Writing is not a one-shot deal where you write an entire paper from beginning to end in one sitting. Even expert writers have a process—one that helps them craft a final masterpiece. Furthermore, everyone—no matter how experienced they are at writing—can suffer writer’s block, and everyone has to revise and edit.

When you look at writing as a process, it is much easier to handle writing assignments, because you complete steps over a period of time that result in a polished final paper. Following a writing process is less time consuming because it takes less time to write a paper in steps than to try to write it all in one sitting. Plus, you end up with a better, stronger, and more engaging paper. Think of it like building a house. You could build a house in a week, but how strong would it be? A paper is similar: It takes time to work through the proper steps to build a strong foundation—your argument or point of view—one that will stand the test of time against all readers.

This section of the Guide discusses the writing process in several ways. Specifically, you will read about what the writing process is, how to consider your audience before you begin writing, and what Writing Center resources are available to you. In addition, because reading and writing are intricately connected, you also will learn about reading strategies that will make you a thoughtful writer. If you are a nonnative English speaker, you might find Chapter 9, *Support for English Language Learners*, pp. 67–86, especially helpful.
Most activities in life involve a process. A recipe for brownies follows a process and so do the instructions for changing a tire, or changing a diaper, for that matter. Anytime there are several steps required to complete a task, a process is involved.

Writing is no different from anything else. In a perfect world, one moment you would be looking at a blank page and the next you would be holding a completed essay in your hands. However, the unfortunate reality is that several steps are required to go from that blank page to that completed essay.

Not everybody follows the same writing process. For example, many students follow this process for writing college essays:

1. Get the assignment.
2. Forget about the assignment until the day before it’s due.
3. Remember the assignment and go into a full-blown panic.
4. Pull an all-nighter to complete the essay.

Obviously, some processes are better than others.

The goal of a good process is to add efficiency and quality to the steps involved in the activity at hand—thus, the philosophy behind the millions of dollars spent by businesses and the U.S. government each year. A good writing process should do the same: It should help you get from the assignment stage to the finished essay stage with a maximum of efficiency and quality.
A quality writing process involves the following three basic stages, which this chapter explains in detail:

1. Preparation
2. Drafting
3. Document improvement

**PREPARATION**

In the preparation stage (sometimes called *prewriting*), your goal is to create and begin organizing the content of your essay. For many students, this is the most difficult part of writing a paper. There’s a reason for this, but it’s an invalid reason, as you shall see, and this difficulty can be overcome by following a quality writing process.

The preparation stage actually involves three phases: (1) planning the writing, (2) creating the content, and (3) organizing that content.

Phase 1 involves more thinking than writing. In this phase, you should review the assignment instructions, make sure you understand exactly what you are supposed to do, and plan your attack. How long is your essay supposed to be? What type of essay is it—expository or persuasive? Have you been given a topic, or do you get to choose your own? If you get to choose your own topic, what are you going to write about? You need to know all of these things before you can start actually developing content for your final essay.

**WORDS FROM WRITERS**

*Own Your Words*

“The best writing is exploratory. It can be raw fact or fiction. It does not regurgitate other works. The best writing synthesizes with voice and passion. When you read it, you lose yourself between words, wanting to linger and sprint ahead at the same time.

We live in a world full of words. They scream at us from billboards and whisper to us from the back of our cereal boxes. In this world full of words, the best we can do is make ours count by sharing a small piece
Students sometimes have a hard time choosing a topic when one is not assigned. If this is true for you, it might help to do this: Take out a sheet of paper and draw a vertical line down the middle of the paper, forming two columns. At the top of one column, write “Things I’m Passionate About,” and at the top of the second column, write “Things I’ve Always Wanted to Learn.” Then write down everything you can think of that falls under those two categories. Once you have the two lists complete, choose one and go to work. Most students find it much more meaningful to write about something they care about or have always wanted to learn more about.

**STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

**Choosing an Essay Topic**

Think of choosing a topic for an essay of a specific length like this: Assume you are a biologist, and you want to study the biology of a frozen lake. You have a 5-gallon bucket you can fill with material from the lake. You have two options for filling that bucket: You can remove a section of ice an inch deep but several feet round, or you can remove a section one inch round but several feet deep. Which will give you a better understanding of the biology of that frozen lake? The deep section, right? It’s a matter of breadth versus depth. You want depth, and in writing, depth means details. You can’t write a detailed essay titled, “The Causes and Effects of the Civil War,” in five pages. But perhaps you could narrow that down to just one battle—for example, Gettysburg. If that was still too broad, you could look at just one aspect of that battle—for example, Pickett’s Charge. The narrower your topic, the more depth you can have, and it’s that depth—those details—that makes an essay not only readable but also interesting and engaging.

In Phase 2, you start developing content for the paper. The temptation here is to jump right into the draft, which is understandable, as
it seems the most time-efficient thing to do. If your math teacher gave you 20 questions to complete for a grade, you wouldn't do 10 “warm-up” questions to get ready for them, would you?

However, writing is different from math; in communication, it’s not a matter of right or wrong. It’s more complicated than that, and a more complicated activity needs a more complicated process. In addition, Phase 2 is where the biggest challenge facing any writer comes into play, and that challenge has a name: writer’s block.

The good news is: There’s a specific reason why writers get writer’s block, and following the correct writing process can beat that challenge. Here’s how:

Imagine that there are two people in your head: an artist and a judge. The artist is the part of you that is carefree, fun-loving, creative, silly, and unique. The judge is the part of you that is grown up, mature, driven to excellence, serious, and judgmental. Everybody has both of these characters within them, just in different proportions. It’s the artist in you who wakes up on a beautiful spring morning and says, “I should call in sick today and go to the mountains for a picnic.” It’s the judge who says, “You most definitely will not. You have responsibilities. People are counting on you. Now get up, get dressed, and get to work.”

These two characters come into play in the writing process as well. Remember, when you first receive an assignment, you have nothing completed. You have a blank screen. You have to fill that screen with something worthwhile, something that will hopefully express your ideas.

If you jump right into the draft of your essay, in your mind you will be thinking, “I need to write this essay, and I need to do a good job of it.” Is that the artist or the judge talking?

