and determining what evidence is applicable to your topic.
3. Once you have decided what literature to include, **begin your analysis**. Ask questions such as: Are there opposing points of view? Have themes or categories emerged from the literature? These questions will allow you to sort information and process what is known about the topic.
4. Your analysis should present **what is known about the topic** in a concise and informative manner. Thus, start with a full overview of the topic.
5. In your analysis, articulate your process of inquiry and **examine** the concept or issue closely. You might consider questions such as: Why is the concept or issue appearing this way? What is the significance?
6. The discussion section of your paper provides room for **analytical commentary** to reflect on issues such as gaps in knowledge and to pose questions such as: What is remiss from the literature? What further work needs to be done?

See **Film Clip 4.1** for further tips on analytical writing



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Film Clip 4.1: Analytical writing [1:34]

What to Keep in Mind?

As you progress with an analysis, here are some points to keep in mind:

- Analytical writing is generally **devoid of overt opinion**; instead, opinion is conveyed in terms of *what and how* information is presented.
- A common error that beginners make is to be persuaded by one viewpoint without a good understanding of the full picture. You need to keep an open mind and **consider differing points of view** while reading a lot about the topic.
- **Avoid over-quoting** one source. Novice writers often privilege one source over others. While you may cite classic literature, the art of analysis is being able to weave together several sources.
- Try to set aside values, at least initially. You might find that your values play a role in establishing your perspective or point of view. Instead, **start by learning the facts**; this will ensure that your values will be well-informed.
- Don't fall trap to reductionism. For the sake of clarity, it is tempting to write in a way that simplifies an issue or topic, but this can mislead the reader. **Balance is the key**. While it is good

to be concise, you also need to allow for complexity.

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Persuasive Writing

What it is?

Have you ever been asked to persuade a reader in your writing?

Persuasive writing is a genre of writing that is intended to **convince, motivate, or move readers** toward a certain point of view or opinion. This is a common genre of writing in nursing, a profession that is committed to promoting social justice and often advocates for equitable and inclusive conditions. Nursing has a legacy of positive social change, and nurses often engage in lobbying, letter-writing, and other forms of political action. They often write persuasively when challenging or exposing the socio-political context that informs health and healthcare (e.g., health policy, social determinants of health, and budget cuts).

The act of trying to persuade intrinsically means that more than one opinion on the subject can be argued like a debate. See **Figure 4.6**. The writer assumes a viewpoint and argues that viewpoint throughout the writing. The term "argument" may conjure images of people yelling in anger. In scholarly writing, however, an argument is very different: it is **a reasoned opinion** supported and explained by evidence. Written arguments can advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way – but they often fail when they are based on ranting rather than reasoning.



Figure 4.6: Persuasive writing

Student Tip

Consider Multiple Angles

In persuasive writing, you should present a **well-rounded, fact-based point of view** based on strong, substantiated evidence, but also ensure you present an argument that looks at the topic from multiple angles. Now, you may ask, "How can my argument be convincing if I present ideas contrary to my main point of view?" It is important that you demonstrate to the reader that you

understand the topic from various angles and have a full understanding of it. This will garner credibility as you try to persuade the reader. If you leave gaps or are inattentive to opposing viewpoints, the reader may assume this is an omission on your part. Furthermore, critical thought and reflection are effective ways to dismantle objections to your point of view.

How to do it?

There are many ways to write a paper that involves persuasive writing. Here are a few steps:

1. Choose a topic that you feel passionate about. If your instructor requires you to write about a specific topic, **approach the subject from an angle** that interests you.
2. **Read and prepare** as much you can about the topic. Search for literature that both supports and counters your argument.
3. Begin your paper with an **engaging introduction**. Your main point should typically appear somewhere in your introduction, in which you identify your main ideas and then outline the argument that will follow.
4. **Begin with most important points**, because this will immediately captivate your readers and compel them to continue reading. Provide explanations and evidence to support your points: use sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be fully explained and clearly stated.
5. Identify **opposing points of view** and provide a

thorough, evidence-informed, convincing argument challenging these views. Acknowledging and explaining points of view that may conflict with your own helps build credibility and trust in your audience. You should also state the limits of your argument. This demonstrates that you are reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone.

6. Write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis. You will want to l**eave the reader with a strong impression** or a call to action.

What to keep in mind?

As you write in a persuasive style, here are some pointers to keep in mind:

- Make sure your **viewpoint is apparent**. Your point of view should be clearly expressed in a topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph; this should contain the main idea of the paragraph and relate it to your overall argument.
- **Stay focused** on your main point. Even if some facts challenge your argument, it is important to address them rather than to be defeated or lured by them. Rarely is there a singular thread that will unravel your belief system. It is important that you maintain a consistent argument throughout the paper.
- Avoid confounding persuasion with righteousness. This means **avoiding value-based language** like good/evil, as this risks evoking emotions that could cloud critical thought.
- **Focus on ideas** instead of individuals. Generally, when making an argument, you are questioning an idea or belief. Stay

focused on the idea instead of pointing fingers at individuals.

- Write in a **style and tone** that is appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language to both, while still being true to your own voice.
- You should use some key **transitional words** in persuasive writing, including: most importantly, almost as importantly, just as importantly, and finally.
- Some writers may claim that one piece of evidence or another proves the argument, but **proving an argument is often not possible**. No evidence proves a debatable topic one way or the other; that is why the topic is debatable. Facts can be proved, but opinions can only be supported, explained, and persuaded.

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Critical Writing

What it is?

Have you ever been asked to write in a critical manner?

Critical writing involves critical thinking. This type of thinking develops over the course of your university program and involves learning to evaluate and reconstruct your thinking and ideas in the context of other peoples' thinking and ideas. You may be involved in critical thinking and writing related to phenomena such as journal articles, healthcare issues, new clinical guidelines, and healthcare policy issues. See **Table 4.2**.

Overall, you should use critical thinking and writing when you start breaking down your topic to develop discussion points. You will also use critical analysis when you synthesize, or blend, your ideas with those of experts. This means you will go beyond a statement of facts and **take a stance**, stating your view on an idea or issue and on core sources of information on that topic: you will insert your own ideas into the text's conversation.

Table 4.2: Critical thinking and critical writing

Critical thinking may involve:	Critical writing may involve:
• Being curious and reflecting carefully on a topic. • Having an inquiring mind by being skeptical and examining your own thinking and the thinking of others concerning a topic. Don't just accept an argument or a way of thinking. Ask why. For example, why do I believe that access to healthcare should be a human right? Why do the authors of Article X propose a two-tier healthcare system? What evidence supports or does not support this case? • Being open to making logical and reasoned judgments and conclusions based on this thinking.	• Responding to a text and determining its quality and relevance to your clinical practice. • Evaluating a specific phenomenon or issue. You may be asked to challenge the status quo and question pervasive ideology underpinned by social justice. For example, you may be asked to question immigration policies that limit healthcare for newcomers, or to challenge gendered practices in maternal healthcare delivery, or to critically evaluate clinical guidelines related to the effectiveness of methods that verify gastric tube placement. • Critically examining the sources you use to support your writing.

How to do it?

The steps involved in critical writing depend on the context of your writing and what you are asked to write about. Here are some general steps:

1. Demonstrate concise and comprehensive understanding of your issue. You should contextualize the issue in relation to other work, so it will be helpful to begin with some pre-reading strategies and notetaking to understand the big picture. It will be difficult for your audience to think critically about your argument if you do not **provide a clear picture of the issue**, so gaps in your understanding will undermine your goal.
2. Critically evaluate the phenomenon or the text in

question. This will involve **identifying strengths and limitations**. You don't necessarily need to adopt a negative position in which you focus on deficits and limitations alone – it's possible to focus on the positive aspects of a phenomenon or a combination of both negative and positive elements in your critical analysis.

3. Critical analysis demonstrates that you are able to **synthesize and connect ideas**, arrive at your own conclusions, and develop new directions for discussion. Move beyond simply taking another person's ideas and spitting out facts: you should show that you have used sources to develop ideas of your own, and present alternative interpretations or perspectives through evaluation, debate, and critique.

4. You will be expected to **evaluate texts** related to research studies. In this case, you should ask questions like: Is the purpose of the research clear? Are the study methods clearly defined? Do the data support the research findings and conclusions? Are the nursing implications clearly identified?

What to keep in mind?

Keep these tips in mind when engaging in critical thinking:

- While summarizing an issue, it is important to **adopt the language used** in the original source, rather than imposing words, beliefs, or assumptions.
- Clearly and concisely argue **one point at a time**. An outline will help keep you on track, as each paragraph should focus on a main point.
- Highlight strengths, limitations, and recommendations in a **respectful way**. Severe language often can make the reader

question your credibility. It is also more helpful to provide constructive feedback rather than stressing the futility of an approach. See **Table 4.3** for examples of ways to avoid severe language.

Table 4.3: Severe language and better choices

Severe language	Better choices
The study methods were difficult to understand.	Some readers will find the study methods difficult to understand.
The authors neglected to comprehensively examine the literature.	This omission of the literature seems to suggest that the authors do not have a comprehensive understanding of the body of literature.
The nursing implications were unclear.	It would be useful to explicate the nursing implications.
The authors' conclusions were unclear and not supported.	The authors' conclusions would have been more clear and better supported if they had presented the data in a table.

Activity: Check Your Understanding



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Editorial Writing

What it is?

Have you ever been asked to write an editorial?

When you are asked to write an editorial, you are expected to **share your educated opinion** on a current and often controversial or debated topic or issue. It is sometimes referred to as an opinion or perspective piece, but what distinguishes it from a purely opinion piece is that it is written from an assumed knowledge base – **the author has expertise on the topic**. Within an editorial, you may find yourself combining other types of writing. For example, you may draw upon a critical voice or analytical voice in which you compare and contrast or evaluate an issue, or use a persuasive style of writing to compel and convince the reader.

Editorials may be written for newspapers, blogs, or websites. You may also need to write editorials for nursing magazines and journals. Often, each issue of a healthcare journal begins with an editorial written by the editor or someone like you with an educated opinion on a current healthcare issue.

How to do it?

Where do you start and how do you write an editorial related to the healthcare field? Here are some steps to consider:

1. **Choose a specific topic** that is current, timely, and controversial in the nursing and healthcare field. Avoid topics that are too broad or ones that hinder your ability to write comprehensively about your topic in a concise manner. For

example, writing about the need for seatbelts in cars is no longer a current topic; it hasn't been for decades. However, writing about seatbelts on buses is a timely health-related topic with some controversy surrounding it.

2. Always **consider the audience** because they will influence the language you use and the points you emphasize. You may be writing an editorial that your instructor will read as an evaluative component of a course. But remember – although your instructor is the reader, they are not necessarily your audience. Your audience is the person or group that you are trying to influence. For example, it may be local government or key stakeholders that you are trying to influence about the need to open harm-reduction clinics in urban areas.
3. Think about **your purpose** in writing the editorial. It is important to know what you want to convey and stick with it. An editorial's purpose can generally be categorized into two types. The first type is to express your opinion about an issue. For example, you might express your opinion about the need for a guaranteed basic income for adults regardless of employment status. Here, you need to state your opinion and clearly argue it. The second type is to propose a solution to an issue. For example, you might argue that a solution to workplace stress is to develop and implement meditation programs. Here, you need to describe the problem and why your solution is best. Whatever the purpose of your editorial, note it at the top of your paper as you begin writing, so that you can keep it in mind and ensure that your writing always aligns with your purpose.
4. Based on your informed opinion, **choose a side** and **state your position** early in the editorial. You should clearly state your opinion in the first paragraph.
5. You should structure your editorial similar to other types of writing. Begin with an introduction that describes the topic and your opinion. Next, write the body of the editorial: describe both sides of the issue, explain why you disagree with

one side of an issue, and then provide a sound argument to support your opinion. Finally, finish with a conclusion that really grabs your audience. This might include a call to action that prompts the audience to immediately respond to the issue.

What to keep in mind?

As you write an editorial, keep in mind the following points:

- Write using a **professional** tone.
- Think about how you can present your idea constructively, without suggesting a cure-all.
- Choose **clear and simple** language and avoid jargon and slang. Don't make your reader "work" to understand what you are talking about.
- Create a short title that emphasizes your main point – it should be catchy and maybe provoking.
- Do your research and make sure your facts are correct. It is important that you can support your argument and use examples to explain your points.
- Keep it concise. The length will depend on the publication that you are writing for. Editorials usually range from 500–1500 words, but if you're writing as part of a course's evaluation component, refer to the assignment guidelines.

Student Tip

Persuading the Audience

In an editorial, you need to persuade your audience that your opinion matters. You should support your opinion with a sound argument and believable evidence. Don't simply reject one side of an issue; instead, provide clear explanations on why you disagree with one side of an issue, and then provide evidence to support your opinion. But be careful – although you may need to include statistics, you don't want to overwhelm your audience with too many facts and statistics.

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Literature Review

What it is?

A literature review involves **summarizing what is known** about a particular topic based on your examination of existing scholarly sources. You may be asked to write a literature review as a stand-alone assignment or as part of a larger assignment or research project. It will provide you and your readers with a summary of what is known and the gaps and inconsistencies in the existing literature and/or research approaches used.

A literature review involves synthesizing ideas. A **synthesis** combines multiple ideas and text into a larger whole. When you are synthesizing multiple texts, you should organize your writing based on the content as opposed to the individual sources. Consider the similar themes across multiple sources and organize your writing according to these themes. You should identify the main ideas in the literature and compare/contrast them with purpose.

Table 4.4 describes the types of literature reviews used in nursing. Various approaches can be used to frame reviews, but all literature reviews involve synthesis skills, with the exception of annotated bibliographies.

Table 4.4: Types of literature reviews

Type of literature review	Focus	Relevance/use
Annotated bibliography	An alphabetical list of texts on a specific topic with a brief summary of each, and sometimes an evaluation of the quality and relevance of each. A combination of descriptive and critical writing.	Organizes the main ideas and your critique of multiple sources into an itemized list.
Narrative review	A synthesis and critical analysis of the literature on a topic (this is not a "systematic" review, which provides the audience with the detailed methods used to conduct the review).	Could be a standalone assignment, but is also a component of many types of assignments and forms the background or literature review section of a paper or a study.
Scoping review	A synthesis and critical analysis of the literature reviewed focusing on a broad topic area (includes a detailed description of the methods used to conduct the review after it has been completed).	Often used when little is known about a topic. Provides the audience with an initial understanding of the nature of the literature and the existing gaps.
Systematic review	A synthesis and critical analysis of the literature reviewed on a highly focused topic. The literature review methods are detailed and established prior to conducting the literature review.	Conducted when a comprehensive review is needed on a specific topic.

How to do it?

The following discussion explores annotated bibliographies and narrative reviews because these are common in undergraduate nursing curricula.

Annotated Bibliography

There are many ways to complete an **annotated bibliography**, depending on the assignment requirements. See **Figure 4.7** outlining the two components of the annotated bibliography including the citation and the annotation

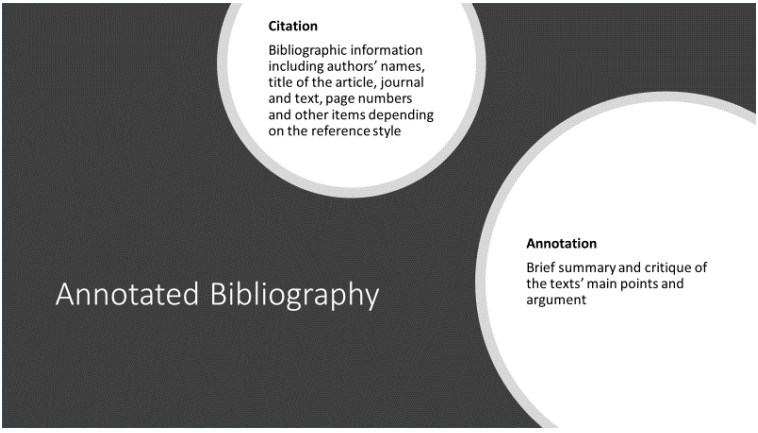


Figure 4.7: Components of an annotated bibliography

Here are some general steps to take when completing an **annotated bibliography**:

1. **Identify your topic** for the bibliography and the number of texts to be included.
2. If the texts are not provided for you, **search the literature** for articles or other types of texts that relate to your topic.
3. **Take notes** while reading and critiquing the identified texts.
4. Review your notes and then **construct a short annotation** summarizing each text's main points. If a text presents the results of a research study, you also include the study purpose, methods, and conclusions.
5. Depending on the outlined requirements or your instructor's expectations, the annotation may also include brief comments critiquing each text, comparing and contrasting texts, and

describing how each text adds to the overall topic of the bibliography.
6. **A bibliographic citation** is included prior to the written annotation. The citation will vary based on what reference style is required; APA formatting is often required in nursing.

**see *Chapter* 3 and *Chapter* 9 for more information on critiquing a text for quality and APA style rules.

Narrative literature reviews

Here are some general steps for writing a **narrative literature review**:

1. **Narrow and define your topic**, and then review the existing literature in that area. You may limit your literature search to certain dates (e.g., the last five years) or certain countries, or certain types of literature such as empirical, theoretical, and/or discussion. You need to decide what sources are acceptable to include, such as journal articles, books, and/or grey literature. You may also check the reference lists of the literature you have found.
2. **Take notes** about the main points and critique the literature while doing pre-reading and during the full reading of the literature that you have located.
3. Gather your notes and **consider the literature** you have reviewed as a whole. Think about: What are the main points across all sources reviewed? Are there common findings across sources? Do some sources contradict each other? What are the strengths and weaknesses in the literature? What are the gaps in the literature?
4. Make decisions on **how to structure your review**. The structure is often based on content trends across the various

sources; these trends can be used as sub-headings to help you categorize and organize your writing. You might also organize a literature review chronologically, particularly if "time" is an important element. Some literature reviews are organized by method, with sub-sections focusing on theoretical, qualitative, survey, and intervention studies.

5. Use **topic sentences** in each paragraph and logically link each paragraph and section to the next.

What to keep in mind?

As you are writing literature reviews, keep in mind several points:

- Annotated bibliographies are **concise** and typically presented as one paragraph, ranging from 100–300 words, but expectations vary, so check the assignment guidelines or ask your instructor.
- **Narrative literature reviews are much longer** and vary in length based on the reason for writing it. If it is part of a larger assignment, your instructor may provide you a specific length. If it is part of an article publishing results from a study, it may serve as a background section and be fairly short (a few paragraphs). If it is part of a graduate thesis, it may form one of your chapters and may be many pages long.