That’s right: It’s the judge. Remember from our list of attributes, though, that judges don’t create things; they only judge things. It’s the artist who creates things—even content for essays. So picture the scene with the judge in charge: The artist is sitting at a canvas ready to create this masterpiece of an essay, but with every brush stroke, the judge says, “Nope, that’s not good enough for an A.” So, the artist
tears off the page and starts again. “That’s no good,” says the judge. “You need a better opening.” If that happens enough times, soon the artist throws up his hands with disgust and says, “I’m done.” There’s your writer’s block.

The way to prevent writer’s block is to take the judge out of the picture. He’ll come back in during the document improvement stage, but that’s his territory—judging the quality of existing material. During the prewriting stage of the writing process, however, you must let the artist play.

English teachers call letting the artist play brainstorming, and you can do it in several different ways. Some people make lists; others put pen to paper (or fingers to the keyboard), set a timer, and start writing, not stopping until the timer goes off. Others do what is often called mind-mapping or webbing. The important thing is to let the artist play with no judgment at this stage of the process. Right now, you want to develop content. It doesn’t have to be perfect content—that will come later. You just want something to work with. Remember, it’s always easier to work with something than with nothing.

**WORDS FROM WRITERS**

*I Find It Hard to Write*

“So, why write? Good question. In spite of all the obstacles I throw in my own path, writing is still something I return to because I have something to say, and I love the act of creating. Any act of creation is an act of hope. And sometimes the writing flows—maybe only once or twice a year—but when it does, I am transported. I forget to eat, miss appointments, and don’t hear the phone. Those euphoric moments are enough to make me hold out and plug on. Whether the writing flows or flounders, in the end I have made something with heart and hands, a quivering little thing as flat as these pancake pages, imbued with the hope that someday, somewhere, someone will read my words—not because they are required to, but because my stories speak to them. And if no one ever reads them, then perhaps the act of creation is gift enough in itself.”

—Christiane Buuck, Writer and Liturgical Artist
Writers often forget the third phase of the preparation stage—organizing the content—and if that happens, the second phase was a waste of time. Once your artist has generated some content, you have to give it shape before it’s ready to put into the draft of an essay.

Picture the raw material from your brainstorming like concrete spinning in the back of a concrete truck. That concrete is potentially quite valuable, but not if it’s poured directly on the ground. If that happens, it’s just a mess. Instead, forms are built to shape the concrete. These forms are built in whatever shape the contractor wants the concrete to eventually take. Only after the forms are put into place is the concrete poured. Then, the concrete can form the foundation of a building.

Your brainstorming material is the same as this concrete; it’s in rough form and needs to be shaped. Here is one example:

Suppose you do a quick brainstorming exercise about gun control, and develop the list shown in Table 6.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Handgun</th>
<th>Rifle</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>Second Amendment</td>
<td>NRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangs</td>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>Shotgun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Safety locks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concealed carry</td>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Bullets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armor-piercing bullets</td>
<td>High-capacity magazines</td>
<td>Danger in the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent crime</td>
<td>Self-defense</td>
<td>Castle Doctrine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 Brainstorm list on gun control

This is your raw material. The next step is to look for commonalities and create categories like this:

- Dangers related to guns
- Types of guns/accessories
- Gun rights
- How other countries view guns
Now put the individual items from the previous list under one of the categories, as shown in Table 6.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dangers related to guns</th>
<th>Types of guns/accessories</th>
<th>Gun rights</th>
<th>Other countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>Handgun</td>
<td>Second Amendment</td>
<td>England—handgun ban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>Rifle</td>
<td>NRA</td>
<td>Australia—ban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangs</td>
<td>Shotgun</td>
<td>Concealed carry</td>
<td>Swiss—100% ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>Bullets</td>
<td>Self-defense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>Armor-piercing bullets</td>
<td>Castle Doctrine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>High-capacity magazines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety locks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent crime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 Groupings of list on gun control

Note that as you build these groupings, you might also think of new additions. For example, under “gun rights,” you might add “Revolutionary War minutemen” and “dictators imposed gun control in Russia, Germany, Cuba, etc.” and “Federalist Paper #46.”

Now review your information. What do you have? Do you see any patterns emerging? Do you see an argument emerging? How might you work with these groups now?

Put these groupings together in different ways, and you have possible outlines. For example, the two following outlines could grow from this information:

Outline #1
I. Introduction with thesis: Despite the Second Amendment and America’s history of gun rights, guns are too dangerous to remain legal.

II. Historical gun rights
   a. Second Amendment
Nuts and Bolts of the Writing Process

b. Federalist Paper #46
c. Concealed carry laws

III. Types of guns today
   a. Rifles
   b. Shotguns
   c. Handguns
   d. High-capacity magazines
   e. Armor-piercing bullets

IV. Current dangers
   a. Violent crime
   b. Gangs/drugs
   c. Home accidents with children

V. Other countries' views on gun control
   a. England—handguns banned
   b. Australia—handguns banned
   c. Switzerland—ownership but with extensive training

VI. Conclusion: Despite the history of gun freedom in the United States, it’s time to follow other countries' lead and ban firearms.

Here’s another possibility:

Outline #2
I. Introduction with thesis: Despite the fact that some people use firearms improperly, maintaining the right to keep and bear arms will keep America free.

II. Current misuses of firearms
   a. Violent crime
b. Gangs/drugs  
c. Home accidents with children

III. Other countries’ views on gun control  
a. England—handguns banned  
b. Australia—handguns banned  
c. Switzerland—ownership but with extensive training

IV. Historical gun rights and why they must remain intact  
a. Second Amendment  
b. Federalist Paper #46  
c. Concealed carry laws

V. Conclusion: Despite abuse by some, it is constitutional and within our rights to keep and bear arms.

Do you see how the information gathered can lead to your outline and eventual essay?

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS  
Making Every Word Count

Pretend you have two vehicles: a big GMC Suburban as well as a Kawasaki 1000 motorcycle. The Suburban has a 7.3-liter engine, and the motorcycle has a 1-liter engine. The Suburban has far more horsepower than the motorcycle. Yet the motorcycle is much faster because the motorcycle has very little “dead weight.” Most of the motorcycle’s weight is contained in parts that make it go, such as the engine and the transmission. The Suburban, on the other hand, has lots of dead weight, like seats, four-wheel drive components, and a heavy chassis and body panels. Very little of the Suburban’s weight is contained in the parts that make it go. Writing is the same. Every word in your essay should make the essay “go.” Anything in the essay that does not advance your thesis or push your essay forward is dead weight and slows down your reader. Keep your essay lean; make every word count.
DRAFTING
If your preparation was done well, the draft can almost write itself. This is where an outline comes in. It’s relatively easy to turn this:

IV. Historical gun rights and why they must remain intact
   a. Second Amendment
   b. Federalist Paper #46
   c. Concealed carry laws

into this:

_The Founding Fathers recognized Americans’ right to keep and bear arms through the Second Amendment, which reads, “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed” (U.S. Constitution). In Federalist Paper #46, James Madison explained that this right was a counterbalance to the power of the federal government and a standing army. If the government became tyrannical and turned the army against the people, then “it may well be doubted whether a militia [of armed citizens]...could ever be conquered by such a proportion of regular troops.”_

DOCUMENT IMPROVEMENT
This is the stage of the writing process where you should allow the judge back in. Now that you have created material, organized it into an outline, and then converted it into a draft, the judge should enter the picture and decide what works and what doesn’t. This is so much easier to do now than when you are actually writing the original paper. Now you have something to judge, and you have just one job to do. If you judge the essay while you’re writing it, you’re essentially trying to do two jobs at once—and again, that’s a recipe for writer’s block.
Document improvement involves three distinct phases:

1. Revising
2. Editing
3. Proofreading

These are separate phases, should be treated as such, and should be followed in this order. We’ll talk about why in a minute.

**Revision** is the first phase of the document improvement process, and it comes from the Latin word, *revisere*, which means “to see again.” If you break the word into its component pieces, you can see this:

Re + vision

Re = to do again
Vision = sight

Re + vision = to see again


These are the big things required for a successful paper. Don’t look at little things like spelling and grammar right now; you’ll get to that later. For now, you want to make sure that your content is solid, easy to follow, and persuasive. These are whole-paper and paragraph-level issues, or as English teachers sometimes call them, *HOCs* (higher order concerns).
STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS
Sculpting Your Essay
When it comes time to review, edit, and proofread your essay, think of your work like a block of granite, and you’re the sculptor. Does the sculptor take a tiny hammer and chisel to a new block of granite? No, that would take forever. The sculptor uses big tools to make big cuts to remove the big pieces that don’t belong. As the block gets closer and closer to the shape the sculptor eventually wants, he or she uses smaller and smaller tools and makes smaller and smaller changes, until eventually the piece takes shape. An essay is the same way. Don’t start the revision process by fixing the commas; start it by looking at the big picture: Do I make a good argument? Can my reader understand what I’m saying here? Is this essay well organized? Is it balanced? These are big questions, and at this point, you should make big changes—move paragraphs around, cut pieces here, add others there. Once the big changes are in place, look at the sentences. Do they say what you want them to say? Are they clear? Can you improve them? Then look at the words; are you using the right word? Should you use mad or incensed, for example? Finally, look at the tiny things, like punctuation, spelling, and typos. Start big and work small, like a sculptor perfecting a work of art.

Editing is when you look at the smaller issues. Now you’re looking at word choice, grammar, mechanics, and structure.

Does it make sense now why you revise before you edit? What if you spend an hour or more going through your entire paper to fix all of the grammar, usage, spelling, and other errors, and then decide to cut whole sections out of the essay and include others? You’ve just wasted all of the time you spent fixing the small things in those paragraphs, and now you have additional, new paragraphs that you have to edit, so you’re repeating the process.

Think of document improvement as you would sanding a piece of wood. When you start, you use a heavy-grit sandpaper to make big changes to the block of wood. As the wood gets closer and closer to the shape you want, you use finer and finer grit sandpaper to fine-tune it. It’s the same with your paper. Make big changes first, and
then as it gets closer and closer to the shape you want, make smaller and smaller changes—whole-paper changes, then paragraph-level changes, then sentence-level changes, then word-level changes, and, finally, even smaller things, like punctuation.

**Proofreading** is when you give your paper one last review to make sure you haven’t missed anything. Double-check your corrections, watch for typos, run a spell check and a grammar check, but don’t depend on this solely. Nothing replaces your own proofreading. For instance, a spell-check does not necessarily flag misused words (*then*/*than*, *woman*/women).

Make sure the paper is formatted properly, including a cover page and proper citations if you use outside sources in your writing. If you do use outside sources, such as journal articles or books, include a properly formatted references page. Finally, review the assignment instructions and make sure you’ve done everything required for the assignment.
Quick: What do you and Quintilian have in common? Are you scratching your head and wondering how someone could name their child Quintilian? Or perhaps you are stumped by the question entirely, asking yourself instead, “Who is Quintilian and what could we possibly have in common?” The answer is rhetoric.

Rhetoric is the study of how to write and speak effectively for the purpose of influencing the thought and conduct of your intended audience. Quintilian, who lived in CE 35–95 (CE refers to the “Common Era” and is the academic term for AD, Anno Domini), was a citizen of ancient Rome known for his writings on oratory and training in rhetoric, the art of persuasion. What Quintilian and many writers from the first century to the twenty-first century have discovered is that the key to effective writing is wrapped up in this one simple phrase, “know your audience.” Stated another way, good writers pay careful attention to the rhetorical situation when writing. The rhetorical situation is an analysis of the purpose of writing, with special emphasis placed on the relationship between the speaker/writer, the intended audience, and the context of the intended message.

Although this might seem like a lot to consider when beginning a writing project, it is not nearly as complicated as it looks. Suppose you have been given a writing assignment and the topic is drug abuse. After consulting numerous periodicals, journals, and books on this topic, you prepare your outline, narrow your topic to one aspect of drug abuse, and write your thesis statement. After completing your
first and second drafts, you revise your paper once more and submit the completed assignment to your instructor on time, in the proper format, and in the designated length. Relieved that your work is complete, you feel proud and confident that it will be well received. Imagine, however, your surprise when your paper is returned to you with a much lower grade than you had expected. While reading the instructor’s comments, you discover that you incorrectly assumed that the intended audience was adults when, in reality, the intended audience was children in the fifth grade. By incorrectly identifying your target audience, your content was above the reading level of most fifth graders and your message was not effectively communicated. Obviously, the words you use to connect with fifth-grade children are different from the words you use to connect with adults. Beyond word choice, the style will be entirely different, too. Different audiences, different words, different styles—“know your audience” is the crucial first step toward crafting an intelligent and effective written message.

Before starting a writing project, you should ask yourself the following questions:

1. What is my topic?
2. Who is my audience?
3. Will my language be formal or informal?
4. How will I select my content?
5. Which tone do I want to convey?