Activity: Check Your Understanding



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Chapter Summary

You now have an initial understanding of the types of writing that may be required of you during your post-secondary nursing program. When starting an assignment, the first thing you should do is closely read the assignment guidelines (and the marking rubric if you are provided one). You need to know what you are supposed to do before you do it. The next chapters will help you understand and advance your capacity to write, revise, and edit a paper, and ensure academic integrity.

Your Writing Journey

Now that you have a good sense of the different types of writing, you should focus on what is being asked of you in assignments. Pay attention to the language that your instructor provides – are they asking you to persuade, describe, or reflect on a particular topic? This will help you establish a writing style and is a crucial step to determine before you write an outline. Remember, the type of writing will influence what information you choose to put forward to the reader. It will be an important basis for the whole paper, so as you formulate your ideas, you should reflect on whether you are trying to influence an opinion, merely share information, or engage in self-analysis. You're almost ready to start an outline!

CHAPTER 5: THE FUNDAMENTALS OF WRITING

Chapter 5 Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Construct your writing to align with the audience, reader, and purpose.
- Appraise sentence and paragraph construction.
- Describe common errors in writing.

Overview: The Fundamentals of Writing

Learning the fundamentals of writing is a continuous journey. Some of you will enter post-secondary education with extensive experience, while others will have more limited experience. Consider this an opportunity to refine and advance your writing skills!

This chapter will introduce you to identifying your writing purpose and figuring out who your audience and reader are. It will also provide opportunities to reflect on some foundations related to grammar such as point of view, use of pronouns, and tone of writing, as well as ideas for optimizing your use of language. Let's continue the journey!

Audience and Reader

During your university education, you will be expected to write a variety of assignments. Your instructor is always your reader, but your instructor is not necessarily your audience. **Your audience is the person or group that you are trying to influence**. For example, you may be asked to choose a healthcare issue and write about it. You might write a text with a focus on influencing the provincial government about the risks associated with approving cannabis store locations that are near schools. In this case, the government is your audience – but your instructor is still your reader and the person who will evaluate your writing.

You should **tailor the content and style of writing to your audience**. You also pay attention to **semantics** so that you choose words appropriate for your audience.

Your audience will vary depending on the topic and purpose of your writing: it may include nurses and other healthcare professionals, educators, researchers, clinicians, students, policymakers, clients, families, healthcare leaders and administrators, or a combination of all of these individuals. If you are writing for nurses, a certain amount of clinical terminology can be expected, whereas if you are writing for clients, you should assume they don't necessarily have a healthcare background, and use lay language instead. Regardless of your audience, you should always write clearly, concisely, and congruently – these are all attributes of scholarly writing.

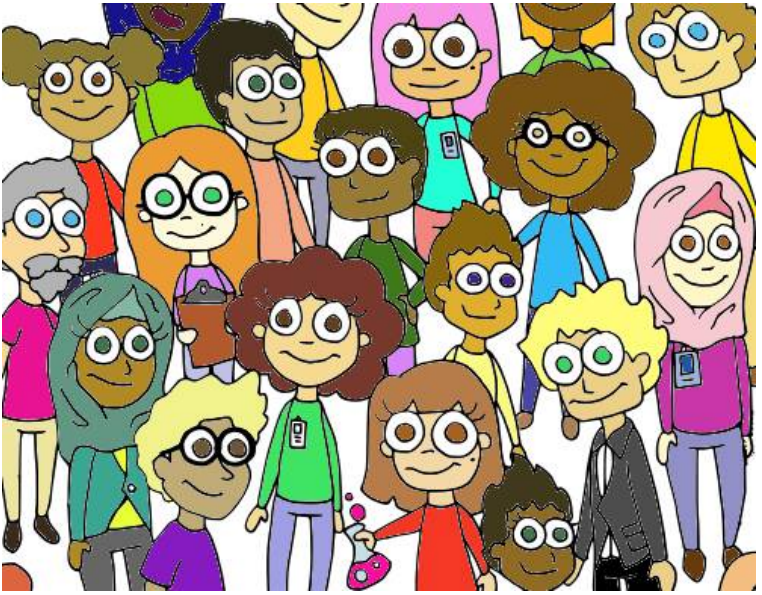


Figure 5.1: Various audiences

Considerations

When making decisions about the audience, consider some of the following questions:

- What does the audience already know about my topic? Can I use simple or complex terms? Can I use jargon? To what degree should I provide definitions of terms? Can I assume a political stance?
- What will compel the audience? Will personal accounts, case studies, or statistics be more influential to persuade the audience?
- What ideological assumptions should I use? For example, does

the audience support the topic or are you presenting radical ideas?

- How do I want the audience to feel after reading my work? For example, what emotions will you evoke in your writing, e.g., desire for change? Or do you want just them to consider an issue carefully?

Writing Purpose

You should **identify your purpose** before you start writing. This purpose will guide your writing process and your decisions about how to write and what to include. Sometimes your instructor will provide a purpose for your writing. Other times, your purpose will depend on what effect you want your writing to have on your audience. What is your goal? What do you hope for your audience to think, feel, or do after reading it?

To figure out your purpose, start by looking at the course assignment guidelines. The **verbs in your guidelines** can help you determine the purpose of your writing. Once you know your ultimate goal, you can choose appropriate language. The verbs that you use will help your audience anticipate the direction of your work and also ensure congruence in your writing. For example, if your purpose is to argue, the audience can expect a debate with information strategically presented to convey a point of view. Instead, if your purpose is to inform the audience, your writing may be neutral with no specific point of view.

Here are a few possible purposes:

- Persuade/inspire your audience to act or think about an issue from your point of view.
- Challenge your audience or make them question their thinking or behaviour.
- Argue for or against something your audience believes or change their minds or behaviour.
- Inform/teach your audience about a topic they don't know much about.
- Connect with your audience emotionally and help them feel understood.
- Motivate your audience to continue to research/investigate and learn about the topic.
- Inspire your audience to share and apply what they learn to

their nursing practice.

Student Tip

Purpose Statement

Writing an effective and scholarly purpose statement is important because it guides your writing and tells the reader the focus of your paper. Here are some tips:

- Consider the audience and write it clearly and concisely. You want your reader to understand it. A 1-sentence statement is effective and to the point. You should avoid long purpose statements because they tend to be confusing to the reader.
- Choose your verbs purposefully based on what you actually will do in the paper and make sure they are aligned with the assignment guidelines. You should limit the number of verbs you use to less than two verbs, but one is fine as well.
- Use present tense in the purpose statement and avoid future tense.
- Write it with confidence. Avoid words like "think" and "believe."
- Use pronouns consistently within your purpose statement. Don't shift from first person to third person or vice versa. (more about pronouns on the the next page).
- Use first or third person point of view (more about

this on the next page).

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Point of View and Pronouns

Point of view (PoV) is the **perspective** used when writing a text. PoV is best understood through pronoun usage and described as **first person, second person,** or **third person**. See **Table 5.1** about the use of PoV.

Table 5.1: Use of PoV

PoV	Examples	When it is used in nursing
First person PoV uses pronouns such as I, our, and we.	I did not know how to respond when I observed the way the nurse spoke to the patient. Our study findings illuminate the need for handwashing when nurses come in contact with body fluids. We reviewed the literature and garnered the following insights.	Used when referring to yourself (I) or when you are referring to yourself with others (we/our) such as when there are multiple authors on a paper (e.g., a group paper). Typically used when the author is reflecting on a personal/professional experience. Also commonly used when presenting findings from qualitative research and sometimes quantitative research. Benefits are that it is a clear way of writing and the reader always knows who is speaking. It also helps to avoid **anthropomorphism** in your writing. You should avoid language such as "The chapter outlines the steps of the research process." Remember: "the chapter" is a non-human object and can't "outline" anything. A better alternative is: "In this chapter, the steps of the research process are outlined." Another example of anthropomorphism is "The experiment tested how best to treat pain in a pediatric populations." A better alternative is "In this study, researchers conducted an experiment about how best to treat pain in a pediatric population."

Second person PoV uses pronouns such as you, and your.	Your diet should include a variety of healthy foods each day. You will note from the exemplar, the following four main ideas. You should look at your incision every day for signs of infection such as redness.	Used when you are addressing one or more readers specifically. It is not considered scholarly so you would avoid using it in an academic paper. Often used for informational and instructional resources for clients and families. Use of the pronoun *you* makes the message applicable to the reader and draws them into the message.
Third person PoV uses pronouns such as she, he, they, it, and their. It also identifies people using nouns (e.g., the researcher)	The researchers concluded that effective communication leads to enhanced therapeutic relationships between the nurse and client. Their assessment of the literature revealed that discussions about the home environment led to more open discussions about interpersonal violence. Research conducted by Trudeau and colleagues influenced how nursing care was delivered.	Used when the intention is to provide an objective perspective to the writing and eliminate subjectivity. In nursing, it is typically used in policy papers and often when presenting quantitative findings.

Here are some other important points to consider when choosing your pronouns:

- Whatever PoV you use, **consistency is paramount**. If you start writing a text in third person PoV, use it consistently throughout your text. Don't move back and forth between third person and second person, or first person and second person. It confuses the reader!
- Your **choice of PoV is influenced by the purpose and audience** for your writing. Reflect on how the use of *I* (first person), *you* (second person) and *the researcher/they* (third person) will influence your message.

- **Watch out for gendered assumptions** in your use of pronouns like *he* or *she*. Assumption of gender is a common error. For example:
    - Historically, nursing has been a female profession, but now all genders are represented in the field. **Avoid statements like:** "A nurse should assess her client's preferences before suggesting healthy ways of eating." This is incorrect because the pronoun use of *her* assumes that all nurses are female. It is also incorrect because it sounds possessive: as if the nurse *owns* the client. It can **easily be modified to**: "Nurses should assess clients' preferences before suggesting healthy ways of eating."
    - The **second error related to pronouns and gender is to assume a binary** in which only two genders exist. Gender exists on a continuum, and you may already be aware of the recent movement to embrace the pronoun *they* in both a singular and plural capacity. Before starting a class assignment, you might want to have a discussion with your instructor about this.
    - Don't assume gender when citing an author. Avoid using *she* or *he* if an author's name is traditionally perceived as female (e.g., Lisa Dottie) or male (e.g., Martin Lin). Rather, it is best to use their last name (e.g., In Dottie's research, it was found…).

Student Tip

Is First Person Point of View (PoV) Scholarly?

You may be wondering: Is first person PoV considered scholarly? Can I use first person PoV when writing papers in my courses? The short answer to the first question is "yes first person PoV is scholarly! The answer to the second question is a bit more complex: it is still being debated among nursing instructors, so it's best to check with your instructor if you are unsure.

Avoid the Royal-Editorial "We" and "Our"

The royal or editorial "we" or "our" is when you use a plural pronoun when in fact you should be specific about who you are referring to in your writing.

Example:

- Ineffective: **We** are known to be an empathetic profession. Effective: The profession of nursing is known to be empathetic.
- Ineffective: It is part of **our** role to advocate for patients. Effective: An important part of the nursing role is patient advocacy.

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Tone of Writing

Tone of writing identifies a **writer's attitude** toward a subject or audience. It influences the message as well as the audience's mood and receptiveness.

In conversation, you can usually determine a person's tone quite easily based on the speaker's pitch, speed, and loudness of their voice. A friend telling you about being accepted into nursing school may use an energetic and excited tone, while an instructor talking about academic integrity and plagiarism may use a matter-of-fact and serious tone.

In writing, you need to **think more carefully about tone** because you can't rely on your spoken voice. Tone is conveyed by a range of elements: the level of formality, point of view, word choice, and punctuation. Your audience is relying on written text only, so be careful to ensure your tone isn't misinterpreted. You may use a combination of tones in your writing, for example both scientific and professional or critical and political. Regardless of the tone you want to convey, it is important to be consistent throughout your paper.

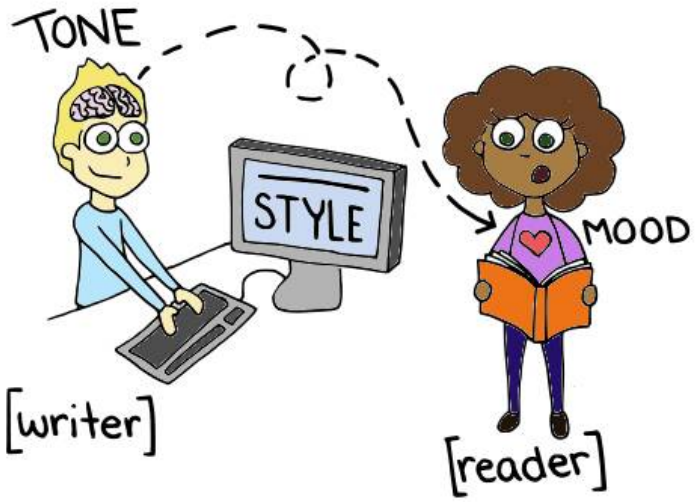


Figure 5.2: Tone of writing

Student Tip

Do Not Use an Informal Tone

It is never okay to use an informal tone in scholarly writing or any professional communications (such as an email) with your instructor. All communications should involve a professional tone.

Here are a few examples of different tones. Click on each to learn more.



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Activities: Check Your Understanding



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How would you rephrase these statements to make them more scholarly?



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Originality in writing

Originality in writing means integrating your own **authentic voice** into what you are trying to say. We all have authentic voices, and integrating that voice into your writing is important. An original voice does not mean you have to write about a new idea, although you might. Rather, it means making it your own.

And yet, writing with originality is difficult.

It takes practice to bring out your voice and use it well in your writing. It takes dedication to cultivating your voice. And it takes **safe spaces** and **mentorship to feel empowered** to share your voice.

There are many ways to cultivate originality in your writing.

- First, recognize that **your own voice** (and experiences and emotions) are **important**.
- Start by brainstorming about your own experiences and emotions related to the topic you are writing about. While reflecting, write openly and freely under the assumption that only you need to read these brainstorming notes – encourage yourself to **be vulnerable and courageous**. Then, you can decide later what parts you feel comfortable sharing in your paper.
- Use the literature to support your ideas. But also **think critically** about the literature and the ideas of others. Embrace your critical voice and consider: is there another way to think about it than what is presented in the literature? What element of analysis can you bring to your writing in terms of critiquing the literature?
- Also, don't fully rely on the literature to the point that your voice is missing – remember, **your voice is important and valued**. The **risk of using too many quotations** is that your writing will lack originality. And as a result, it will appear that you are just reproducing what someone else has said. Most times, it is fine to write a paper with no quotations. Consider

how you can reshape existing information from your own point of view and think about it in a unique way.

- Present the information in a **unique way** or from a unique perspective.
- If done correctly, **creativity** can be used to make your writing original and done so in a scholarly way. There are many ways to be creative in scholarly writing including the purposeful integration of a short reflection or story, a powerful quote that you personalize, a metaphor or symbolism, poetry and imagery. However, you must think carefully and critically about how to integrate a creative element into your writing as there is always the risk that writing may appear as non-scholarly.

Sentence and Paragraph Construction

You should construct your paragraphs and sentences **with intention** because these elements are the building blocks of scholarly writing. Plan your writing by briefly outlining the main idea of each paragraph. Each paragraph should convey one main point, usually identified in the first sentence, that links to the overarching purpose of your paper – this is often referred to as your topic sentence. Each paragraph should include several sentences supporting this main point. The end of each paragraph should link to the next paragraph to enhance flow of the overall paper. Watch **Film Clip 5.1** about the building blocks of paragraphs.



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Film Clip 5.1: Building blocks of a paragraph [1:31]

Paragraph and sentence length will vary depending on the length of your paper and the complexity of the ideas. For example, you wouldn't use a one-page paragraph in a three-page paper. Overly long sentences and paragraphs can be unclear and confusing to your reader. The most important thing to keep in mind is that the amount of space needed to develop one idea will likely be different than the amount of space needed to develop another. When is a paragraph complete? When it's fully developed. Check out **Table**

5.2 for some pointers on when to end a paragraph and when to combine paragraphs.

Table 5.2: Paragraph pointers

Signals that it's time to end a paragraph and start a new one	You're ready to begin developing a new idea. You want to emphasize a new point by setting it apart. You're getting ready to continue discussing the same idea but in a different way (e.g., shifting from comparison to contrast). You notice that your current paragraph is getting too long (more than three-fourths of a page or so), and you think your writers will need a visual break.
Signals that you may want to combine paragraphs	You notice that some of your paragraphs appear to be short and choppy. You have multiple paragraphs on the same topic. You have undeveloped material that needs to be united under a clear topic.

Student Tip

Paragraph and Sentence Length

Although there are exceptions, here are some guiding principles for paragraph and sentence length:

1. Sentences should be no longer than three lines. Longer sentences can be complex and confusing: it's

best to write more concisely and/or divide the sentence into two sentences.

2. Paragraphs should be at least 3-8 sentences.
3. In a double-spaced paper, paragraphs should be about one-half to three-quarters of a page. Longer paragraphs tend to be confusing and usually include more than one idea or repetitive information. Try to make your writing more concise.

The number of paragraphs shares similar qualities to paragraph length. You may have been asked in the past to write a five-paragraph essay – there's nothing inherently wrong with a five-paragraph essay, but just like sentence length and paragraph length, the number of paragraphs in an essay depends on what's needed to get the job done. There's really no way to know that until you start writing. Try not to worry too much about the exact length and number of paragraphs. Start writing and see where the essay and the paragraphs take you. You'll have plenty of time to sort out the organization during the revision process. You're letting your ideas unfold: give yourself – and your ideas – the space to let that happen.

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Clear and Complex Language

Your choice of words while writing a paper is important because it influences a reader's interpretation of the meaning.

Choose **clear** and **specific** words. Avoid broad and general terms, such as *government* or *hospitals*, which can be ambiguous. Use more specific language. For example, you could say "members of the provincial government" or "hospitals in urban settings." In nursing, a common error is to homogenize *clients* as a distinct population. For clarity, it is best to further define what you mean, e.g., "clients with congenital heart disease."

Some words are commonly misused in scholarly writing and lead to a lack of clarity. Here are some examples:

- **Hard**—this word implies something that is firm and solid like stone or rock. Although it can be used to refer to something that takes effort and skill, it is better to use a more scholarly word such as difficult (e.g., "It was difficult to decide where to go to school").
- **Mentioned**—this word usually implies something that was briefly referred to. It is better to use words like: described, discussed, or stated (e.g., "Matchu et al. stated that moral distress is experienced more by novice nurses").
- **Several**—this word generally refers to three of something as opposed to *a couple*, which refers to two of something.
- **Proves**—in nursing, this word indicates that you have evidence that supports the claim. Unless the claim is statistically proven with high quality evidence, it's better to use words like: indicates or suggests.
- **Correlates**—in nursing, this word refers to a relationship between two things that is supported by statistical data; otherwise, it's best to use words like "corresponds" or "is associated with".