If you correctly identify your target audience before you start writing, it will be easy to complete items 3–5 in the preceding list. Unfortunately, writers don’t always factor audience into the equation. Instead, they spend the majority of their time researching the topic and then writing the paper. However, without an analysis of your intended audience, you are missing an important step. Just as one size doesn’t really fit all, one writing style does not reach all. If you want your writing to
be effective, remember the rhetorical situation. Here are some tips for you to use:

- If your target audience is college students, incorporate references that appeal to this group.
- If your target audience is readers of academic journals, use university language and higher level reasoning techniques.
- If your target audience is business executives, incorporate business-specific words, sorted by industry, to demonstrate effectiveness and feasibility.
- If your target audience is teens or primary-school children, choose age-appropriate words and colorful language to keep their attention.

Whenever you adapt your writing style to reach a variety of audiences, you become a more proficient writer. Discovering your audience can even be a fun process. Trust me, once you have established the habit of stepping back to get a clearer picture of your intended audience, your writing will incorporate all of the nuances needed to captivate and engage this select group of readers. For example, imagine yourself speaking, rather than writing, to your intended audience. Use your imagination to visualize what they look like, how they are dressed, where they live, where they work, and so forth. Now quickly record all of these words in your freewriting, paying careful attention to the group’s demographics (age, gender, socioeconomic status).

**STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

**What Is SAE?**
SAE is an acronym for Standard American English. Because you will hear your instructors and see project assignments constantly refer to this term, here is a basic definition. SAE is the generally accepted form of writing used in most educational and business environments. SAE is formal writing that adheres to the standard conventions of English grammar.
Slang or informal language is not SAE, and you should avoid such informal language in professional communication, such as the papers you write for classes, e-mails to instructors or other school personnel, and all communication in the classroom, including responses on the Discussion Board.

Consider the following writing samples. As you read, take careful note of the tone (is it humorous or serious?) as well as the words (are they simple? sophisticated?). Let’s see if you can correctly identify the intended audience.

- *I like ice cream. Mary likes ice cream. John likes ice cream. Do you like ice cream?*
  Intended audience: children ages 2–4

- *Everyone’s favorite dessert, ice cream, has a history dating back to ancient times. The Roman Emperor Nero (CE 37–67) is reported to have ordered ice to be transported to Rome from the Apennines, a mountain range that runs the length of peninsular Italy, and, more specifically, from the Corno Grande glacier. This was a logistic feat requiring ingenuity and engineering to transport the ice quickly and efficiently over great distances while, at the same time, maintaining its frozen condition. Once the ice arrived in Rome, it was then mixed with fruit toppings to create a rare and much coveted sweet treat.*
  Intended audience: adults

- *Ice cream can certainly be categorized as being a dairy exchange in the food pyramid; however, when you consider the grams of fat and carbohydrates in just one serving, this food is better avoided when you are actively working toward dietary goals.*
  Intended audience: health science majors
The nonfat, chocolate-almond ice cream is an essential product that would add variety to the menu of dessert items available to patrons.

Intended audience: business owner or employees of a business

In the previous examples, the language, tone, and choice of words are completely different. Although the subject matter in all four examples is the same (ice cream), the intended audiences are distinct. One thing they do have in common, however, is the intended impact. In each of the examples, the writer is speaking directly to the intended audience.

Writers have the luxury of painting pictures with words in the minds of their readers. Writers’ tools are their words. The writer’s canvas is the mind of the intended reader or target audience. How you, as a writer, choose to express yourself is your decision. However, to achieve the maximum impact and create a lasting impression, you must first visualize your audience. Once you’ve identified this audience, use your words to paint a picture so they can see and readily experience your ideas. Essentially, your words will lead them down the path you would like them to walk with you. Capturing the reader’s interest is the key.
The Kaplan University Writing Center offers so many helpful student resources that the biggest question you might have is, “Where do I begin?” Have no fear; by the time you are finished reading this chapter, you should have a firm grasp on the many services the Writing Center has to offer. The Writing Center offers services such as Paper Review, Live Tutoring, Q&A Service, Reference Library tutorials, and monthly workshops on a variety of topics, from how to beat writer’s block to learning discipline-specific editorial citation styles quickly and easily. In addition, several specialized Writing Center services are available for students through the English Language Learners (ELL), Writing Coach, and Writing Fundamentals programs.

In fact, writing is a far more collaborative act than many students believe—because all of us need encouragement, support, and meaningful feedback about the ideas we want to convey to our readers. The entire Writing Center staff wants you to feel empowered by learning when and where to ask for help. All writers, regardless of skill level, need constructive and holistic feedback, additional practice and tips, and a place where questions about writing and research are always welcome. The hope is that you’ll find this support at the Writing Center.
Ultimately, empowering you in the writing process means that Writing Center tutors won’t be your editor or proofreader, but rather partners who will work with you one-on-one by suggesting areas of strength, interest, and development. Please note that a Writing Center tutor will never fix, correct, or edit your paper. What tutors will do—which many students find far more valuable—is work with you on the skills you need to become a more independent and effective communicator in the long run. Although the Writing Center staff understands that doing well on a paper will help you succeed in school, they also value the writing process. In other words, they know it takes time, hard work, and practice to create effective and clear writing throughout your lifetime.

To be clear, the Writing Center does not guarantee higher grades; grades on projects are strictly the domain of your Kaplan University professor. Please use the comments you receive from the Writing Center services to create a better draft of your project.

In addition to the ample writing practice you’ll take part in as a student at KU, one of the biggest tricks to your success as a writer is to discover when to best use the Writing Center’s resources. The hope is that you’ll use all of the Writing Center’s tutorials and services at some point in your education, but, understandably, certain services are more practical and conducive to your needs depending on where you’re at in the writing process. This chapter describes a menu of services that you might find appropriate during the preparation, drafting, and document improvement stages of college composition.

So, good luck and have fun exploring what the Writing Center offers as you continue to build your confidence and skills as a college-level writer!

A MENU OF WRITING CENTER RESOURCES

Have you ever visited a restaurant and not known what to order? Many of us have faced a similar dilemma, especially when the menu is new. *How will I know which entrée is delicious? What do other diners recom-*
mend? What’s the establishment’s signature dish? Will I leave feeling satisfied? These are just a few of the questions that might go through your head right before the server comes to take your order.