Table 5.3: Language to avoid in scholarly writing

Language to avoid	Examples
Jargon Refers to language, abbreviations, or terms that are used by specific groups, typically people involved in a profession. Using jargon within that group makes conversation simpler, and it works because everyone in the group knows the terms. The problem with using jargon when writing is that if your reader has no idea of what those terms mean, you'll lose them. If you decide jargon is useful based on your audience's knowledge, then at least explain each complex term when you first introduce it.	Biological and social capital are influenced by material conditions. (This sentence and the jargon within it is appropriate for a highly academic audience who has theoretical understanding of the term "capital"). Better option: A client's socioeconomic status influences their social relationships and health and wellness state.

Colloquial phrasing Colloquial phrasing is familiar, everyday slang language. It includes informal words that often change with passing fads. Many people use slang when speaking or texting, but understanding may be limited to a specific group of people.	On the other hand, it has been noted that the tympanic route enhances temperature accuracy. Better option: Conversely, it has been noted that the tympanic route enhances temperature accuracy. The study found that drug seekers are frequent flyers. Better option: The study found that people with addictions seek healthcare often. They made a big deal of the issue. Better option: The issue was viewed as an important problem. The healthcare team was stuck in their old ways of nursing practice. Better option: The healthcare team was comfortable with the status quo in terms of their nursing practice. Grieving the death of a parent is very hard. Better option: It is difficult to grieve the death of a parent.
Clichés Clichés are descriptive expressions that are often not understood because they have lost their original meaning due to overuse. Writing that uses clichés lacks professionalism and original insight.	Only time will tell whether these therapeutic interventions are effective. Better option: Further research will provide evidence about the effectiveness of these therapeutic interventions. It is important that nurses read between the lines when reading new policy. Better option: It is important that nurses look for hidden or implied meaning when reading new policy statements.

Simpler language can help make a text available to everyone. However, overly simple language may frustrate some readers. Using more **complex language** allows a writer to add deeper layers of information and meaning to a text. This can work if the audience is

familiar with the language being used – but if they're not, they may find the text confusing, irritating, or even impossible to understand. Think critically about whether simpler or complex language should be used based on your audience and purpose.

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Respectful and Inclusive Language

The field of nursing is orientated toward social justice, so it is important to be attentive to the power and use of language. Use respectful and inclusive language that is not oppressive and discriminatory.

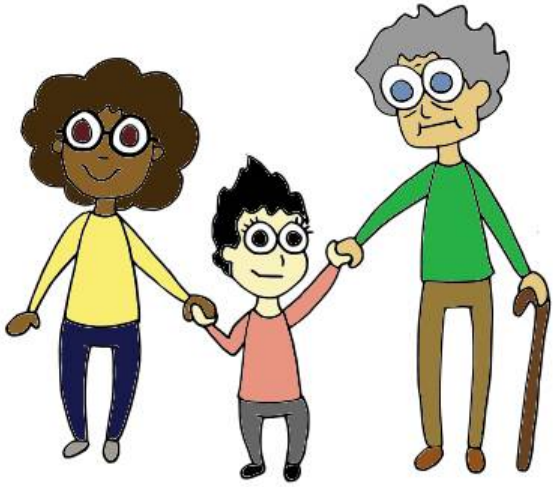


Figure 5.3: Respectful and inclusive language

Labels are words and phrases that describe and **categorize people** in ways that are overpowering and demeaning. Labels can be used as tools to oppress or subjugate populations and reduce persons to their pathology. See **Table 5.4** for examples of inclusive language that can replace labelling language.

Table 5.4: Labelling and inclusive language

Labelling language	Inclusive language
The demented patient	The person living with dementia
The autistic child	The child living with autism
The psych patient	The client with a mental health disorder

Some language can be demeaning based on its connotative value (e.g., a feeling or idea attached to a word). Words have denotative and connotative meanings. A **denotation is the dictionary or literal definition** of a word. A **connotation is the cultural meaning or feeling or idea** attached to a word—it can be positive, negative, or neutral. For example, *vagrant* and *homeless* have the same denotative meaning, but vagrant has a negative connotation. Thus, in scholarly writing, you should use the word homeless instead or unhoused (the latter is more current and inclusive). Consider your word choices carefully based on the connotative meaning of a word. Check out **Film Clip 5.1** about denotative and connotative languages.



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Film Clip 5.2: Denotative and connotative language [1:53]

Student Tip

Scholarly Language

To decide whether you are using scholarly language, ask yourself: Does it take an expert to understand what you're trying to convey? If so, is your audience composed of experts? Is your language a reflection of how you would like to be perceived professionally? Are complex terms well-defined in your paper? Could someone take offense to your use of words?

Commonly Confused Words

There are many words that are commonly confused and used inappropriately. Click on the words below if you struggle with them or are curious about which to use and in which context.



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Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Other Grammar and Style Tips

You probably learned a lot about grammar and style rules before entering post-secondary school. Clauses, contractions, modifiers, comma splice – is this sounding familiar?

This section reviews some common errors that instructors see in papers written by nursing students. Check out **Table 5.5** for some of the common errors made in writing.

Table 5.5: Common grammar errors

Common errors	Example	Correction
Contraction use: Two words that are combined with an apostrophe – should be avoided in scholarly writing	It's best to evaluate the physical environment of the home prior to hospital discharge for clients with complex care needs and limitations in physical mobility.	It is best to evaluate the physical environment of the home prior to hospital discharge for clients with complex care needs and limitations in physical mobility.
Excessive modifiers/ descriptors: These are adjectives and adverbs that describe nouns and verbs – excessive use of these words to describe something that is already descriptive is distracting to the reader.	These nursing interventions were extremely effective. The client was quite upset after receiving the diagnosis. **Avoid use of words such as very, quite, and extremely.	These nursing interventions were effective. The client was upset after receiving the diagnosis.
Semi-colon use: A semi-colon is used to connect two closely related independent clauses (group of words that can stand alone as a complete sentence). Semi-colons are also used to separate items in a long list.	RN prescribing has a potential to increase access to care; as well as increase healthcare system efficiencies. Examples of determinants of health include; income; education, gender, culture. **Note: the words after the semi-colon do not form a complete clause.	RN prescribing has a potential to increase access to care; this shift in practice can also increase healthcare system efficiencies. Examples of determinants of health include: income; education; gender; and culture.

Omission of listing comma: This comma is used to separate the items in a list of two or more. (The comma that comes before the final item is called the Oxford comma, and it is typically used in academic writing.)	Common areas of study in year one nursing include writing, therapeutic communication and biology.	Common areas of study in year one nursing include writing, therapeutic communication, and biology.
Comma splice: Two independent clauses (i.e., complete sentences) joined with a comma.	It is important for clients to receive sufficient sleep, researchers have found that lack of sleep has been shown to slow healing.	It is important for clients to receive sufficient sleep. Researchers have found that lack of sleep has been shown to slow healing.
Run-on sentence: Two independent clauses joined with no intervening punctuation (i.e., run together).	Clients who are at risk for premature death due to risky health behaviours such as unprotected sex and illegal drug use may benefit from attending nurse and peer facilitated health promotion programs because these programs can provide opportunities for clients to receive support from nurses and for clients to speak with other clients who have had similar experiences.	Clients who engage in risky health behaviours such as unprotected sex and illegal drug use are at risk of premature death. These clients may benefit from attending nurse and peer facilitated health promotion programs. These types of programs provide opportunities for clients to receive support from nurses and for clients to speak with other clients who have had similar experiences.

Verb form or verb tense error: A verb that is in the incorrect form or in the incorrect tense.	The nurse speaked with the client's family.	The nurse spoke with the client's family.
Wrong preposition: The preposition chosen is incorrect.	The nurse gave instructions for the client.	The nurse gave instructions to the client.
Apostrophe error: Using an apostrophe when one isn't needed, or leaving out the apostrophe when it is needed, or putting the apostrophe in the incorrect place.	Nurse's are integral to the healthcare system. Nurse's philosophy of care is central to how they practice.	Nurses are integral to the healthcare system. Nurses' philosophy of care is central to how they practice.

Student Tip

Emphasis of words

When emphasis is required for a word or short phrase or to introduce an important term, do not bold the word and do not place single quotation marks around it. Rather, APA

(2020) indicates to use italics if needed. But usually, the syntax of the sentence is sufficient to emphasize a word or introduce an important term.

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Chapter Summary

This chapter has helped you refine your writing skills. You learned to reflect on the audience and purpose of your writing, as well as the point of view and tone of your writing. You also considered sentence and paragraph construction, language, and grammar. It will take practice and time to refine your skills.

Your Writing Journey

Now that you have thought more deeply about your writing purpose, consider your audience. You now have the tools for engaging in "detective work" – reading between the lines of what is expected in your writing. Right from the start, you should think about who you are writing for, in what voice, and common pitfalls to avoid. Start by identifying the expectations of the writing assignment and considering the structure of your paper – this is the scaffolding for good scholarly writing.

CHAPTER 6: THE WRITING PROCESS AND PRE-WRITING

Chapter 6 Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Describe the writing process.
- Evaluate thesis statements.
- Explain how to develop outlines.

Overview: The Writing Process

This chapter will introduce you to the writing process: the steps involved between receiving an assignment from your instructor to handing in your paper. **Figure 6.1** illustrates the writing process.

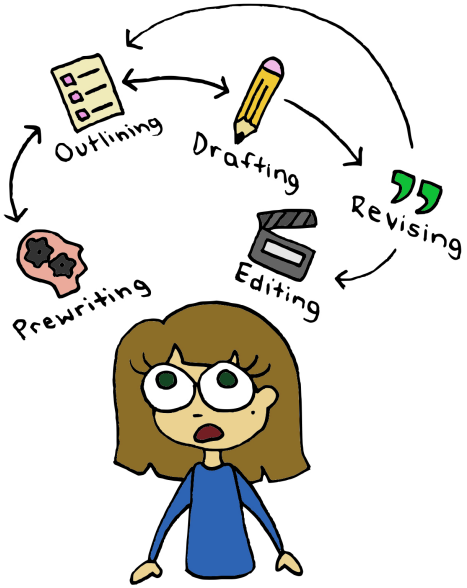


Figure 6.1: The writing process

A successful writing project includes the following phases:

1. **Prewriting:** Generate and begin to develop ideas to write

about. As a starting point, read the writing assignment, determine what is required, and what you will focus on. You may need to conduct research during this phase.

2. **Outlining a structure of ideas:** Determine the paper's overall organizational structure and create an outline to organize these ideas. This phase usually involves elaborating on the initial ideas.
3. **Writing a rough draft:** Use the work completed in the prewriting and outlining phases to develop a first draft. It should cover the ideas that you brainstormed and follow the organizational plan that you laid out.
4. **Revising:** Review the draft and reshape its content to ensure it flows smoothly. This stage involves moderate and sometimes major changes: adding or deleting paragraphs, phrasing the main point differently, expanding on an important idea, reorganizing content, etc.
5. **Editing:** Review the draft again to make changes that improve style and adherence to standard writing conventions. For example, you may replace a vague word with a more precise one, or correct errors in grammar and spelling. Once this stage is complete, the writing process is finished and your work is ready to share with others.

Check out **Audio Podcast 6.1** in which **Dr. Annette Bailey** from the **Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing** at **Toronto Metropolitan University** shares her insights about writing and transferring your thinking onto paper.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/scholarlywriting/?p=154#oembed-1

Audio Podcast 6.1: Insights about writing [7:53]
See bottom of page for transcript of audio podcast 6.1

Student Tip

The Iterative Process of Writing

The writing process is not linear: you should **move back and forth between the phases**. For example, you might recheck the assignment guidelines to verify that your topic, pre-writing, and writing meets expectations. Or, you might brainstorm some ideas, do some research, and only then begin thinking about the main idea or thesis of your paper.

Activity: Check Your Understanding



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Transcript of audio podcast 6.1

Hello, my name is Dr. Annette Bailey, Associate Professor at the Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing. I'd like to take a few minutes to share some insights with you on the topic of writing. Over my years of teaching, I often hear students say they don't have the writing skills to make meaning come alive on the pages. So I say to students, if they are able to think, they are able to write, because writing is about thinking. Writing is simply transferring your thinking onto paper. However, you must have the right thinking space, time, clarity of mind, and not be overly stressed to facilitate your deepest and most reflective thinking.

So how do you prepare for writing? Here are a few tips. 1. The critical first step in writing is to have a sound idea of the main message you want to relay. In other word what is your paper about? If you are writing a piece for yourself, you likely have an idea you are passionate about. If you are writing for an assignment, for which a topic is given, then you need to figure out how to put your spin on the topic. Ask yourself, what it is about this topic that I am passionate about, or what is of interest to me about this topic? Whenever possible, choose topics that you are curious about, or one you have an interest in pursuing knowledge on. 2. Secondly, create a detailed outline. once you have your topic and you know the main message you want to convey in your paper, begin writing ideas down related to that message, and use those ideas to create a detailed outline that you can use as a guide- one that provides a process or a sequence for building and connecting ideas in the paper. Once you have the basic outline, decide what you want to include under each heading or subheading in the paper, using bullet points. Then search the literature to find insights to support your ideas. You may also want to look for literature that may conflict your ideas or thoughts, so that you can build good debatable

argumentation throughout your paper. Some writers do the literature research in advance of writing, I find that literature review occurs throughout the writing process for me, as I usually get new ideas in the process of writing that require support or substantiation. The literature is used to help bring clarity or expand on your ideas, or to build evidence into your paper. I usually encourage students not to simply rely on what the literature has to say. Bring your own ideas and ways of understanding what the literature has to say. Remember, you are using the literature to support your ideas, not the other way around. 3. Third, see the big picture of your paper. Look at your outline that you have created and try to see the big picture of your paper. As you document your ideas in the outline, ensure that ideas are coinciding throughout the paper, so that your finished paper does not appear fragmented. Ideas should link nicely throughout the paragraphs, the sections, and the entire paper. Look at this process of writing your paper like building a human being. Let me explain. Start with ideas (representing bones), connect ideas (which is constructing the skeleton), support ideas with the literature (which is adding muscles to skeleton), bring originality and creativity to your ideas (which is adding organs), and build critical perspectives (which is like adding the brain). You have now built a scholar on paper! Originality, creativity and critical thinking are hallmarks of writing. So, bring your own unique ways of thinking into your writing. Critical thinking is not only about making sure that ideas are connected throughout the paper; it is also about the uniqueness of the ideas, and the ways in which they are presented to entice and excite the reader. Critical writing is about critical thinking, as I mentioned earlier. It is the critical things that come to mind that you then document on paper. Two writers can say something very similar, but the way it is written is the key to igniting a certain reaction from the reader. So, the way you use words matter. Never be afraid to use words creatively. Don't let words scare you! But, having said that, it is important that you write in the most simplistic, easy to understand manner. There is an art to using simple words. Your

simplest writing is the most sophisticated writing. Make your writing clear, ensure that ideas flow well, look at transition between your sentences, look at transition between paragraphs and sections of the paper. Your main message should be well woven throughout your entire paper. There is such thing called writers' fatigue. If you find that you are having trouble generating ideas, maybe you have just spent 2 hours writing one paragraph, and the ideas are no longer emerging in your mind– try a different approach. How about speaking into an audio recorder, or exploring your ideas with a friend or family member while recording the conversation, or going for a walk to refresh and process your thoughts. What else can I tell you about writing? Well, writing is a messy process. You cannot write a polished paper without going through many different iterations. You will find that you are restructuring and rebuilding the paper as you progress in the writing process. So, it is important to start writing your paper early, so that you have enough time. That's it for now. Be sure to check out my article- Building a scholar in writing (BSW): A model for developing students' critical writing skills, published in the Nurse Education in Practice Journal

The Starting Point

Now that you have a basic understanding of the writing process, what are the first steps when starting to write a paper? First step: **read the assignment guidelines carefully**. Second step: **think about YOU in relation to the topic**.

Step 1: Review assignment guidelines

- Highlight the key points when you read the guidelines and the marking rubric, if provided. You need to know what is expected of you before you start writing.
- Look for the verbs in the assignment and on the rubric. Are you being asked to reflect, analyze, argue, or something else? These verbs will help you determine what is expected and the type of writing that is required from you.
- Schedule the timing of when you will engage in each phase of the writing process. See **Figure 6.2**. Many factors will affect how long it will take you to write a paper: the length of the paper itself, the complexity of the ideas in the paper, the amount of research that is required before writing a paper, and all of your other competing obligations. For example, if you are expected to conduct a literature review, that will take you longer than writing a two-page reflection where you are only asked to incorporate one reference.



Figure 6.2: Scheduling your timing

Step 2: Think about YOU in relation to the topic

Before beginning the writing process, think about your **positionality** in relation to the topic. Positionality means how you position yourself in relation to a topic, informed by your identity. To highlight your positionality, it is important to understand your identities (Canty & Kantrowitz-Gordon, 2024). As you begin to understand your positionality, you can challenge yourself to be reflexive by examining your emotions, feelings, assumptions and biases surrounding the topic; these influence what you write about and how you write. Every decision you make in writing (what you

choose to write, how you describe the event, what you compare/contrast) conveys meaning. It is helpful to be aware of the meaning that underpins your writing so that you can be consistent and intentional in how you write. Early in your writing journey, you may be more comfortable with a more neutral or objective tone. As your writing evolves, you will become more skilled at integrating yourself into writing via tone, style, and delivery.

Student Tip

Time Management

Time management is important because you will have many nursing assignments. Start by writing the due date on your calendar, and then work backward from the due date to set aside blocks of time when you will work on the assignment. Always plan multiple writing sessions per assignment. Don't try to move through all phases of the writing process in one evening: trying to work that fast is stressful and does not yield great results. You will plan better, think better, and write better if you space out the steps.

Activity: Check Your Understanding



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Canty, L., & Kantrowitz-Gordon, I. (2024, early view). Understanding positionality and reflexivity in scholarly writing. Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health. https://doi.org/10.1111/jmwh.13675

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Brainstorming to Get Started

There is no one right way to begin the writing journey. You might be given a topic or be instantly inspired by a topic. You might dive right in by writing complete sentences and paragraphs, or start with some brainstorming or freewriting. Some people choose their strategy based on the particular writing task and how familiar they are with the topic. You need to determine **what works best for you**.