Although the Writing Center doesn’t serve up blue plate specials, it does provide a variety of top-notch services tailored to help you with writing projects for any KU course. For students in their first term to their last, the KU Writing Center offers Live Tutoring, the Q&A Service, Paper Review, a comprehensive Reference Library, monthly student workshops, and specialized outreach programs through the English Language Learners (ELL), Writing Coach, and Writing Fundamentals initiatives.

This section of the Guide is dedicated to explaining what these services are and how you may access them to select the service that’s right for you. There’s no need to feel overwhelmed by the choices, especially if they’re new to you. Simply read on to garner a better understanding of the Writing Center’s services.

**Live Tutoring**
Kaplan University composition professors always staff Live Tutoring sessions. Although live tutors are not able to read entire essays during these sessions, they are happy to discuss targeted areas of your work, editorial style and citation guidelines, grammar and mechanics, or writing in general.

The Writing Center is staffed by live, or synchronous, online tutors at several times throughout the week. What’s wonderful about this audio-enabled service is a student may chat or talk with a Writing Center tutor and receive answers instantly in the same one-on-one session. Most sessions last about 15–20 minutes, and the sessions allow the student and tutor to have a significant conversation about the writer’s work, strengths, and areas of growth and development.

Before attempting to seek live help, please confirm on the Writing Center’s Web site that you are visiting Live Tutoring during the hours of operation. Whenever a live tutor is not available, you may also visit
the Q&A Service and Reference Library, which are available 24 hours a day.

Q&A Service
Let’s say you have a quick writing-related question for a tutor, but you don’t have time to wait for Live Tutoring. Then, the Q&A Service is the perfect solution for submitting questions ahead of time so you may receive a timely e-mail response from a qualified writing expert.

Please ensure that you read through the full Q&A Service submission process, which is located on the Writing Center’s Web site, to learn how to best use these services. After using this service a few times, you will discover how easy to use and rewarding this service can be.

Paper Review
The Paper Review service provides a comprehensive look at a student’s work at any time during the writing process. A student can submit a draft of his or her writing as an e-mail attachment to a dedicated e-mail address, which is available at the Writing Center’s Web site. A Kaplan University composition professor will review the draft and provide concrete strategies and suggestions on how to improve the writing.

To reiterate, Writing Center tutors do not edit or rewrite your papers. Tutors serve as allies in the writing process by guiding you through the questions they have about your work and specific writing techniques they recommend based on where you’re at with your draft and research. Moreover, the Writing Center’s overall approach to grammar, mechanics, and spelling is to highlight patterns of error instead of isolated, sometimes random, problems with college-level conventions. Students and many composition studies experts agree that the best way to improve one’s use of conventions is to see how and why patterns of error occur and then to receive concrete feedback on how to fix the pattern at hand. When you submit your paper for review, tutors review the paper for appropriate use of conventions. However, they primarily focus their feedback on the clarity and cohesiveness of your ideas; how you organize and develop your thoughts; how you integrate outside
evidence; how you consider the audience, purpose, and context of the writing prompt; and what big-picture questions they still have for future drafts. Such an individualized approach to writing feedback helps students see tangible progress as they advance in their studies; the Writing Center staff truly hopes you will see the impact their services can have on your writing and critical thinking.

Moreover, it’s incredibly important to take ownership of your writing now by including specific questions or concerns in the paper review submission request. Please let Writing Center tutors know what you’re proud of, what areas you’re struggling with, or if you’ve hit a wall with your writing. It’s much easier for tutors to help you when they know what kind of feedback you’re interested in receiving in addition to where you’re at in the writing process. For instance, let the tutors know if this is a rough draft of a thesis statement or your final draft on an informative essay about childhood obesity.

Lastly, Writing Center tutors do not review graduate theses, dissertations, résumés, cover letters, or reward-based writing (e.g., scholarship applications and writing contests). Your graduate thesis or dissertation represents the culmination of all your hard work and learned input of your department’s advising committee and chair. Please contact the chair or a member of your thesis or dissertation committee for suggestions and feedback. As for résumés and cover letters, unless they are for a specific course at KU, Writing Center tutors do not review them. To learn more about what services are available to students who are seeking full-time employment, please contact the KU Career Resource Center for more information.

**Reference Library**

The Writing Center's Reference Library addresses students’ self-directed questions about writing; provides sample papers that showcase effective writing, grammar, and mechanics explanations; provides tips and tricks on how to correctly format and cite papers using appropriate editorial styles; and much more. There are over 250 pages of tutorials, with a growing number of multimedia resources,
including podcasts, interactive learning modules, and instructional videos, in the Reference Library. You can save many reference materials to your computer or print them for quick reference.

The Reference Library includes resources on a variety of writing styles—from persuasive and informative papers to critical essays and lab reports—as well as tools to help you create an outline, use statistics effectively, create a strong thesis statement, and work with Microsoft® Word and PowerPoint®. There are also resources to help students understand the writing process, such as how to overcome writer’s block and the difference between revising and editing your writing.

Are you stymied by an editorial style? Do you need help formatting your essay with appropriate headers and footers? The Reference Library also provides resources to help you accurately and ethically gather college-level research for your writing while also shedding light on the most popular, discipline-specific editorial styles. Finally, the library also includes many resources on the mechanics of writing with in-depth explanations about how to improve punctuation, spelling, grammar and sentence structure, and style as well as English Language Learners (ELL) grammar guidelines. In addition, if there is something you would like to see in the Reference Library but can’t seem to find, just let the Writing Center know and the staff will either direct you to the resource or create one to share.

Workshops
The Writing Center’s constructive monthly workshop series encourages students to come together to discuss and collaborate on writing-related issues with a Writing Center workshop presenter. Past topics include techniques such as how to avoid plagiarism or how to create a strong body paragraph. What’s especially handy about these hour-long workshops is no registration or sign-up is required; simply note the date and time workshops are available on the landing page of the Writing Center’s Web site, and click on the appropriate link. If you can’t attend a live workshop, you can always access the archived link by visiting our Web site for more details.
Common workshop topics include the following:

- Research Strategies
- Major Writing Errors and How to Avoid Them
- Preparing for College-Level Writing
- Writing Lab Reports
- Hallmarks of Effective Writing
- How to Effectively Use Writing Center Resources
- Writing Concisely
- Writing Effective Thesis Statements
- How to Beat Writer’s Block
- ELL Workshop Series
- And more! New resources are added on a regular basis.

**English Language Learners (ELL) Program and Resources**

The Writing Center offers innovative, nurturing, and rigorous support for students who are English Language Learners (ELL) and writers. According to the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s statement on second language writing and writers, ELL writers range from “international visa students, refugees, and permanent residents as well as naturalized and native-born citizens of the United States and Canada” (2009). Learning English in an academic setting can be extremely challenging and time intensive. However, you’re not alone. The dedicated ELL Writing Center staff provides exceptional, student-centered support to make the language learning process an enriching and helpful process.

To learn more about ELL services, be sure to refer to Chapter 9, *Support for English Language Learners*, pp. 67–86.

The ELL program offers the following primary services:

- **Personalized Language Plans**: Students submit a sample of writing and receive a writing analysis and goals for skill
development along with resources for ongoing and long-term language learning.

- **Workshop and forum series:** One-hour workshops are tailored to the specific learning needs of ELL students. Past topics have ranged from “Captioning a Photo: Developing Well-Ordered and Detailed Paragraphs” to “In Your Own Words: Paraphrasing, Summarizing, and Avoiding Plagiarism.”

- **Live Tutoring and one-on-one consultation:** Live Tutoring services as well as one-on-one tutor support are available and are customized for learners’ needs.

- **ELL-specific resources:** The KU Writing Center’s Web site updates and archives handouts, video tutorials, and other ELL writing resources for your access.

**Writing Coach Program**

The Writing Coach program embeds a trained writing coach in an online class to guide students’ writing and to inform students about the range of Writing Center resources. As Writing Center ambassadors, writing coaches do not review, edit, or proofread individual papers; such aid would provide only temporary, “emergency-room” writing care. Instead, the writing coach and the Writing Center provide writing “health care” for a lifetime, with an emphasis on preventative measure, empowering Kaplan University students to become better writers and thinkers.

The writing coach provides editorial style and citation tips, links to writing resources, and information about Writing Center workshops. The writing coach establishes a presence in the classroom by uploading content to Doc Sharing within the online course platform, posting announcements, establishing a Discussion Board thread, and sending e-mail to students.

After the writing coach establishes a presence in the classroom, students can initiate contact with the coach, thus beginning a dialogue for the semester. Though the writing coach might visit a live seminar early in the term, the dialogue with students occurs primarily
via e-mail and through telephone and AOL Instant Messenger (AIM) conference and weekly AIM “office hours.”

The writing coach also helps students understand individual course assignments and prepare accordingly. However, the goal of such interaction is not simply for the student to succeed on a single paper but to help the student internalize and “own” the writing process.

Thus, the writing coach best serves the student as the student prepares to write, not after the writing process is under way and problems arise.

Ultimately, the writing coach’s job is to become obsolete as the student and instructor learn how to best use Writing Center resources. The Writing Coach program’s primary goal ensures that students take an active role in the learning process, which is one of the primary goals of the Writing Center: to empower students to take ownership of their learning by understanding how they write and what resources are available at Kaplan University.

**Writing Fundamentals Program**

The Writing Fundamentals program is designed to provide support for students needing help with the basics of writing, those foundational skills that help writers create clear, effective texts that appeal to a specific audience. Perhaps you have been out of a formal education setting for a while and need a refresher on skills such as development, organization, or grammar. Or, perhaps you find essay assignments intimidating and difficult to begin. Writing Fundamentals provides you with a supportive introduction or review of some of the foundations for successful writing practices.

Writing Fundamentals resources are broken down into manageable chunks or steps by select Writing Center tutors. Understanding and applying these concepts provide writers with a foundation they will use to communicate effectively throughout their lives—in academia, the workplace, and beyond. Writing Fundamentals also provides support through the Writing Fundamentals Outreach Program,
where tutors meet one-on-one with students to create and support plans to improve students’ writing.

A brief overview of Writing Fundamentals services includes the following:

- **One-on-one consultation:** Live Tutoring services as well as one-on-one tutor support are available and are customized for Writing Fundamentals’ student needs.
- **Fundamentals-specific resources:** The KU Writing Center’s Web site provides handouts, video tutorials, and links to workshops (synchronous and asynchronous), as well as other writing resources.

**WHEN TO USE THE WRITING CENTER’S SERVICES**

To continue the metaphor of the Writing Center’s “menu of services,” knowing when to take advantage of the Writing Center’s services is a lot like going out to a fancy dinner: You make the reservation, get dressed up, enjoy four-courses, and then kick back and relax as you take your coffee with cream and a delectable dessert.

When you’re at a restaurant, you probably know when to order the appetizer, enjoy the main course, or dig into the double-chocolate gelato. Although the order and structure of the Writing Center’s services aren’t as formulaic or as laid back as drinks and dessert, there is a great advantage to using certain services during different stages in the writing process.

This section focuses on recommendations for how to get the most out of your Writing Center visit based on where you’re at in the writing process. In fact, based on experience, the most beneficial time to use the Paper Review service is during the middle stages of the writing process, not at the very end. It is also most helpful to you if you work on several drafts of your paper instead of one rushed draft.

Lastly, it bears repeating that the writing process is a recursive process; in other words, you’ll brainstorm, prewrite, draft, revise, edit, and publish your work at multiple points while writing a paper or Dis-
cussion Board post. In fact, the writing process is often displayed as a circle because writers bounce around and circle through the different stages of writing. The following recommendations are just that—recommendations. You might find another process that works just as well for you, so have fun and explore the many Writing Center resources available.

**Brainstorming and Prewriting**

- Meet with a **live tutor** or your instructor first to brainstorm ideas or topics for your paper.
- Conduct preliminary research in the **KU Online Library**.
- Meet with a **live tutor** to craft a working thesis and outline.

**Drafting**

- Review materials in the **Reference Library** on writing topics you are unsure about; go back to **Live Tutoring** for clarification or ask your question through the **Q&A Service**.
- Write your first draft.
- Submit the first draft to the **Paper Review service**. It also helps to ask a friend, coworker, or family member to review a draft as well.