Brainstorming encompasses several methods that help you generate ideas and see connections between ideas without writing in complete sentences. These methods have some common rules:

- Write down all of your ideas; don't eliminate anything until you are finished brainstorming.
- Write in point form and don't bother with editing at this stage.
- Work as quickly as you can.
- If you get stuck, stop and review your work or get someone else's input.

Clustering

A **cluster is one method of brainstorming** that helps you find connections between ideas (**Figure 6.3**). It's also called a tree diagram, mind map, or spider diagram. Start with a main concept: write it in the center of a page or screen and circle it. Next, think of ideas that connect to the main concept. Write these ideas around the main concept and draw connecting lines to the main concept. As you think of ideas that relate to any of the others, create more connections by writing those ideas around the one idea that connects them and draw connecting lines.

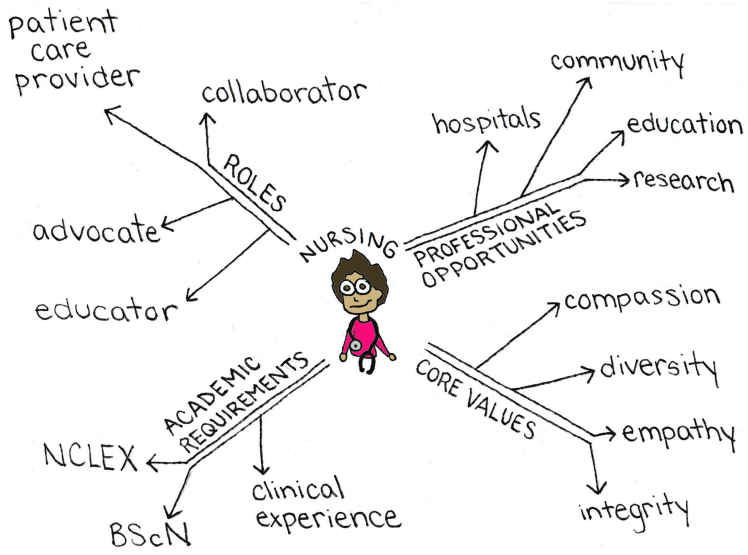


Figure 6.3: Clustering

Listing

Listing is just what it sounds like: **making a list of ideas**. Here are two kinds of lists you might use:

- Brainstorm list: Simply make a list of all the ideas related to your topic. Don't censor your ideas; write everything down, knowing you can cross some off later.
- What I know/don't know lists: If you know that your topic will require research, you can make two lists. The first will be a list of what you already know about your topic; the second will be a list of what you don't know and will have to research. See **Table 6.1**.

Table 6.1: Writing Lists

What I know about dementia	What I don't know about dementia
It impacts mental ability. It affects memory. It damages brain cells. There are different types. The risk factors include age and genetics.	What part of the brain does it affect? What resources are available to nurses, clients, and families? What community resources are available?

Freewriting

Freewriting is **a technique that generates text**, some of which you may eventually use in your final draft, as illustrated in **Figure 6.4**. The rules are similar to brainstorming and clustering:

- Write as much as you can, as quickly as you can.
- Don't edit or cross anything out. If you must edit as you go, just write the correction and keep moving along. Don't go for the perfect word – just get the idea on the page.
- Keep your pen, pencil, or fingers on the keyboard moving.
- You don't need to stay on topic or write in any order. Feel free to follow tangents.
- If you get stuck, write a repeating phrase until your brain gets tired and gives you something else to write.
- Freewriting can be used just to get your mind working so that you can write an actual draft. In this case, you can write about whatever you want. Freewriting to generate ideas usually works best when you start with a prompt – an idea or question that gets you started. An example of a writing prompt might be "What do I already know about this topic?" Or "What is the first idea I have about my topic?" If you already have a list or an outline, you can freewrite about each item.

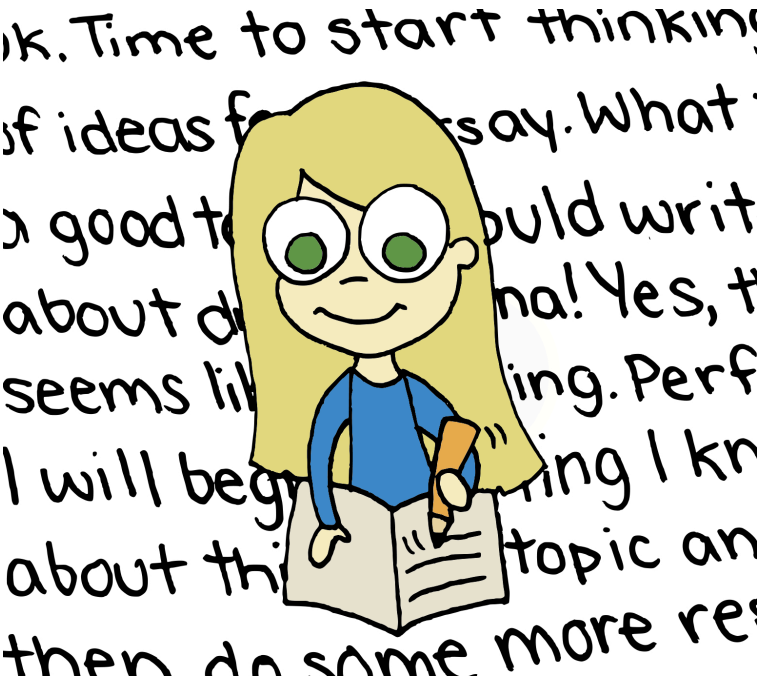


Figure 6.4: Freewriting

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Working With a Thesis

After doing some researching and brainstorming, you have finally chosen one main idea (or closely related group of ideas) out of all of your possible ideas to focus on. Congratulations! Now, you need to decide what you want to say about it. If applicable, you may want to develop a working thesis to guide your drafting process.

A thesis is the **controlling idea of a text** (often an argument). Depending on the type of text you are creating, your writing may develop, explore multiple angles, and/or support your thesis.

But how do you know, before getting any of the paper written, exactly what your thesis is and how your sources will support it? Often, you can't. The closest you can get in these cases is a **working thesis**, which is a best guess at what the thesis is likely to be, based on the information you are working with at this time. The main idea of it may not change, but the specifics are probably going to be tweaked a bit as you complete a draft and continue to do research.

Student Tip

Is a Thesis Always Needed?

Not all assignments will require you to develop a thesis, but some will, especially those involving persuasive, critical, and opinion types of writing. A thesis may not be appropriate for reflective writing, annotated bibliographies, and some analytical writing – you will still have a main idea for these types of writing. In general, if you need to argue

something or take a stand or position, you will need a thesis statement. When in doubt, discuss it with your instructor.

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Elements of a Thesis Statement

When writing an essay, you must **focus on a main idea**. This idea will stem from a topic you have chosen or been assigned or from a question your instructor has asked. It is not enough merely to discuss a general topic or answer with a yes or no: you will need to form an opinion and then articulate it into a **controlling idea** – the main idea you will build your thesis on.

A thesis is not the topic itself, but rather your interpretation of the question or subject. When an instructor presents you with a topic, ask, "What do you want to say about it?" Asking and answering this question is vital to forming a thesis that is specific.

A thesis is typically one sentence long and appears near the end of your introduction. It is specific and focuses on one to three points related to a main idea: you will work to prove these points in the body of your paper. Thus, the thesis forecasts the content of the essay and how you will organize your information. A thesis statement does not summarize an issue but rather helps to dissect it.

A strong thesis statement

Click on the items below to understand the qualities of a strong thesis statement.



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Examples and Pitfalls of Thesis Statements

The following are good examples of strong thesis statements.

Thesis statement 1

To plan and fund healthcare, local health networks are better at improving the patient experience and access to care than a large central body.

Thesis statement 2

Positioning clients with acute respiratory distress syndrome in the prone position increases ventilation and decreases mortality rates.

Pitfalls to avoid with thesis statements

Now that you have learned about strong thesis statements, take a look at four **pitfalls to avoid** when composing a thesis, as described in **Table 6.2** and illustrated in **Figure 6.5**.

Table 6.2: Pitfalls to avoid with thesis statements

Pitfall	Example of weak thesis statements
Simply declaring your subject or describing what you are about to discuss.	My paper explains why experience is more important than knowledge.
Making an unreasonable or outrageous claim or insulting the opposing side.	Provincial governments should double the amount of money that is given to hospitals.
Stating an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with.	Hospitals should employ nurses.
Making too broad a statement.	Healthcare services are important to preventing disease.



Figure 6.5: Pitfalls in thesis statements

Student Tip

Use of the First Person Perspective in a Thesis Statement

Even in a personal essay that allows the use of the first person perspective, your thesis **should not contain phrases such as in "my opinion" or "I believe."** These statements reduce your credibility and weaken your argument. Your opinion will be more convincing if you use a stronger statement, such as: "As per the evidence, I argue that shifting money to preventative healthcare is important to reduce hospital healthcare costs."

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Writing a Thesis Statement

Readers always want to know "What is the big idea?" Every type of non-fiction writing – from a short essay to a 10-page term paper to a lengthy thesis or dissertation– needs a controlling idea as a "spine" that holds the paper together (see **Figure 6.6**). Look at **Table 6.3**: Topics and Thesis Statements for a comparison of topics and thesis statements.

Table 6.3: Topics and thesis statements: A comparison

Topic	Thesis Statement
Healthcare funding	To plan and fund healthcare, local health networks are better at improving the patient experience and access to care than a large central body.
Acute respiratory distress syndrome	Positioning clients with acute respiratory distress syndrome in the prone position increases ventilation and decreases mortality rates.

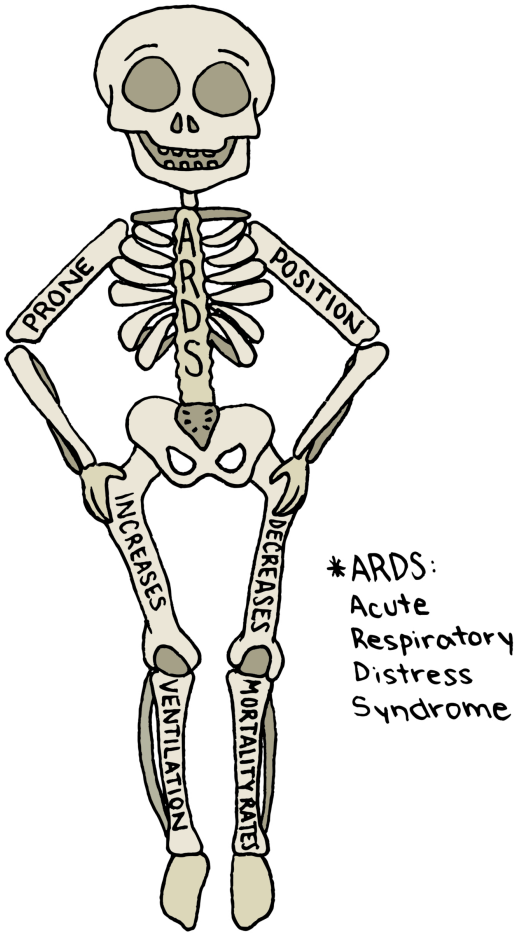


Figure 6.6: Thesis skeleton

Begin by writing a working thesis statement. You will need this working thesis statement when you begin to outline and organize your assignment. As you continue to develop your paper, you can limit the working thesis statement if it is too broad or expand it if it proves too narrow for what you want to say. Each draft of the thesis

statement will bring you closer to the exact wording that expresses your controlling idea.

Student Tip

The Controlling Idea

The controlling idea should be broader for a longer piece of writing than for a shorter piece of writing. Make sure the controlling idea is appropriate for the length of the assignment. How many pages it will take to explain and explore the controlling or main idea in detail? Be reasonable with your estimate. Then expand or trim the controlling or main idea to match the required length.

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Revising a Thesis Statement

Your thesis statement will probably change as you write so that it reflects exactly what you discuss in your paper. Remember, you will **begin with a working thesis** statement, an indefinite statement that you make about your topic early in the writing process.

Working thesis statements will become stronger as you gather information and form new opinions and reasons for those opinions. **Revisions will help you strengthen your thesis** so that it matches what you have expressed in the body of your paper. See **Table 6.4** for ways to remove irrelevant parts and revise your thesis.

Table 6.4: Revising a thesis

Step	Revision	Impact
Identify and replace all nonspecific words, such as people, everything, society, or life, with more precise words to reduce any vagueness.	Working thesis: University students have to work hard to succeed in school. Revised thesis: Nursing students must have discipline and persistence to manage their course workload and be successful in their course evaluations.	The revised thesis makes a more specific statement about success and what it means to work hard. The original includes too broad a range of people and does not define exactly what success entails. By replacing the general words like university students and work hard, you can better focus your research and gain more direction in your writing.
Clarify ideas that need explanation by asking questions that narrow your thesis.	Working thesis: The welfare system is a joke. Revised thesis: The welfare system prevents people in the lower socioeconomic class from gaining employment by alluring members of that class with unearned income, instead of programs to improve their education and skill sets.	*Joke* means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By asking questions, you can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for joke. By incorporating the answers to these questions into a thesis statement, you more accurately define your stance, which will better guide the writing of the essay.

Replace linking verbs with action verbs. Linking verbs do provide information about a subject, such as a condition or relationship (is, appear, smell, sound), but they do not describe any action. The most common linking verb is any forms of the verb to be, a verb that simply states that a situation exists.	Working thesis: Individuals who are homeless are not receiving adequate healthcare. Revised thesis: The Canadian healthcare system is not providing sufficient funding to support individuals who are homeless, resulting in inequitable healthcare resources and inadequately diverse approaches to provide required services and access to healthcare.	The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word: are. Linking verbs often make thesis statements weaker because they do not express action. Reading the original thesis statement, readers might wonder why individuals who are homeless are not receiving adequate healthcare; the statement does not compel you to ask many more questions. You should ask yourself questions in order to replace the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement – one that takes a more definitive stance on the issue. For example: Who is not providing adequate healthcare to individuals who are homeless? What is considered adequate? What is the problem? What are the results?
Omit any general claims that are difficult to support.	Working thesis: Today's adolescents are too sexualized. Revised thesis: Adolescents who are captivated by the sexual images on MTV are conditioned to believe that a person's worth depends on their sexuality, a feeling that harms their self-esteem and behaviour.	It is true that some adolescents in today's society are more sexualized than in the past, but that is not true for all. Many adolescents have strict parents, dress modestly, and do not engage in sexual activity while in middle school or high school. Here, it would be helpful to ask questions like: Which adolescents? What constitutes too sexualized? Why are they choosing certain behaviours over others? Where does this behaviour show up? What are the repercussions?

Student Tip

Ask Questions about Your Thesis Statement

The best way to revise your thesis statement is to ask questions about it and then examine the answers to those questions. By challenging your own ideas and forming definite reasons for those ideas, you can move toward a more precise point of view, which you can then incorporate into your thesis statement.

Activity: Beware of the Pitfalls!

Some working thesis statements are provided below. Use the steps you have just learned to revise the working thesis to strengthen the statement.

- Working Thesis: Today's university students have too much stress in their life.
- Working Thesis: Children are not exercising enough.

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Organizing and Connecting Ideas

Now that you have refined your topic a bit more, you can start **organizing how your ideas will support your main idea** or thesis. Start **looking for connections** as you develop a formal outline or roadmap for your paper. Having an outline and imagining how your paper will flow from one idea to the next or from one paragraph or one section to the next will help ensure your writing is clear and logical. You have already identified a topic and a working thesis, so now you can begin to refine this topic and further flush out your ideas. Ask questions like:

- What ideas do you need to discuss in your paper to support your main idea?
- How many supporting ideas are needed to comprehensively discuss your main idea?
- Do you need to separate an idea into two ideas to fully discuss it?
- Should you combine two ideas into one idea because they are focusing on the same thing?
- How are your ideas related?
- Which ideas need to be discussed first or later so that the writing flows?

After you have elaborated on your organizing ideas and made connections between them, you are ready to develop your outline!

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Developing an Outline

Outlining is a useful pre-writing tool once you are at the stage where you know your topic well or at least know the areas you want to explore. It provides a map of what your paper will look like, including its components.

Traditional outline

A traditional outline (see **Figure 6.7**) uses a **numbering and/or indentation scheme** to help organize your thoughts. The outline can be written in bullet/point form.

Generally, you will begin with your main idea (topic), perhaps stated as a thesis (if a thesis applies to the kind of paper your are writing). The main idea should be identified in the paper's introduction. Then, as per the traditional outline, place a series of subtopics/supporting ideas, usually the supports for your main point/topic, and finally expand the details underneath each subtopic. Each subtopic is numbered and has the same level of indentation. Details under each subtopic are given a different style of number or letter and are indented further to the right. Each subtopic should include at least two details. There can be as many supporting ideas as needed to support your major idea. When you are ready to write your paper, usually one paragraph is dedicated to one supporting idea.

1. Major (main) Idea

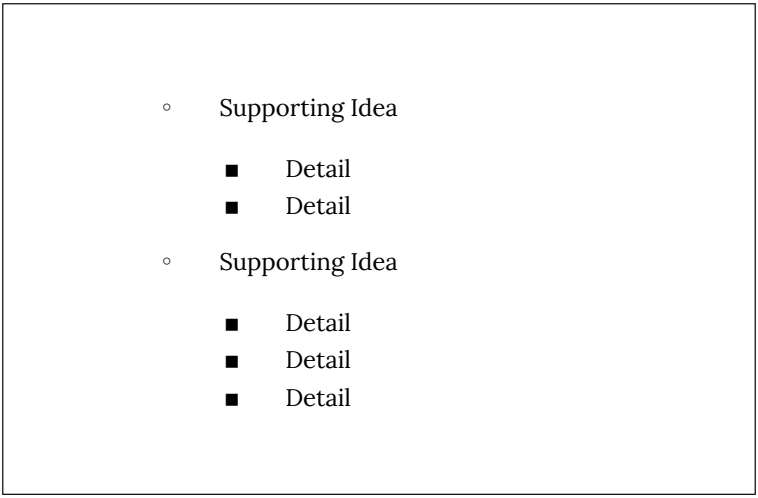


Figure 6.7: Traditional outline

Rough outline

A rough outline is **less formal than a traditional outline**. You can work from a list, a brainstorm, or a freewrite to organize ideas into an order that makes sense to you. You might try colour-coding similar items and then grouping items with the same colour together. Another method is to print out your prewriting, cut it up into small pieces, and group the pieces into piles of related items. Tape the similar items together, and then put the pieces together into a whole list/outline.