**Revising**

- Revise the first draft based on the holistic comments from the **Paper Review service**.
- Review materials in the **Reference Library** on writing topics you are unsure about. In addition, take a peek at sample essays within the mode of writing you’re working on to see how other writers have approached their audiences.
- Return to **Live Tutoring** for clarification or ask your question through the **Q&A Service**.
Editing and Publication

- Edit second and subsequent drafts by taking advantage of the Reference Library’s comprehensive conventions tutorials (grammar, mechanics, and style).
- To gain confidence in your progress so far, consider visiting Live Tutoring one last time to ask targeted questions about your final draft.
- Last, but not least, before turning in your final draft, carefully proofread your paper by looking for grammar patterns you have been advised about from the Paper Review service tutors during the drafting and revising stages.

WRAPPING IT UP

Now that you have a better idea of what’s on the Writing Center “menu” of resources, the hope is that you’ll become a regular. Don’t hesitate to ask the Writing Center staff questions about existing services. You can always reach the Writing Center staff with your questions by composing an e-mail to KUWC@kaplan.edu with the subject line, “Q&A.”

The Writing Center staff cannot wait to meet you and help you on your learning journey!

References

Kaplan University has a wonderfully diverse online culture that includes international and multilingual students who are learning English while learning the content for their courses. If you are multilingual and English is not your strongest language, you are on a challenging but certainly worthwhile journey. At Kaplan University, the faculty and staff understand and appreciate the challenges nonnative English speakers face while studying at an English-speaking university. To add to the challenge, online courses place great emphasis on writing. Nearly all communications with your instructors and peers at Kaplan are written, so this chapter is dedicated to helping you find the tools you need to learn and master Standard American English.

In this chapter, you will learn about one of the most common writing assignments in English, the essay, as well as how to develop a thesis statement, form an argument, and approach writing as a process. Additionally, you will find strategies for editing the most troubling aspects of English grammar. With effort, you will develop more confidence and control over the English language. Whenever you have questions or need more information, remember that writing help is available through the Writing Center.
In your classes, you will be assigned essays and research papers that will ask you to demonstrate mastery over a subject. Essays reveal your command over Standard American English as well as your credibility as an ethical and trustworthy researcher, writer, and student. (For more information on Standard American English, see Chapter 17, *Grammar, Mechanics, and Spelling*, pp. 221–296.) These elements are assessed in addition to the content of your papers. Although you might not write essays in your profession, the basic writing concepts still apply. Most professional letters, proposals, articles, appeals, plans, reports, and even your résumé and cover letter need the elements of sound writing: (1) a thesis, (2) an argument, (3) an appeal to the reader, and (4) audience awareness. Approaching all writing as a process ensures that your final product is clear and meaningful. These four aspects of writing are explained in more detail in the following sections.

**Thesis Statements**

All papers need a thesis, which is the paper’s main idea. The thesis evolves throughout the writing process. During the prewriting stage, you write what you already know about a topic then brainstorm new ideas that lead to your main idea. The search-and-discovery process that happens when narrowing prewriting to one main idea is a lot like snorkeling or spear fishing—the writer must look through a special lens to focus and then grasp the idea.

The thesis is the reason the essay exists; it is both the possibility that you want to substantiate and the claim that you want to convince readers to accept. Do you see the paradox? The thesis is both an uncertainty and a conviction, which is why the writing process is so important; it resolves this contradiction. During the drafting stage, the thesis is the premise that guides your search for information and your new understanding about a subject. During revision, however, you solidify your thesis so it is the unifying point in the
paper—it determines your purpose, organizational plan (the thesis statement), and your argument (the supporting reasoning and evidence).

**Arguments**
The content of an English paper is the argument. Essays argue a point. An essay’s argument is not a battle, a fight, or even a disagreement. The goal is not to win. Rather, an essay’s argument exposes a new way to understand a subject, taking into consideration any existing or different perspectives on that subject. An argument is, therefore, like a conversation, and your purpose is to make clear your position within this conversation. To do this, you need to state your position early in the paper, such as at the end of the introduction, and then sustain this viewpoint throughout the essay. While doing this, it is crucial to keep the reader engaged. You must also show you are being fair and reasonable by considering other viewpoints and conceding or refuting those other viewpoints. Research-based essays, for example, should include expert opinions or authoritative examples, such as statistics, research study results, or historical facts, to help support your argument and appeal to your readers.

---

**STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

**What Is a Thesis Statement?**
A thesis, sometimes called a thesis statement, is generally one or two sentences that state the main idea of a paper. Usually, the thesis appears in the introductory paragraph.
because it is like a compass for the paper in that it tells readers the direction the paper will take on a particular topic. It takes some practice to craft a thesis; for more information about how to do just that, see Chapter 14, Essay Development, pp. 159–204.

**Appealing to Your Readers**

You can use the following strategies to appeal to your English-speaking readers. Use them when appropriate given your particular subject matter, audience, and purpose:

- **Facts**: Verifiable data or statistics; the details of an event that happened
- **Opinions**: Personal interpretations of facts such as predictions or analyses
- **Anecdotes**: Narratives of one-time or recurring events
- **Assertions**: A forceful statement that something is so
- **Allusions**: A reference to a literary piece or a cultural or commonly known event
- **Analogies and metaphors**: Direct or indirect comparisons of two or more things or ideas
- **Authority**: The opinion of an expert or famous person

Vocabulary choices also affect an essay’s appeal. The best way to develop your academic vocabulary is to read academic or professional papers and to write and have your work read by native speakers, such as peers or Writing Center tutors (who are Kaplan University professors). Native speakers can provide feedback on the areas that might need further clarification due to inappropriate phrasing choices.

ELL writers can write with confidence knowing that Kaplan University is a growing, multicultural, and global educational institution. It is not expected that anyone lose his or her accent entirely or compromise any features that make a person’s voice unique. The more you write for native speakers, the better you will become at making
choices that appeal to their sensibilities. Native speakers must do the same. As the social and political climate evolves and we are left to consider dynamic ideas, the American audience must adjust accordingly as well.

**WORDS FROM WRITERS**

**Full Exposure**

“Much of my personal writing exposes my most vulnerable feelings of loneliness, fear, and the uncertainty that is part of my human experience. Even my professional writing—even e-mails I type when I’m advocating for something at work—is a risk. By writing them, I am accepting the possibility that someone might disagree with me, that I won’t get what I want, and that I’ll be able to see the holes in my arguments right there in black and white. Sometimes, meaningful writing seems so painful that I procrastinate and hole up under the covers or stare at the ceiling in a rebellious refusal to work.