Figure 6.8: Rough outline using sticky notes

Structure of the paper

Part of creating an outline is thinking about how paragraphs will structure your paper. You might already be familiar with the five-paragraph essay structure (see **Figure 6.9**), in which you spend the first paragraph introducing your topic, culminating in a thesis that has three distinct parts in three paragraphs, and then finish with a conclusion paragraph.

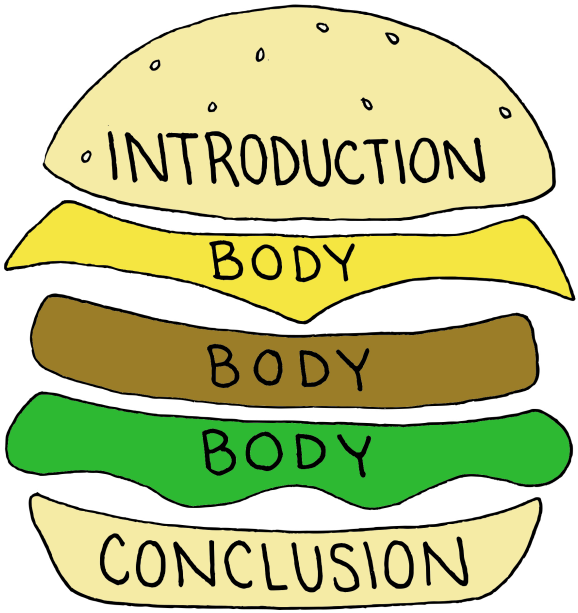


Figure 6.9: The five-paragraph burger structure

This structure is commonly taught in high schools, and it has some pros and some cons (See **Table 6.5**)

Table 6.5: Pros and cons of the five-paragraph essay structure

Pros	Cons

It helps organize thoughts. It is a good introduction to a simple way of structuring an essay that lets students focus on content rather than wrestling with a more complex structure. It familiarizes students with the general shape and components of many essays: a broad introduction giving readers context for this discussion, followed by a more detailed supporting discussion in the body of the essay, and ending by wrapping up the discussion and refocusing on the main idea. It is an effective	It can be prescribed – essays structured this way sound a lot alike. It isn't very flexible – topics often don't lend themselves easily to this structure. It doesn't encourage research and discussion at the depth university-level work tends to require. Quite often, a paragraph is simply not enough space for a thorough examination of an issue.

structure for in-class essays or timed written exams.

So, if the five-paragraph essay isn't the golden ticket in university work, what is?

That is a tricky question! There isn't really **one prescribed structure** that written university-level work adheres to. Audience, purpose, length, and other considerations all help dictate what that structure will be for any given piece of writing you are doing. This chapter has provided information about some basic guidelines and best practices.

When you have developed your outline, you are ready to write your first draft!

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Chapter Summary

This chapter has advanced your understanding of the writing process. You have now reflected on drafting and refining a thesis and the main point of your writing. A good thesis statement takes time to develop and requires several iterations. You have also had the opportunity to consider how to develop your outline. In the next chapter, you will learn about writing and drafting your paper.

Your Writing Journey

Now, you are at the phase in your journey where you can begin to craft an outline. Understanding the iterative phases of the writing process and ways to start writing are important first steps. Always consider your positionality in relation to the topic and be open to the power of brainstorming as you determine what works best for you. A full understanding of the topic and your own positionality will allow you to draft the main idea or thesis of your assignment. However, it is important to remain open and refine your thesis as you organize and connect your ideas.

CHAPTER 7: DRAFTING AND WRITING A PAPER

Chapter 7 Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Discuss elements of a first draft.
- Evaluate the quality of a first draft.

Overview: Drafting and Writing a Paper

The next step in the writing journey is drafting and writing the paper. A **draft is a complete version** of a piece of writing, **but it is not the final version**. After you draft a paper, you will have the opportunity to revise it, and then to edit and proofread it (as detailed in *Chapter* 8). The first draft gives you a working version that you will later improve.

Basic elements of a first draft

The previous chapter taught you how to develop a topic outline to direct your writing. Here, you will learn what a first draft looks like, which will help you make the creative leap from the outline to the first draft. A first draft should include the following elements:

- **Introduction**
  - Piques the audience's interest, conveys what the paper is about (i.e., the main idea), and motivates readers to keep reading.
  - Provides the thesis statement, if one is applicable or required, to present the controlling idea of the entire piece of writing.
- **Body**
  - Includes several paragraphs with a topic sentence in each paragraph that states the main idea of the paragraph and connects the idea to the thesis statement or the main idea of the paper.
  - Supporting sentences in each paragraph develop or

explain the topic sentence. Depending on the type of writing (e.g., reflective, persuasive), these may be specific facts, examples, anecdotes, or other details that elaborate on the topic sentence.

- **Conclusion**
  - Reinforces the main idea or thesis statement and leaves the audience with a feeling of completion.

Student Tip

Index Card

You may want to note your purpose and audience on an index card that you clip to your paper (or keep next to your computer) as illustrated in **Figure 7.1**. Write notes to yourself on the card – for example, what the audience might not know – so that you will remember to address those issues as you write.



Figure 7.1: Index card with purpose and audience

Activities: Check Your Understanding

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Writing the First Draft

Writing the First Draft

Now you are ready to write your first draft. Remember to consistently refer to the following items:

- The assignment guidelines and grading rubric.
- Your thesis or main idea.
- Your outline, including the connections that you have identified between the supporting ideas.
- Any research that you have done for this paper.

How do you start writing? There are many ways. Staring at a blank page can be overwhelming, so it's best to start with what you know. You will gain momentum just by having something written down as illustrated in **Figure 7.2**.

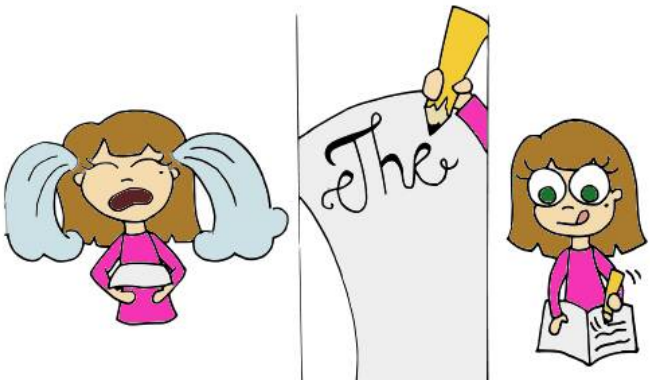


Figure 7.2: Gaining momentum in writing

Some writers like to start by writing the introduction, because this sets the scene for the whole paper. Others prefer to write the introduction after they've completed a first draft. It doesn't matter how you start. What is important is that you constantly have in mind your main idea or thesis statement as you write.

More to come on writing introductions and conclusions later in this chapter.

Writing Paragraphs and Topic Sentences

A previous chapter (*chapter* 5) briefly introduced you to the fundamentals of writing in terms of paragraph and sentence construction. Here, you will learn more about developing paragraphs and topic sentences to support your ideas. Paragraphs are a **group of sentences** that form the main structural component of your paper. Each paragraph focuses on a single idea that relates to your main idea or thesis.

A topic sentence helps you introduce a paragraph. The **job of the topic sentence** is to control the development and flow of the information contained in the paragraph. It shapes the specific topic of the paragraph and how you present it to readers.

Placement of topic sentences

The topic sentence is often, but not always, the paragraph's first sentence. Placing a topic sentence **at or near the beginning of the paragraph** is a good strategy. If you announce a topic clearly and early on in a paragraph, your readers are likely to grasp your idea and to make the connections that you want them to make.

One way to think about a topic sentence is that it presents the **broadest view** of what you want your readers to understand. You're announcing or bringing into focus the purpose or meaning of the paragraph. If you think of the topic sentence as presenting the broadest view, then you can think of how every supporting detail within the paragraph brings a narrower, more specific view of the same topic. See **Figure 7.3**.



Figure 7.3: Topic sentence as an umbrella

Characteristics of good topic sentences

If an instructor or other reader comments that your paragraph lacks unity, you probably need a better topic sentence (or maybe you don't have one yet). See **Table 7.1** for examples of good and not-so-good topic sentences. In addition to being scholarly, a good topic sentence should meet the following criteria:

- Signals the topic and more focused ideas within the paragraph.
- Presents an idea or ideas that are clear and easy to understand.
- Provides unity to the paragraph (clarifies how all supporting ideas relate).
- Links to the purpose or thesis of your paper.
- Omits supporting details.
- Engages the reader.

Table 7.1: Examples of good and not-so-good topic sentences

Topic	Not-so-good topic sentence	Good topic sentence
Sugar leads to ill-health	Sugar is often used as a substitute for fat in many foods. *In this case, the sentence isn't great because while it may speak to the pervasiveness of sugar, it doesn't link the information back to how it serves as an agent of ill-health. The government should develop public health guidelines about sugar intake. *Similarly, this sentence doesn't relate to how sugar leads to any health problems.	High levels of sugar alter blood viscosity, rendering it thicker, which can lead to hypertension. *In this case, the sentence supports the main topic of sugar leading to ill-health, and hones in on one particular reason why sugar is not good for health.

The paragraph body: Supporting your ideas

Whether you draft a paragraph based on a main idea, or whether the idea surfaces in the revision process, once you have the main idea you need to ensure that you support it. The job of the paragraph body is to **develop and support the topic**. Here's one way to think about it:

- Topic sentence: What is the main claim of your paragraph? What is the most important idea that you want your readers to take away from this paragraph?
- Support in the form of evidence: How can you prove that your claim or idea is true (or important, or noteworthy, or relevant)?
- Support in the form of analysis or evaluation: What discussion

can you provide that helps your readers see the connection between the evidence and your claim?
- Transition: How can you help your readers move from the current idea to the next idea?

Now that you have a good idea what it means to develop support for the main ideas of your paragraphs, let's explore how to make sure that those supporting details are solid and convincing. Types of support might include: reasons, facts, statistics, quotations, and examples.

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Good vs. Weak Support

What questions will your readers have? What will they need to know? What makes for good supporting details? Why might readers consider some evidence to be weak?

If you're already developing paragraphs, it's likely that you already have a plan for your writing, at least at the most basic level. You know what your topic is, you probably have a main idea or working thesis, and you might have at least a couple of supporting ideas in mind that will further develop and support your thesis.

When you're developing a paragraph on a supporting idea, you need to make sure that the **support that you develop for this idea is solid**. See **Table 7.2** for examples of good and weak support.

Table 7.2: Good and weak support

Good support	Weak support
Is relevant and focused (sticks to the point).	Lacks a clear connection to the point that it's meant to support.
Is well developed.	Lacks development.
Provides sufficient detail.	Lacks detail or gives too much detail.
Is vivid and descriptive.	Is vague and imprecise.
Is well organized.	Lacks organization.
Is coherent and consistent.	Seems disjointed (ideas don't clearly relate to each other).
Highlights key terms and ideas.	Lacks emphasis of key terms and ideas.

Student Tip

Evidence

Good support requires evidence. You need to avoid stating something that appears as a fact or a claim in your writing without evidence to support it. It is important to support your writing with evidence and reference high-quality and credible sources. The evidence should be smoothly threaded into your writing so that it flows with what you are trying to say. It is your responsibility to help the reader understand the significance of the evidence and its function in supporting your writing. For example, how is the evidence incorporated in your paper connected with what you are trying to say?

Activity: Check Your Understanding



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Transitions: Developing Relationships between Ideas

Once you have a main idea, and supporting ideas, how can you be sure that your readers will understand the relationships between them? How are the ideas connected? One way to emphasize these relationships and logical connections is using **clear transitions** between ideas as illustrated in **Figure 7.4**.

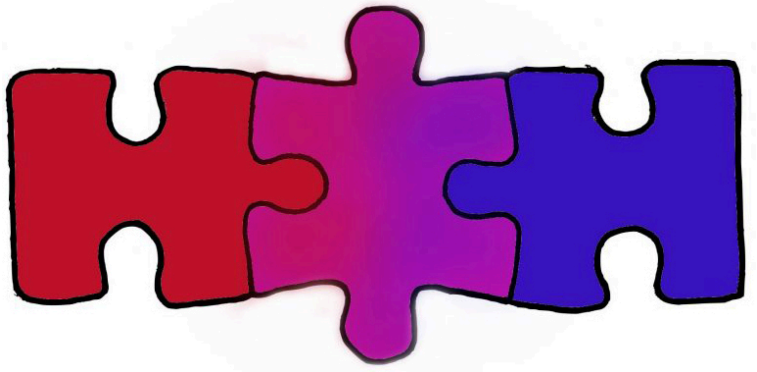


Figure 7.4: Transitioning between ideas

Think of transitions as segues that help the reader **move from one idea to another**. Rather than leaping to a new idea, a transition weaves thoughts together. Transitions signal the order of ideas, highlight relationships, unify concepts, let readers know what's coming next, or remind them about what's already been covered. When instructors or peers comment that your writing is choppy, abrupt, or needs to flow better, you might need to work on building some better transitions into your writing. If a reader comments that they are not sure how something relates to your thesis or main idea,

a transition is probably the right tool for the job. You should build solid transitions during the drafting phase. See **Film Clip 7.1** about transitional words.



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Film Clip 7.1: Transitional words [1:23]

Sentence-level transitions

Transitions between sentences often use **connecting words** to emphasize relationships between one sentence and another. See **Table 7.3** for examples of how to show connections between ideas in adjacent sentences.

Table 7.3: Examples of showing connections between sentences.

Showing connections	Examples
Words that indicate **similarity** include: also, similarly, and likewise.	In my practice, I have observed nurses demonstrate empathy by engaging in active listening with clients. *In the same way*, I have practiced empathetic behaviours by acknowledging clients' feelings and probing further about their emotions.
Words that indicate **contrast** include: however, despite, in contrast, and yet.	Mortecai (2019) found that handwashing is vital to reducing nosocomial infections. *However*, Barton (2020) and Latai and Leung (2020) have indicated that only 75% of healthcare providers effectively practice hand hygiene.
Words that indicate **examples** include: for instance, for example, specifically, and to illustrate.	The cost of college tuition is higher than ever, so students are becoming increasingly motivated to keep costs as low as possible. *For example*, some students are renting books instead of buying books.
Words that indicate **cause and effect** include: therefore, so, and thus.	Davaine notes that sugar leads to ill-health effects. *Therefore*, it is important to examine sugar consumption and read food labels.
Words that indicate **additional support** include: also, besides, equally important, and additionally.	Researchers have noted that sugar leads to ill-health effects. *Equally important*, it has been noted that foods high in saturated fats increase risks for cardiovascular disease.

Paragraph- or section-level transitions

It's important to consider how to emphasize the **relationships not just between sentences but also between paragraphs**. See **Table 7.4** for strategies to help you show your readers how the main ideas

of your paragraphs relate to each other and also to your paper's main idea/thesis.

Table 7.4: Examples of showing connections between paragraphs

Showing connections	Examples
Signposts are words or phrases that indicate where you are in the process of organizing an idea. They might indicate that you are introducing a new concept, summarizing an idea, or concluding your thoughts. They may include words like: first, then, next, finally, in summary, and in conclusion.	The first problem with this practice is… The next thing to consider is… Some final thoughts about this topic are…
As you conclude a paragraph, you may want to give a hint about what's coming in the next paragraph or section. **Forward-looking sentences at the end of paragraphs** can help provide a transition and prepare your readers for the next paragraphs. Don't leave your readers hanging by introducing a completely new or unrelated topic.	Walking has positive effects on physical health, but it also offers other benefits.
Rather than concluding a paragraph by looking forward, you might instead begin a paragraph by looking back. **Backward-looking sentences at the beginning of paragraphs** can be helpful as a review.	While the physical benefits of walking are great, the benefits of walking for mental health cannot be overlooked.

A word of caution

Be careful not to **overuse transitions** in your writing – your readers will quickly find them tiring or obvious. Try to find creative ways to let your readers know where they are situated within the ideas

presented in your writing. Here is an example of the overuse of transitions:

Sugar is a common additive in many foods. Historically, it was socialized as a luxury food item (let them eat cake!). Today, sugar is highly pervasive. Similarly, it is also highly addictive, as research has demonstrated tolerances to sugar and the desire to consume more, the more one eats. Consequently, we are seeing ill-health effects from the overconsumption of sugar. And yet, little is being done to limit sugar uptake.

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Patterns of Organization and Methods of Development

Patterns of organization can help readers **follow the ideas** within your writing and also work as methods of development to help you recognize and further develop ideas and relationships in your writing.

General to specific or specific to general

It might be useful to organize your topic like a triangle. In **Figure 7.5**, the arrow on the left side of the triangle represents starting with the most general, big-picture information first, and then later moving to more detailed and more personal information. The arrow on the right side of the triangle represents starting with the specific information first and then moving to the more global, big-picture stuff. The triangle is a general guide, and you can move around within it. For example, each paragraph might be its own triangle, starting with the general or specific and moving out or in. However, if you begin your paper very broadly, it might be effective to end it in a more specific, personal way. If you begin your paper with a personal story, consider ending by touching on the global impact and importance of your topic.

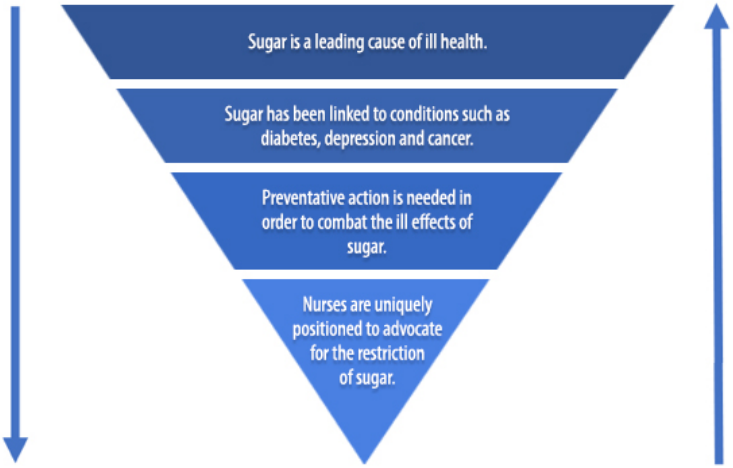


Figure 7.5: Organizing topic like a triangle

Other ways to organize ideas

Instead of organizing ideas based on whether they are broad or specific, you could organize them using one of the following ways:

- Chronological order (the order in time that events take place).
- Compare and contrast (ideas are organized together because of their relationship to each other).
- Most important information first (consider what you want readers to focus on first).

Note that order of importance is a particularly good choice when you are trying to persuade and convince the reader. Most papers move from the least to the most important point, and the paragraphs are arranged in an effort to build the essay's strength. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to begin with your most

important supporting point, such as in an essay that contains a thesis that is highly debatable or when writing persuasively.

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Writing Introductions

The common phrase "you don't get a second chance to make a first impression" expresses how much weight people place on their first experiences when reading a piece of writing. Catching the attention of readers may be your most important task as you write: if you lose them in the introduction, you won't get a chance to share your message with them later. See **Figure 7.6**.



Figure 7.6: Introduction.

Introductions have **three jobs**:

- Introduce the focus and purpose of your writing (ie., the main idea and thesis if applicable).
- Provide a brief overview of what you will discuss.
- Catch the attention of readers.

How do you accomplish these jobs without giving away your entire essay in the introduction? How do you know what will hook readers' attention without sharing all the cool details? Great questions!

You might start by using this simple **formula**.

> A good introduction = new information + ideas that everyone may not agree with.

If your piece begins with an idea most people know and agree with, it's less likely to pull readers in. People are curious about new ideas and opinions that have multiple perspectives or may be controversial.

See **Table 7.5** for some methods for introducing a topic and getting a reader's attention.

Table 7.5: Methods for introducing a topic

Method	Reason
Share an interesting, shocking, or little-known fact or statistic about your topic.	This gives your readers insight into your topic right away; it will pique their curiosity and make them want to know more. It will also help you establish a strong ethos, or credibility, from the very beginning.
Share a brief anecdote or story.	Sharing a human interest story right away will help readers connect with your topic on a personal level and illustrate why your topic matters.
Ask a question that gets readers curious about the answer.	People want to know the answers to questions. They'll keep reading to find the answers you pose in your introduction – just be sure to answer them at some point in your writing.

Student Tip

Share Your Introduction

After you have drafted your introduction, share it with a peer or a friend. Ask them: Does the introduction catch your attention? Does the introduction predict what my paper is about? If they answer "no" or "sort of," it needs to be refined.

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Writing Conclusions

Studies have shown that the human brain is more likely to remember items at the beginning and end of lists, presentations, and other texts. Recollection of the last thing a person reads or hears is called the *recency effect*– they're remembering the most recent information they've encountered. This is why your conclusion is so important. It's your final chance to make an impression on your readers.

Conclusions have **two jobs**:

- Leave readers with something to think about.
- Clarify why your topic matters to them and the larger community. Some people refer to a conclusion as the *so what?* section of a text, because it helps readers understand the significance of your subject. See **Figure 7.7**.



Figure 7.7: The conclusion as the "so what?" section.

What techniques can keep readers thinking about the topic at the end of a piece of writing? Some of the same methods that work for the introduction also work for the conclusion, but the **formula** is a little different:

A good conclusion = a call to action + a connection

between the topic and the reader.

You're trying to end your piece, so don't start making new claims or sharing new research. Instead, try to help readers see how they relate to your subject matter. Sometimes this means suggesting that the reader do something specific: a call to action. You could also end by raising questions related to your topic or by making suggestions for how this topic may develop in the future. Leaving readers with interesting ideas to think about is the key to a successful conclusion. See **Film Clip 7.2** about writing conclusions.



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Film Clip 7.2: Writing conclusions [1:03]

See **Table 7.6** for methods and examples for concluding your writing and giving your readers a sense of closure or an idea of what you would like them to think about or do next.

Table 7.6: Methods and examples for conclusions

Method	Example
Make a call to action: prompt readers to do something.	Nurses are uniquely positioned to advocate for better public policy to limit and restrict the consumption of sugar.
Ask a rhetorical question: a question asked for mere effect. A rhetorical question is meant to make people think, but not necessarily come to an answer. Often, the answer to rhetorical questions is clear right away, but the deeper significance needs to be pondered.	Have you considered the impact of sugar consumption on your health or the clients you care for?

Student Tip

Optimizing Your Conclusion

Avoid introducing new ideas in the conclusion. But don't simply copy and paste your thesis from earlier in the text. You've likely had a whole conversation in the text since the reader first encountered that thesis. Simply repeating it, or even replacing a few key words with synonyms, doesn't acknowledge that bigger conversation. Instead, try pointing the reader back to the main idea in a new way.

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Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of how to draft a paper, including some of the structural issues you should be aware of, as well as how to maintain congruence throughout your writing. When you review a draft, make sure that your purpose, main idea/thesis statement, and outline is clear. This step is important and will help enhance the clarity of the rest of your paper. Be attentive to your arguments: it is easy to be lured to distracting points, but a good paper will stay on point.

Your Writing Journey

Your journey of drafting and writing your paper can be exciting, and sometimes overwhelming. Pay attention to the outline that you have drafted. Try writing your purpose and audience on an index card and clip it to your computer. Refer to it when you get stuck. Part of your journey is learning to write with purpose, meaning that each word and sentence is intentionally developed and links with the topic sentence of your paragraph and the main idea of your paper. Your ideas should flow smoothly from your introduction to your conclusion.

CHAPTER 8: REVISING AND EDITING A PAPER

Chapter 8 Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Explain the elements of revising.
- Explain the elements of editing.
- Recognize how to provide feedback.

Overview: Revising and Editing

The next steps in writing are revising and editing your paper. These processes allow you to **examine two important aspects of your writing separately**, so that you can give each task your undivided attention. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, there are distinctions. See **Table 8.1** on how revising and editing are different.

Table 8.1: Revising and editing

Revising	When revising, focus on organization, cohesion, and style and tone. Organization means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. Cohesion means that the elements of your paper work together smoothly and naturally. Together, your style and tone create the voice of your paper, or how you come across to readers through language and word choices. You might need to add, cut, move, or change information to make your ideas more clear, accurate, interesting, and convincing.
Editing	When editing, focus on how you expressed your ideas. You may add or change words, and fix any problems with grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. You will improve your writing style to make your paper into a polished, mature piece of writing – the end product of your best effort.

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Revise to Improve Organization

As you revise to improve organization, look at the **flow of ideas** throughout your paper as a whole and within individual paragraphs. Check to see that your paper moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion, and that each section reinforces your main idea/thesis.



Figure 8.1: Reading and revising your paper to determine if it has a logical flow

Here are some steps to begin revising your paper's overall organization:

- Print out a hard copy of your paper. Read your paper out loud paragraph by paragraph. Highlight your main idea/thesis and

the topic sentence of each paragraph.

- Using the main idea/thesis and topic sentences as starting points, outline the ideas you presented, just as you would do if you were outlining a chapter in a textbook. Don't look at the outline you created during prewriting. You might write in the margins of your draft or create a formal outline on a separate sheet of paper.
- Next, read your paper again more slowly, looking for how ideas flow from sentence to sentence. Identify places where adding a transition or recasting a sentence would make the ideas flow more logically. Reading your paper out loud can help you see errors more easily.
- Review the topics on your outline. Is there a logical flow of ideas? Identify any places where you may need to reorganize ideas.
- Begin to revise your paper to improve organization. Start with any major issues, such as needing to move an entire paragraph. Then proceed to minor revisions, such as adding a transitional phrase or tweaking a topic sentence so it connects ideas more clearly.

Here are some questions to ask while revising the organization of your writing:

- Does each body paragraph have a clear idea that relates to the your paper's main idea/thesis? Does the topic sentence clearly state the idea? Do the details in each paragraph relate to the main idea within that specific paragraph?
- Do the main ideas in the body paragraphs flow in a logical order? Is each paragraph connected to the one before it?
- Do you need to add or revise topic sentences or transitions to make the overall flow of ideas clearer?
- Does your conclusion summarize and revisit your paper's main ideas/thesis?

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Revise to Improve Cohesion

We have already explored transitions in previous chapters. Careful writers use transitions to clarify how the ideas in their sentences and paragraphs are related; these words and phrases help the writing flow smoothly. Adding transitions is not the only way to improve coherence, but they are often useful and give a mature feel to your writing. See **Table 8.2**.

Example of transition statements

- Given X, the implications for this topic include X.
- It is important to consider X as we move forward with these findings.
- X sheds light on the timeliness of this work because…

Table 8.2: Ways to revise to improve cohesion

Revise to improve cohesion	Questions to ask
As you revise to improve cohesion, analyze how the parts of your paper work together. Look for anything that seems awkward or out of place. Revision may involve deleting unnecessary material or rewriting parts of the paper so that the out-of-place material fits in smoothly. In a research paper, problems with cohesion usually occur when you have trouble integrating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they will distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support your point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect.	Does the opening of your paper clearly connect to the broader topic and main idea/thesis? Make sure entertaining quotes or anecdotes serve a purpose. Have you included support from research for each main point in the body of your paper? Have you included introductory material before any quotations? Quotations should never stand alone in a paragraph. Does paraphrased and quoted material clearly serve to develop your own points? Are there any places where you have overused material from sources? Do you need to add to or revise parts of the paper to help the reader understand how certain information from a source is relevant? Does your conclusion make sense based on the rest of the paper? Make sure any new questions or suggestions in the conclusion are clearly linked to earlier material.

Here are some steps to revise your paper for cohesion:

- Print out a hard copy of your paper.
- Read the body paragraphs of your paper first. Each time you come to a place that cites information from sources, assess what purpose this information serves. Check that it helps to support a point and that it is clearly related to the other sentences in the paragraph. Identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete.
- Identify places where you need to revise your writing so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources.

- Skim the body paragraphs of your paper again, looking for any paragraphs that seem packed with citations. Review these paragraphs carefully for cohesion.
- Review your introduction and conclusion. Make sure the information presented works with ideas in the body of your paper.
- Revise as needed to improve cohesion.

Creating unity

In general, **following your outline closely** should help you stay focused on your purpose and not drift away from the main idea/thesis. However, if you are rushed, tired, or can't find the right words, sometimes your writing may not be as good as you want it to be. It may not be clear and concise, and it may include unnecessary information that is not needed to develop the main idea.

When a piece of writing has unity, all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire paper clearly belong and are **arranged in an order that makes logical sense**. The ideas flow smoothly, and the wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph.

Student Tip

Read Your Paper Aloud

Reading your writing aloud will often help you find problems with cohesion and unity. Listen for the clarity and

flow of your ideas. Identify confusing places and write down ideas for possible fixes.

Activity: Check Your Understanding



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Revise for Style and Tone

Once you have revised your paper for organization and cohesion, you can begin revising to improve **style and tone**. Together, your style and tone create the voice of your paper, or how you come across to readers; you should be consistent throughout the paper. Style refers to how you use language meaning the technical aspects of writing: your sentence structures and word choices. Part of style is your writing tone: the attitude toward your subject and audience. Tone may include a level of formality and objectivity or may be intimate and personal. Tone is conveyed through your word choices.



Figure 8.2: Style and tone of writing

Determining an appropriate style and tone

To avoid being overly formal or informal, determine an **appropriate style and tone**. Consider your topic and audience, because these will dictate your style and tone. For example, a paper on new breakthroughs in cancer research should be more formal than a paper on ways to get a good night's sleep. A strong paper comes across as straightforward, appropriately academic, and serious.

Here are some tips for ensuring your paper has an appropriate style and tone:

- Avoid excessive wordiness.
- All sentences contribute to the main idea.
- Sentences are varied in length and structure.
- Use the active voice whenever possible. Active voice is when the subject of the sentence is performing the action as opposed to passive voice when the subject receives the action. (e.g., active voice: The nurse assessed the patient. passive voice: The patient was assessed by the nurse).
- Define specialized terms that might be unfamiliar to readers.
- Use clear, straightforward language whenever possible and avoid unnecessary jargon.
- State your point of view using a balanced tone – neither too indecisive nor too forceful.
- Use precise language, convey no unintended connotations, and ensure your paper is free of bias.
- Do not use vague or imprecise terms or slang.
- Do not continually repeat the same phrases ("Smith states…," "Jones states…") to introduce quoted and paraphrased material.
- Ensure you understand the meanings of all the terms you use in your paper.
- Do not use outdated or offensive terms to refer to specific groups.

Keeping your style and tone consistent

As you revise your paper, make sure your **style and tone is consistent** throughout. Look for instances where a word, phrase, or sentence does not seem to fit with the rest of the writing. It is best to re-read for style after you have completed the other revisions so that you are not distracted by any larger content issues.

Revising strategies can include the following:

- Read your paper aloud. Sometimes your ears catch inconsistencies that your eyes miss.
- Share your paper with another reader who you trust to give honest feedback. It is difficult to evaluate one's own style objectively, especially in the final phase of a challenging writing project. Another reader may be more likely to notice wordiness, confusing language, or other issues that affect style and tone. Whoever you share it with, make sure that they note any suggested changes so that you can consider them. One option is to use *track changes* tool in Word.
- Revise your paper slowly, sentence by sentence. You could try using a sheet of paper to cover up everything on the page except the paragraph you are editing, forcing you to read slowly and carefully. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then rework those sections.

Student Tip

Gender Neutrality

Using plural nouns and pronouns can help you keep your

language gender-neutral and inclusive. For example, the following sentence is gender-biased: When a writer cites a source in the body of **his** paper, it should be listed on the reference page. As per APA, you are permitted to use a plural pronoun (e.g., they) when referring to a singular noun (e.g., a writer). Thus, you could say: When a writer cites a source in the body of their paper, it should be listed on the reference page. Alternatively, you could also modify the sentence to: Writers must list any sources cited in the body of a paper on the reference page. The use of plural pronouns combined with a singular noun is a new shift in writing. Thus, it is best to speak with your instructor about gender neutrality and whether plural pronouns are appropriate in the singular context.



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Editing Your Paper

The next step after revising the content is editing. When you edit, examine the surface features of your text: **spelling, grammar, spacing, and punctuation**. Additionally, pay attention to scholarly word choices.

For example, use of the word "get" in this sentence lacks scholarship: "I wanted to get a job where I could work with people." Additionally, the previous sentence uses the word "I" twice. Whenever you use a word more than twice in a sentence, consider how you might edit it. For example, the following sentence conveys the same thing more scholarly: "It was important to choose a job where I could work with people."

It takes time, so be sure to budget time into the writing process to complete additional edits after revising. It is also very easy to read past a mistake, so set your paper aside for at least a few hours, if not a day or more, so your mind can rest. If you need additional proofreading help, ask a reliable friend, classmate, or peer tutor to make a final pass on your paper to look for anything you missed.

Here are a few tips about readers:

- They don't notice correct spelling, but they do notice misspellings. They won't cheer when you use there, their, and they're correctly, but they will notice when you do not.
- They look past your sentences to get to your ideas – unless the sentences are awkward, poorly constructed, and frustrating to read.
- They notice when every sentence has the same rhythm as every other sentence, with no variety.
- The accumulation of errors distracts the reader from your argument and suggests that you didn't put enough care into your writing.

Student Tip

Spell and Grammar Check

Spell and grammar checks can be helpful, but you must review them carefully. Your computer may be programmed to identify problem words, but it is not always correct, so don't rely on it. A computer cannot consider context and meaning. For example, if the spellchecker identifies a word that is misspelled and provides alternatives, you might end up choosing a word that you never intended, even though it is spelled correctly. This can change the meaning of your sentence. Spellcheck can also miss misspelled words that are correct spellings of a different word: e.g., form versus from. Spellcheck may also make grammatical suggestions such as semi-colons and hyphens that do not necessarily fit your sentence structure.

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Editing for Clarity and Conciseness

Some writers are very methodical and painstaking when they write a first draft. Others unleash a lot of words and ideas to get out everything they want to say. Do either of these methods match your style? Or is your composing style somewhere in between? Regardless of the author, the first draft of almost every piece of writing can be made more clear and concise.

To be concise, you should edit your writing for wordiness. Eliminating wordiness make your work easier to read because the ideas are clear, direct, and straightforward.

Click on the items below to see how the wordiness can be revised.



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Here are some tips for choosing specific and appropriate words to ensure your writing is clear and concise:

- Avoid slang. Use scholarly language to replace informal language.
- Avoid overly casual language. Write about “men and women” rather than “guys and girls” unless you are trying to create a specific effect. A formal tone calls for formal language. However, more gender-inclusive language would be “persons

of all genders."

- Avoid contractions. Use "do not" instead of "don't" – contractions are considered casual speech.
- Avoid clichés. Overused expressions like "face the music," and "better late than never" are empty of meaning and are unlikely to appeal to your audience.
- Be careful when you use words that sound alike but have different meanings. Some examples are allusion/ illusion; complement/compliment; council/counsel; concurrent/ consecutive; founder/flounder; and historic/historical. When in doubt, check a dictionary.
- Choose words that have the connotations you want. "Proud" has positive connotations, while "arrogant" and "conceited" have negative connotations.
- Use specific words rather than overly general words. Find synonyms for vague words like thing, people, good, and interesting or add specific details to make your exact meaning clear.

Student Tip

Red Herrings

Red herrings (see **Figure 8.3**) are sentences or statements that distract the reader from your main idea or thesis statement. Pay close attention when revising to notice any red herrings. For example, avoid writing about the benefits of mathematic skills in adolescents if your thesis is: Adolescents who are captivated by the sexual

images on MTV are conditioned to believe that a person's worth depends on their sexuality, a feeling that harms their self-esteem and behaviour.



Figure 8.3: Watch out for red herrings

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Giving and Receiving Feedback

In many writing classes, you will be expected to **give feedback** to your peers. This task is usually called **peer review**, a concept you learned about in *Chapter* 3. At first, it may seem intimidating – you may think, "I'm not an instructor! How can I give useful feedback to another student?" Don't worry – it's a learning process. Just give your peers an honest reaction as a reader and provide advice based on your own experience.

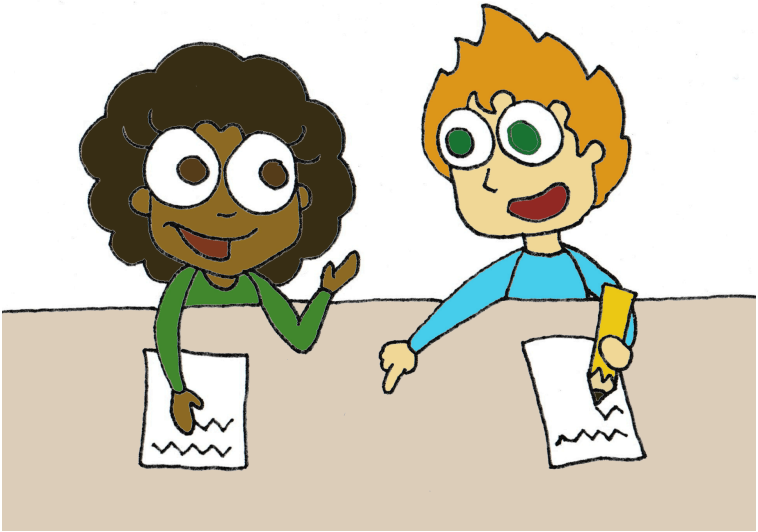


Figure 8.4: Providing feedback

Giving peer feedback

Think about the kind of feedback you would like to get and **how** you would like it to be given. Here are some basic rules for responding to someone else's writing.

- First, listen to the writer: what kind of feedback are they asking for? Do they want to know if their main idea/thesis is clear? Do they have questions about citing sources? Make a note about what kind of feedback they have requested and keep it in mind as you respond.
- Be kind. It's easier to take criticism if the person giving it is kind and respectful.
- Comment on important issues first: Did anything confuse you? Did the paper meet the expectations of the assignment? Did the organization of the paper make sense?
- Use *I* statements to help focus on your own reactions: instead of saying, "You aren't clear in this paragraph," try saying, "I'm confused in this paragraph. Did you mean X or Y?"
- Be specific. Never say "I liked it" or "It was good" unless you follow up with an explanation of exactly what you liked or thought was good. The same goes for criticism; say exactly what confused you or what was missing.
- Ask questions to clarify what the writer means, what the resources given are saying, and what the writer is trying to do.
- Offer advice based on your own experience. For example, "if this were my paper, the two things I would do next are A and B."
- Don't try to make the writer sound like you. Tell them if a word is incorrect, but otherwise word preference is just a matter of style and voice.
- Correcting errors is important at some point, but it makes no sense to spend time editing a paragraph if it may be deleted or changed. It's okay to remind the writer to run spell check and

grammar check if you notice minor errors, but otherwise, only ask about errors if they make the meaning unclear.

Receiving peer feedback

Next, consider your role in receiving feedback. Are you eager to get feedback? Afraid to share your work? Either way, remember that **you get to decide** what feedback to accept. If you don't think the feedback is correct, ask your instructor what they think. You can't ask your instructor to read sections of your paper, but you can ask specific questions. Make sure you leave ample time to do so.

It's a good idea to ask for the kind of feedback you want. Don't be afraid to give your peer reviewer some direction. When you receive feedback, listen with an open mind. The peer reviewer is your reader, and it's helpful to know what an actual reader got out of your writing.

If you aren't sure about the feedback or feel upset about it, take a break. It's okay to say, "I'll think about that." If you feel that the reviewer is trying to change your style so that the paper doesn't sound like you anymore, consider whether the feedback actually helps you make the paper better. If not, feel free to set the feedback aside.

Student Tip

Consider Your Instructor's Feedback

Closely review feedback from your instructor. You will

keep making the same mistakes unless you think critically about them and make an effort to change. Document the feedback in a journal and refer back to it as you write other papers.

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Creating and Refining a Title

Most people create a title when they are done writing. The title of your paper frames what your paper is about and captures your reader's attention. Creating a good title is important because it is **the first thing your reader sees**. Your title conveys your tone to your audience. A good title is clear, concise, informative, and inviting.

Choose a title based on your purpose and your audience. A title often has two parts, separated by a colon – the most important part should come first. If you are creating a title for a scientific audience, the first part might focus on your topic and the second part might focus on your methods, e.g., "Nurses' Experiences of Grief: A Literature Synthesis." Alternatively, if you want to use a creative or clever hook to pique your reader's curiosity, you might call your paper "Nine Hundred Ninety-Nine Patients: The Crisis of the Country's Wait List for Surgery."

You may have chosen a title before you started writing, but you should refine it in the final stages of writing. Make sure it says what you need it to say. Show it to a peer and ask them what they would expect the paper to be about and whether it sounds interesting.

Some strategies to consider when creating a title:

- Avoid abbreviations.
- Limit it to 10 to 15 words.
- Choose words purposefully.
- Avoid unnecessary words (bolded in these sentences) such as "**Exploring** Nurses' Experiences of Grief" or "**Examining** the Crisis of the Country's Wait List for Surgery."

Student Tip

Creating a Title

Re-read your introduction: your main points may help you develop a title.

Revising and Editing Checklist

Some final questions to consider when revising and editing your paper:

1. Have you met the assignment's purpose and requirements?
2. Have you met all the grading criteria?
3. Are all your sentences less than three lines? If not, did you purposefully construct them this way?
4. Are all your paragraphs less than a page? If not, did you purposefully construct them this way?
5. Does each paragraph convey one concise idea?
6. Did you use appropriate transition sentences between paragraphs to enhance flow?
7. How does the paper compare to your outline? Did you include all your ideas?
8. Have you maintained a consistent style throughout the paper?
9. Is your thesis statement or main idea adhered to throughout the entire paper?
10. Does your conclusion link back to your thesis statement and emphasize the significance of the paper?
11. Have you checked your grammar and spelling?

Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced you to the steps involved in revising and editing a paper. This phase of the writing process is important and will take time. Enlist a trusted reviewer, such as a peer, and consider their feedback with an open mind. Additionally, review your instructor's feedback on submitted/graded assignments. Pay attention to your common mistakes and document them in a journal so that you can refer to them when writing future assignments.

Your Writing Journey

Revising and editing your paper is a crucial part of your writing journey. This phase provides the opportunity for you to refine your writing for organization, coherence, style, tone, clarity, and conciseness. Try reading your paper aloud – you might catch errors that you would miss when reading. Finally, give yourself sufficient time to receive and reflect on feedback. Remember, this is a learning journey.

CHAPTER 9: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND STYLE RULES (APA 7TH EDITION)

Chapter 9 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Identify style rules.
- Understand academic integrity.
- Describe how to avoid plagiarism.

Overview: Style Rules and Academic Integrity

Style rules and academic integrity are among the most important elements of your writing.

This chapter will introduce you to APA: this acronym might be unfamiliar now, but by the end of your program you will understand what this acronym is and you will have these style rules memorized. This chapter will also teach you about the importance of writing ethically as you integrate your own voice and ideas with those of others: you never want to be accused of plagiarism!

NOTE: this chapter is based on the **7th edition of the APA manual**, which is the most current version. Check your course syllabus or check with your instructor which edition you are supposed to use. You may be required to purchase this manual for some courses.

Style Rules

Style rules are guidelines to ensure **uniform writing** across authors and publications. You may be familiar with popular guides such as APA, MLA, Chicago, and Harvard referencing. Your assignment guidelines will usually specify which style guidelines to use; if not, check with your instructor. Whichever style guide is required you should **consult the most current manual** because guidelines are updated every few years.

Remember, this chapter is based on the **7th edition of the APA (2020) manual**.

The **American Psychological Association (APA)** style guidelines are commonly used in many academic fields, including nursing. The APA manual is a required resource for many nursing courses. So it is advised that you **purchase it early** in your program and consult it throughout. You can pick it up at your university bookstore. Another option is to borrow it from the university library. Additionally, the APA website has many resources, descriptions, and examples.

All style guides specify how to write, format your paper, and cite your sources. You have already learned about some elements of writing, such as language and tone of voice. Other style rules may apply to elements such as manuscript structure (title page, abstract, layout of paper, and appendices), and citations and references.

New with the current version of APA (2020) is a **student version for a title page**, which also includes the course number and course name, the instructor name, and the assignment due date (in order of month, day, year with month spelled out). Other items to include are: the title of paper (bold, centred, and **title case**) located in upper half of page [approximately 3 to 4 lines down from the top of the page]), author name (with one extra double space between the paper title and author), affiliation (e.g., name of school and institution, such as the university), and the page number. Also, the new version of APA indicates that **student papers do not require**

a running head, thus we advise you not to include one. Keep in mind the whole title page should be doubled spaced and centred. See **Figure 9.1** for an example title page for a student paper as per APA (2020).

Other style rules are related to **formatting** (margins, line spacing, font size and style, indenting, page numbers, and title). For example, the guidelines indicated with APA (2020) are:

(a) One-inch margins on all four margins with left justification;

(b) Double spaced text;

(c) Times New Roman 12 font;

(d) Page numbers in top right corner starting on the title page;

(e) "Indent first line of every paragraph 0.5 in" (p. 45);

(f) One space after each sentence.

(g) In addition, the title of your paper should appear on the first line of the text of your paper (APA, 2020). As per APA, this title should be "title case, bold, and centered" (p. 39).

You also need to consider **levels of heading** in your paper. Headings help you organize your paper. APA (2020) identifies five levels of heading all of which are bolded and title cased. For an example of headings, check out the inside cover of the APA manual at this link.

You will see that some headings are centred whereas others are flush left or indented (APA, 2020). Also, some are italicized and some have a period at the end of the heading. For a short paper, you may also decide to not use any headings except Level 1. This level is always included in a paper because the paper's title is always noted on the first page following the title page (APA, 2020). And then, remember that the introduction to your paper does not require a heading (APA, 2020). If your paper is short, you may choose to use just Level 1 heading, which means your headings will be "centered, bold, and title case" (APA, 2020, p. 46).

Some of your writing will require you to incorporate one or more **appendices**. An appendix is additional information placed at the end of the paper. The additional information is included at the end as

it is supplemental to your writing and may disrupt the flow of your writing and/or be considered distracting to the reader if included in the body of your paper. It is important to follow APA formatting when incorporating an appendix. As per APA (2020), when including an appendix:

- Each appendix goes on a separate page.
- Appendices follow the reference page(s).
- Label and name each Appendix: **label** appendices with a capital letter beginning at the start of the alphabet (e.g., Appendix A then, Appendix B, and so on). You should label it Appendix if you are just using one appendix in your paper. The **name** of your appendix should relate to the contents. For example, if you have one appendix and it includes the description of the methods used to conduct a literature review, it could be labelled and named: Appendix: Literature Review Methods.
- All appendices should be referred to in the text of your paper. For example, you may say something like: See Appendix for a description of the methods used to conduct the literature review.
- The appendix page should include the label and name "on separate lines at the top of the page" (p. 41). The label and name should be bold, centered, and title case. See APA website for samples of appendices.

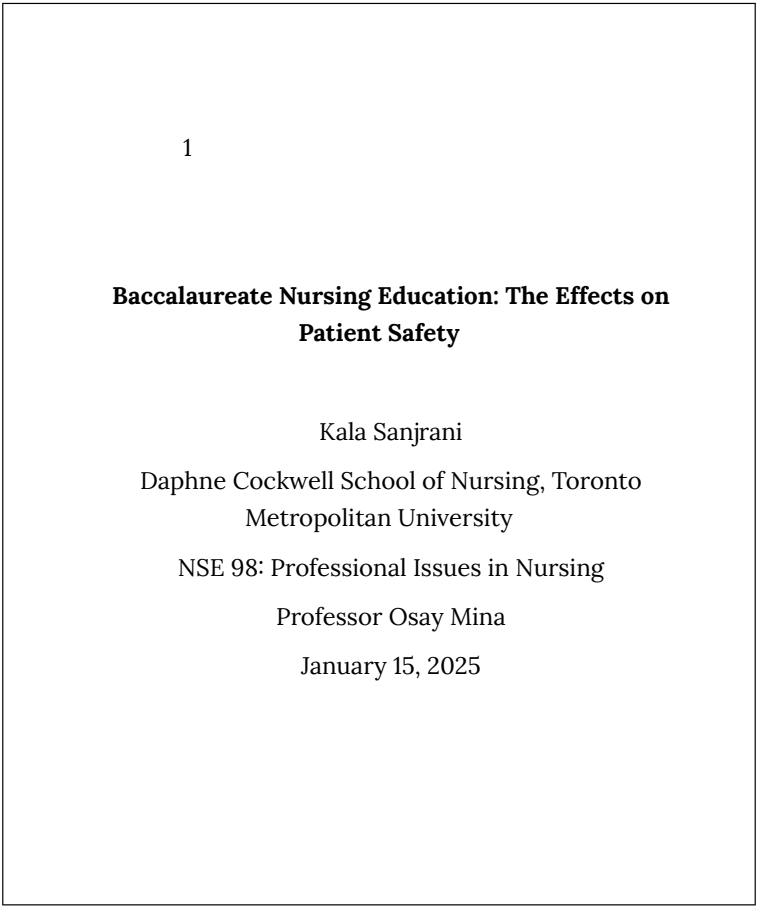
Student Tip

Making a Manual Work for You

You may find style manuals confusing. Start by looking at the Table of Contents and review the most relevant

sections. You could create a summary sheet of key points or use stick-on tabs to mark important pages or highlight important sections. Manuals provide samples of title pages, abstracts, introductions, citations, and references, and you should model your work based on these samples.

Figure 9.1: Sample title page for a student paper





Academic Integrity

Along with your own original work, part of scholarly writing involves integrating the ideas of others. Academic integrity requires that you truthfully present **your own ideas** and identify when you are incorporating **the work and ideas of others**.

A citation is a **reference to another person's work**. You will often read what others have written on a topic and integrate their work into your own writing. By including citations, you show your readers that you have done some research; you also help position your ideas within the scholarly conversation on a topic. When you are quoting numbers and statistics, citations show your readers that the information is factual and can be trusted. Citations provide just enough details to lead your reader to the sources you used, in a standardized format.

Informing readers where you found information helps them distinguish between existing sources and your original thoughts. This is critically important! **Failing to cite can lead to a charge of plagiarism**, which can have various consequences depending on your institution: a reduced grade or even a zero on an assignment, a failing grade for the whole course, or a disciplinary notation in your student file. Failing to cite can also devalue your work, as readers will not trust you.

Listen to **Audio Podcast 9.1** about a discussion about Academic Integrity with **John Paul Foxe** who is the **Director of the Academic Integrity Office at Toronto Metropolitan University**.



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Audio Podcast 9:1: Academic integrity [18:46]

Student Tip

Academic Integrity Office

Check out your university's academic integrity office. It will usually have a website with tutorials, videos, quizzes, and other resources related to academic integrity. Here is a link to the Toronto Metropolitan University Academic Integrity Office.

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Plagiarism and Self-Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves integrating another person's ideas and intellectual material into your writing without **giving them credit or citing them**. In nursing, you will cite sources including peer-reviewed journals, textbooks, and websites. It might seem funny, but you can also plagiarize yourself: **self-plagiarism** is a type of plagiarism where you don't reference ideas that you previously wrote about in other assignments/papers.

Why do people plagiarize?

Sometimes a writer plagiarizes work on purpose, for example, by copying and pasting or purchasing an essay from a website and submitting it as original work. See **Figure 9.2**. This may happen because the writer has **not managed their time** and has left the paper to the last minute, or has **struggled with the writing process** or the topic. This can lead to desperation and cause the writer to take credit for someone else's ideas.

In other cases, a writer may commit **accidental plagiarism** due to carelessness, haste, or misunderstanding. A writer may be unable to provide a complete, accurate citation because they neglected to record the bibliographical information, for example, by cutting and pasting from a website and then forgetting where the material came from. Or, a writer who procrastinates may rush through a draft, which easily leads to sloppy paraphrasing and inaccurate quotations. These careless actions can create the appearance of plagiarism and lead to negative consequences.

Both types of plagiarism have serious consequences that can affect your success in your program.



Figure 9.2: Plagiarism

Turnitin

Turnitin is a tool that helps instructors identify plagiarism. Your instructor may provide a link for you to submit your paper to the Turnitin website for scanning. This detection service compares your writing to a vast collection of writing (including Internet sources and other student papers) from around the world. It uses a similarity index to identify components of your writing that are similar to other sources. Don't plagiarize – turnitin will catch you!

How to avoid plagiarism?

You can avoid plagiarism by following these simple rules (also, see **Film Clip 9.2**):

- Start by writing what you know about a subject, turning to sources only when you need to support your own ideas with authoritative backing or when there's a knowledge gap you cannot fill on your own. Or, of course, to satisfy requirements required by your instructor, who may require you to cite a certain number of sources to support your writing. Even then, most of the work should be your own.
- Take notes carefully. If you add source material to your work, mark it or identify it in such a way that you will know it's from a source. Cite the work **immediately** and add it to your reference list.
- If you use someone else's intellectual property, you must give them credit.
- Changing a few words from a source and presenting it as your own is still plagiarism. Carefully follow guidelines on how to paraphrase and quote source material, coming up on the next page.



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Film Clip 9.2: Avoiding plagiarism [2:00]

Student Tip

Previously Graded Work

Most instructors will not permit you to submit previously graded work in their course, and using your own ideas from previous assignments can place you at risk for self-plagiarism. You should try to choose a completely different topic to avoid the temptation to reuse previously submitted work. However, an instructor will sometimes ask you to build on your ideas from a previous paper; in this case, you might want to have a discussion with the instructor about self-plagiarism.

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Paraphrasing and Direct Quotations

You can incorporate the ideas of others into your writing by paraphrasing or using direct quotations. See **Table 9.1**.

Table 9.1: Paraphrasing and direct quotations

What it is?	Why use it?	Considerations
Paraphrasing involves presenting ideas from source material **in your own words**.	Paraphrasing can demonstrate your understanding of a text – its details and connections between its main points. It can also help you double-check the depth of your understanding of a text. For example, you might paraphrase an important idea from a source when you want to include it in an assignment, but also want to rephrase it in a way that matches your style without losing any key information.	A paraphrase must be entirely your own writing, not just words substituted into the same sentence structure, length, etc., used in the original text. Write paraphrases in sentence structures that are natural to you and true to your own writing voice. The only job of a paraphrase is to accurately represent the relevant idea.

A **quotation** (sometimes called a **direct quotation**) is when you use the **exact wording** from a source. In this case, you must be careful to exactly copy the source's original language, word for word.

If the original text is phrased in a way that is particularly powerful/vivid and paraphrasing would likely weaken it, a direct quotation is a good option. This is also true when the language of the original source is so special or unique that it can't be reasonably rephrased.

A direct quotation can demonstrate that an authoritative source supports your point. It can also present an opposing view to your own for discussion: it can be useful to present opposing views as direct quotations to avoid the risk of personal bias affecting the language of a paraphrase.

You should generally **limit your use of quotations**. Don't rely too heavily on them: most of your paper should be in your own words and in your own voice. Too many quotations may indicate a lack of original ideas and thoughts.

You should also avoid using unnecessarily long quotations. If a quotation is longer than a sentence or two, consider whether the full quotation is needed or whether a partial quotation or a summary would do.

Quotes over forty words should be formatted as a block quotation (start it on a new line, do not use quotation marks, and indent it a .5 in) (APA, 2020). If you require further information about short quotes or block quotes, check out this APA weblink.

Student Tip

It is generally best to paraphrase another person's ideas as opposed to using a direct quotation. Paraphrasing shows that you have understood the source material and have

situated it in the context of your own ideas. Many writers don't include any direct quotations. Direct quotations should only be used when the idea can't be expressed in any other way.

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Citing Another Person's Ideas

You will cite another person's ideas to give **credit to their work** and to clarify what is their work and what is yours. Within a paragraph, you only have to cite the authors once, **IF** it is clear that the other sentences are still being paraphrased (APA, 2000). However, it has to be clear when a sentence is paraphrased and when a sentence is your own original idea or even an idea from another source. See **Film Clip 9.3** about citing another person's ideas. APA (2020) uses the author-date citation system. Each source that you cite must be in the reference list and each source in the reference list must be in the text of your paper (APA, 2020).

Here's a correctly cited excerpt using APA (2020):

> Hart and Lu-Ann (2019) argued that many students do not cite appropriately. They further stated that students often fail to indicate where a reference begins and ends. In my experience, I have found that students do not reference enough. Many students lose grades because of poor citations, and this is often because they do not understand the nuances of APA citation (Hart & Lu-Ann, 2019).

As you will note in the example above, an ampersand (&) is used within parenthesis between authors' names and the word "and" is used between authors' names with the textual content that is not in parentheses (APA, 2020). The above is also an example of using the same source more than once in the same paragraph.



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Film Clip 9.3: Citing another person's ideas [2:01]

In-text citations

An in-text citation can be a citation placed in **parentheses** within the text of your paper (this is called **parenthetical citations**) (APA, 2020). You can do this by including a short quotation from the original text within your work, or a paraphrase of the ideas, followed by the author and year of publication. For example:

> Despite the media's insistence that it is colour-blind, Serena is most often portrayed as a symbol of Black pride and heritage (Schultz, 2005).

Another option is to begin the sentence with a signal phrase that includes the author's last name followed by the date of publication in parentheses. This is called a **narrative citation** because the citation is embedded in the text (APA, 2020). When doing it this way, make sure that you place the year in parentheses right after the author's name:

> According to Schultz (2005), despite the media's insistence that it is colour-blind, Serena is most often portrayed as a symbol of Black pride and heritage.

If you are including **multiple references within parentheses**, list them in **alphabetical order** (APA, 2020). Thus, a source in which the first author's last name starts with D comes before a source in which the first author's last name starts with G. Also, if you are citing two or more sources by the same authors, list them in **chronological order** based on the year (APA, 2020). For example:

> It has been found that hand hygiene with handgel is the best measure for infection prevention (Barjarow, 2017, 2019; Matilada & Barsowitz, 2018).

Use **letter notations** to distinguish two different citations that have the same author and same year (APA, 2020), such as:

> Reading prior to lecture has been correlated with better grades (Lapum 2017a, 2017b).

When including **direct quotations**, you must add page numbers. For example:

> According to Schultz (2005), "In the overwhelmingly White world of professional tennis, Serena Williams and her older sister Venus are frequently represented in the tradition of Black pride and heritage" (p. 339).

You should carefully consider how to integrate and introduce quotations. See **Table 9.2** on points to consider when using direct quotations as per APA (2020). As per APA: use quotation marks around phrases that are direct quotes and under 40 words; and use a block format (indented 0.5 inch) with no quotation marks for phrases that are direct quotes and greater than 40 words.

Table 9.2: Points to consider when using direct quotations

Suggestion	Nursing examples
Never use a stand-alone quotation: always integrate the quoted material into your own sentence.	Abbasi and Umrani (2018) advocated for gender inclusive language. They argued, for instance, that "typical plural pronouns such as 'they' can be used as singular and plural pronouns" (p. 7).
Use ellipses [...] if you need to omit a word or phrase. This shows your reader that you have critically and thoroughly evaluated the quotation and have chosen to include only the most important and relevant information. Use [. ...] when you are removing a section that would end in a period.	"Nurses who practice self-care ... have reduced absenteeism" (Abraham & Mark, 2019, p. 24). Liu and colleagues (2018) conducted a "narrative study about the effects of meditation on clients with post-traumatic stress. ... meditation decreases feelings of emotional distress and flashbacks" (p. 22).
Use brackets [ ] if you need to replace a word or phrase or if you need to change the verb tense.	As noted by Madulla (2020), "training in ergonomics decrease[s] musculoskeletal injuries" (p. 46).
Use [*sic*] after something in the quotation that is grammatically incorrect or spelled incorrectly. This shows your reader that the mistake is in the original, not your writing. Italicize sic and place it in square brackets immediately after the error.	The authors found that "prolonged grief can led [*sic*] to increased feelings of anxiety" (Pathack, 2020, p. 98).
Use double quotation marks [" "] when quoting and use single quotation marks [' '] when you include a quotation within a quotation.	One participant remarked "nurses often told me to 'breathe slowly and deeply' when my fear became too much" (Rodriguez & Balakrishnan, 2019, p. 2).

When citing an author in parentheses, you always need to include the authors' last names and year. However, if you are citing the authors as part of your text (i.e., not in parentheses) and within the same paragraph, then you generally only need to note the publication year the first time – unless it could be confused with another citation with similar names. If you note this author in a separate paragraph, you should indicate the year again.	Nurse educators consistently encourage students to complete readings ahead of time so that they can focus on skill acquisition in lab. It has been found that students who completed readings prior to laboratory practice were better prepared to practice nursing skills (Cranley, 2019). Specifically, Cranley found that students were able to focus on skill application in lab as opposed to reading the content. It was also noted that these students did better in the course overall (Cranley, 2019).

Activities: Check Your Understanding



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In-text Citation Types – One or Multiple Authors

The way you complete an in-text citation depends on the number of authors included in a citation. Adapted from APA (2020), see these examples:



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Activities: Check Your Understanding



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Other In-text Citation Types

There are other types of in-text citations that are contingent on the type of author, as noted by APA (2020).



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Activity: Check Your Understanding



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Creating a Reference Page

The brief citations included in the body of your paper correspond to the more detailed entries provided at the end of the paper in the **reference section** (APA, 2020). In-text citations provide basic information—the author's name, the publication date, and the page number if necessary—while the **reference section provides more extensive information**, which allows your reader to follow up on the sources you cited and do additional reading about the topic if desired.

The information included depends on the type of reference, but as per APA (2020), the elements of a reference entry contains:

1. The name(s) of the author(s) or institution/organization that wrote the source.
2. The date (most references only require the year of publication).
3. The full title such as the title of an article.
4. The source information, which varies based on the source, but may include:

- For books, the book title and name of publisher.
- For journal articles, the journal title, the volume number, issue number, and pages where the article appears.
- The journal article DOI (digital object identifier) when it is available, as opposed to the URL (uniform resource locator). A DOI is an identification code provided for some online documents, typically articles in scholarly journals. Like a URL, its purpose is to help readers locate an article. However, a DOI is more stable than a URL, so it makes sense to include it in your reference entry when possible. If the DOI is not available or the article was not obtained from academic research database, then you can include the URL link to the journal's homepage. To do this, you are expected to do an internet search and find the journal's homepage. Here is an example of

a homepage. Do NOT put a period after a DOI or a URL. The formatting of a DOI has changed over the years. Currently, it should be formatted as https://doi.org/xxx Here, the xxx refers to the DOI number that should follow based on the source you used. As per APA (2020), you can make the hyperlink for doi or URL in plain black font that is not underlined or if you press the "enter" key on your keyboard after entering the doi, it will make the hyperlink in a blue font and underlined; either format is acceptable.

- For sources on the web (such as a government website or the CNO website), the URL where the source is located should be included.

Student Tip

URL Links

Do not include the URL link in which you accessed a journal article through your library's database, for example, it includes ezproxy. This information is NOT helpful because if a person reading your reference page clicked on the link, they would only be able to access it if they had institutional access to your specific library and were logged in. Thus, you would **never** include a link like the following:

https://journals-scholarsportal-info.ezproxy.lib.ryerson.ca/pdf/03092402/v75i0004/711_teopsodasram.xml

Tips for **formatting your reference page** according to APA (2020) include:

- Begin on a new page and title it: **References** – the first letter is capitalized, and the word is bolded and centred.
- Doubled spaced.
- Use a hanging indent for each reference: this means that a reference's first line is flush left (left justified) and subsequent lines of the reference are indented one-half inch (0.5 inches).
- Include all works cited in your paper and only works cited in your paper.
- Within a citation, the authors' names should be listed in the same order that they are presented in the original article. **Do NOT change the order of the authors.**
- However, format the reference list in alphabetical order (based on the first author's last name of a citation). This means that an article in which the first author's last name starts with "A" should be higher on the reference page than an article in which the first author's last name starts with "H."
- Begin with the "oldest" source when referencing multiple sources with the same author. For example, if you are citing two sources authored by Aromdee, one from 2021 and another from 2026, then the one from 2021 is listed in the reference list first.
- Capitalize only the first letter of the first word of a title and subtitle, the first word after a colon or a dash in the title, and proper nouns. (however, always capitalize the first letter of each word with a journal name e.g., Journal of Advanced Nursing).
- Always include a DOI if it is available. If not available, include a URL for the journal's homepage.
- You will need to be aware of when to use title case and when to use sentence case. As previously noted, **title case** refers to capitalizing the first letter of each word except those that are three letters or less (UNLESS it is the first word of a title or a word following a colon or hyphen) – an example is: The Journal of Equity (in this example, the first letter of all words are capitalized except those that are three letters or less; however,

the word "the" is capitalized because it is the first word of the title. As per APA (2020), title case is used with the names of journals, newspapers, magazines, and websites (e.g., Journal of Advanced Nursing, The Globe and Mail, Maclean's, Health Canada). **Sentence case** refers to mainly the use of lower case except when it is the first letter of the first word or a proper noun – an example is: "Racial inequities in the Canadian healthcare system" (in this example, all lower case letters are used except the first letter of the first word is capitalized [Racial] and the proper noun [Canadian]. As per APA (2020), sentence case is used with article titles, book titles and book chapter titles, title of an article on a website or blog or title of a video.

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The tips on APA reference style were integrated with our own original content, and adapted from:

Write Here, Right Now by Dr. Paul Chafe, Aaron Tucker with chapters from Dr. Kari Maaren, Dr. Martha Adante, Val Lem, Trina Grover and Kelly Dermody, under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Download this book for free at: https://pressbooks.library.ryerson.ca/writehere/

Reference Page Examples – Books and Websites

As per APA (2020), below are reference page examples for books and websites.



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Oftentimes, students wonder about how to cite this open educational resource. What we suggest is, you consider it an online book without a publisher. Therefore, the reference page citation would be as follows:

Lapum, J., St-Amant, O., Hughes, M., Tan, A., Bogdan, A., Dimaranan, F., Frantzke, R., & Savicevic, N. (2019). *The scholarship of writing in nursing education: 1st Canadian edition* (1st ed.). https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/scholarlywriting/

***NOTE: You will notice that the book title is italicized. "1st Canadian edition" is in the title because it is part of the book title. The edition is again noted in parentheses to follow APA. And last, the weblink is included. There is no publication company associated with this book, so you just leave it blank. And of course, don't forget to double space the entry and use a hanging indent for the lines following the first line.

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Reference Page Examples – Journal Articles

As per APA (2020), with articles in scholarly journals, you include:

1. The author or authors' names.
2. Publication year.
3. Article title (in sentence case, without quotation marks or italics).
4. Journal title (in title case and in italics).
5. Volume number (in italics) and issue number not italicized (in parentheses).
6. Page number(s) where the article appears.

Here are some examples:



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https://pressbooks.library.torontomu.ca/scholarlywriting/?p=2040#h5p-94

***NOTE:

Don't forget to **double space the entry and use a hanging indent** for the lines following the first line.

Only include the year of publication with journals (not the month and day). However, with sources that are published more frequently like a newspaper, blog, or magazine, you also include the month and day as per the examples.

For a journal article, use the "Article number" (or eLocator) if there are no page numbers. Thus, it should look as follows:

Jansen, R. Nursing roles. *Journal of Nursing Sources*, *12*(5), Article e989004.

Student Tip

21 or more authors

As per APA (2020) all authors' last names (and initials) should be listed except when there are 21 or more authors. In this case, you list the first 19 names followed by an ellipsis (and no ampersand in this case) and then the last author name (APA, 2020). Here is an example:

Pathak, L., DeCarlo, I., Ahmad, D., Ibrahim, D., Rabbani, L., Yousuf, D., Chen, L., Igibiki, I., Lee, R., Carter, S., Peters, L., Yau, C., Schulz, T., Kang, L., Jones, K., Marta, J., Wahab, Z., Uddin, P., Malai, J., … Sayad, H. (2025). Muslim women's experiences of primary care. *Canadian Community and Public Health Journal*, 45(3), 42-51. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000118-987

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Sample Reference Page

References

Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1963). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for resea rch.* Houghton Mifflin.

Canty, L. (2021). The lived experience of severe maternal morbidity among Black women. *Nursing Inquiry*, 29(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1111/nin.12466

Lapum, J. (2018). Deepening the mystery of arts-based research in the health sciences. In P. Leavy

(Ed.), *Handbook of arts-based research* (pp. 526-545). Guilford Press.

Racine, L., Ford, H., Johnson, L., & Fowler-Kerry, S. (2021). An integrative review of Indigenous informal caregiving in the context of dementia care. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 78(4), 895-917. https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.15102

St-Amant, O. (2014). A *critical examination of the social organizations within Canadian NGOs in the provision of HIV/AIDS health network in Tanzania.* (Publication No. 2092). [Doctoral dissertation, Western University]. Western Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies Electronic Thesis and

Dissertation Repository. https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/2092/

*****NOTE: the reference list above should be double spaced with a hanging indent of 0.5 inches for each subsequent line of a citation.**

Student Tip

Personal Communication

Have you ever wanted to reference something from your instructor's powerpoint slide or something they said during class or something an expert said at a conference. First, make sure what you want to reference is an original idea from your instructor and not just something from your required readings that they have repeated in class. You always want to go to the primary source if possible, and avoid citing your instructor's powerpoint slides.

If it is something they said, you reference it as a Personal Communication in the text only; this means it does not

need to go in your reference list (APA, 2020). You must ask their permission to reference them. Here is an example:

- L. Santos (personal communication, November 4, 2019) indicated that it is best to use a trauma-informed nursing approach with all clients.

Artificial Intelligence

In most nursing courses, you will not be permitted to use artificial intelligence (AI). However, in rare cases, you may be permitted to do so. If so, how do you complete an in-text citation and a citation on the reference page? Here is an example:

When prompted with "What is scholarly writing?" the ChatGPT-generated text stated that "scholarly writing refers to the style of writing commonly used in academic and research contexts. It is characterized by its formal tone, precise language, and adherence to specific conventions and standards within a particular field of study" (OpenAI, 2024).

Reference

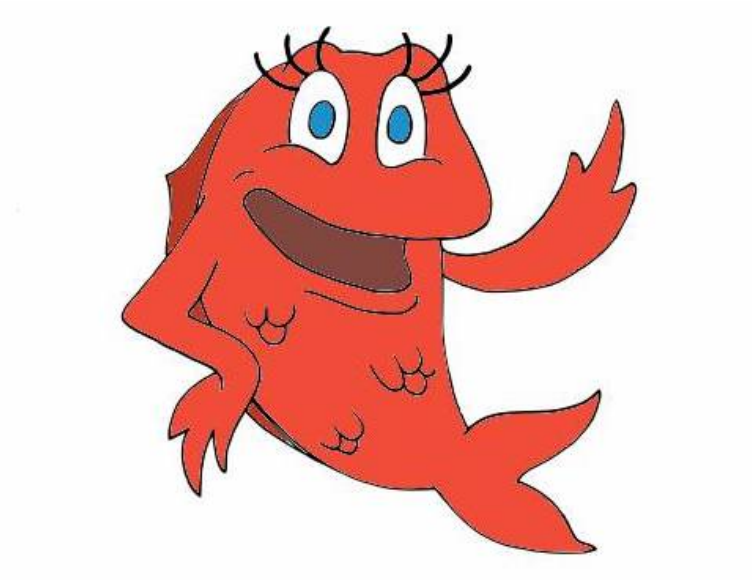
OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT (April 29 version) [Large language model]. https://chat.openai.com/

Chapter Summary

In the final chapter of this book, you have learned about academic integrity and plagiarism. This chapter provided you with skills related to style rules for in-text citations when paraphrasing and quoting. Additionally, you learned about style rules related to the creation of title pages and reference lists.

Your Writing Journey

Part of your journey is to become familiar with the style rules of academic writing in the nursing field. APA might seem like a nuisance at first, but this style is important to ensure consistency and clarity across writing. Your instructors expect you to know it and adhere to it. Familiarize yourself with academic integrity as these standards are the parameters for plagiarism and self-plagiarism. Developing academic integrity is necessary and you want to acknowledge others' ideas and voices while finding and articulating your own.



Glossary

Abstract

A brief summary of a text.

Anthropomorphism

When human traits are assigned to a non-human actor/object.

Click-bait

Source in which the purpose is to attract your attention and prompt you to click on links to web pages that might be selling something or promoting fake news.

CRAAP

Evaluation tool that helps determine a source's quality.

Critique

Constructive way to explore, interrogate, and evaluate a text.

Descriptive Writing

Writing that describes or summarizes something.

Egalitarianism

The belief that all people are equal and deserve the same rights.

Evidence-informed nursing

When practice and decision-making are informed by best available evidence from a variety of sources and combined with practitioner expertise, patient preference, and local context.

Information literacy

Having knowledge and skill related to various types of knowledge.

Peer-review

A process associated with journals in which a submitted manuscript passes through a process of being reviewed by experts before being accepted for publication.

Positionality

How you position yourself in relation to a topic, informed by your identity.

Reading effectively

Reading effectively.

Red herrings

Sentences that distract the reader from your main topic.

Reflective Practice

Exploring and analyzing a clinical experience.

Reflective Writing

Thinking deeply and critically about an experience.

Rigorous

Complete, sound, thorough and carefully constructed.

Semantics

The study of language/words used and the associated meanings.

Synthesis

Combining two or more ideas and texts in writing.

title case

involves capitalizing the first letter of each word except those that are three letters or less (UNLESS it is the first word of a title or a word following a colon or hyphen (see example of the paper title in Figure 9.1).