The only antidote I have found to the poisonous self-doubt that prevents me from sharing my truth is to make sure what I am writing is always rooted in love for the reader and/or the people for whom I am advocating in my writing. When my writing is grounded in something greater than my own ego, I can always move beyond fear that I am wrong or that what I have to say might not be good enough. I know deep down that my love is enough at any given moment. It really must be because it’s all I have to give.”

—Marisa Wall, 7th- and 8th-Grade Writing Teacher

**Audience Awareness**

Awareness of your audience or readers is essential to the success of your essay. Try to avoid seeing your readers as just your professors or classmates who are writing the same assignment. Instead, write beyond the assignment; make it your own, and consider your readers educated professionals who care about you and what you have to say. Your readers may have opposing viewpoints, too. These are the people you need to convince, and this is why being aware of your audience is so important. The reader needs to believe what you are saying,
feel connected to the argument, and consider it logical. These three appeals, historically known as **ethos** (credibility), **pathos** (emotion), and **logos** (logic), are rooted in the philosophy of Aristotle (Greece, 384–322 BCE), who is revered by many as the founder of democracy.

In some cultures, it might not be acceptable to make an argument that is critical of the government, but in other countries, questioning and being critical of those in power is a fundamental element of democracy. Writing in your classes, therefore, prepares you for expressing your voice in a democratic society. The skills required for writing effective arguments in English are critical-thinking skills. This is how we, as a community of writers and thinkers, can best participate in professional, academic, and social discussions.

Essays can be exercises in questioning authority, not just the government but any institution that creates public policy or professional practices. In fact, your professors will expect you to take positions on controversial social, political, and professional issues. If this makes you uncomfortable, consider your essay as a new way to think and see a subject. After writing an essay, writers naturally reflect on their ideas. Many will come away with completely new or renewed viewpoints. Thesis statements and arguments do not need to be an absolute and unwavering proclamation that defines the writer or limits the points of view. Rather, it is one valid viewpoint among many on a controversial issue. To learn more about how to write to various audiences, please see Chapter 7, *Audience*, pp. 49–53.

**WRITING AS A PROCESS**

Writing as a process means writing in stages over time. Honoring the time spent in the writing process is like learning more about a person. When you meet someone new, you don’t begin by listing your qualities. Instead, you reach a deeper understanding over time. In the case of writing, this time allows you to understand not only an overview of your topic but also its nuances. An essay is an attempt to know something more deeply. The English term *essay* comes from the French verb
essayer, which means “to try.” In French, an essai is literally an attempt. Think about what the word for essay is in your native language. Does it relate to a way to figure out something? Each stage of the writing process helps you become more familiar with your subject and further determine your point of view. The result of this effort is having more to say, resulting in an essay that demonstrates critical and creative thinking.

Like sailing, the writing process allows you to navigate the waters of your imagination while keeping your eyes fixed on one main idea or destination. To learn more about how to work through the stages of the writing process, see Chapter 6, The Writing Process, pp. 35–47.

EDITING YOUR ESSAY

After you draft and revise your essay, you need to focus on sentence structure and edit for clarity and conciseness. The following sections cover aspects of the sentence that are most problematic for English Language Learners.

Do My Sentences Have the Correct Word Order?

Word order is different in various languages; however, word order most often refers to the position of the subject and object in relation to the main verb. The English sentence is said to have a subject verb object (SVO) order. Therefore, when composing a declarative sen-
sentence (a sentence that makes a statement), the subject of the sentence comes first, the verb second, and the object follows.

The **subject** (S) of the sentence states who or what performs the action or the main verb. For instance, in the sentence *The cat caught the mouse*, *cat* is the subject, *caught* is the verb, and *mouse* is the object. In the English language, the subject is most often a noun or noun phrase that comes at the beginning of a main clause or simple sentence.

The **main verb** (V) of the sentence conveys the action performed by the subject. In English, the verb usually comes right after the subject. Verbs also have several tenses, such as past, present, and future.

The **object** (O) of the sentence is a word or phrase that refers to the person or thing receiving the action of the verb. For example, *The boy hit the ball*. In this sentence, *ball* is the part of the sentence that receives the action; therefore, it is the object of the sentence.

It is important to keep in mind that not all sentences fit into this simple SVO formula. Your Writing Center tutors can assist you when it comes to learning more about the complexities of word order and sentence structure.

**Are My Adverbs Positioned Properly?**

Adverbs, which qualify verbs, are usually placed after the verb and often end with the suffix –ly.

Examples:

She drove *carefully*. (Carefully ends in –ly and follows the verb.)

Robert spoke *softly*. (Softly ends in –ly and follows the verb.)

**Trouble Spots with Adverbs**

Adverbs of manner usually follow the verbs they qualify.

Example:

He runs *very fast*. 
Adverbs of frequency go between the subject and the verb.

Example:
   She always comes early.

Adverbs with “to be” verbs (am, are, is, was, were, been) follow the verb.

Example:
   He is always on time.

Adverbs with compound verbs go between the helping verb and the main verb.

Example:
   He will rarely come to class late.

Are My Adjectives Positioned Properly?
Adjectives, which qualify nouns, are usually placed before the noun.

Examples:
   He has a brand-new, red car.

   The nice girl came to the party.

Adjectives with “to be” verbs (am, are, is, was, were, been) follow the verb.

Example:
   The car is new.

Trouble Spots with Adjectives
Sometimes qualifying adjectives are needed to make a sentence clear, especially when comparing two people or things as shown next.

- Adjectives used to compare two nouns
  - For short adjectives (one or two syllables), add –er to the adjective.
    Example:
    Mary is older than Lucy.
For long adjectives (more than two syllables), add more to the adjective.
Example:
Mary is more beautiful than Lucy.

Adjectives used to show an object is “the most” out of many
- For short adjectives (one or two syllables), add –est to the adjective.
  Example:
  Mary is the oldest child in her family.
- For long adjectives (more than two syllables), add most in front of the adjective.
  Example:
  Mary is the most beautiful of all the children.

Are My Word Forms Correct?
Word forms relate to a word’s function in a sentence. The function of a noun is to name something, the function of a verb is to show action, the function of an adjective is to modify something, and so on. You can use the following techniques to overcome misusing a word form (such as using a noun or adjective in place of an adverb):

1. Read your draft aloud sentence by sentence, and listen for the main words, such as nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and connecting words. Reading to a native speaker, or having a native speaker read aloud to you might also help you identify any word form errors.

2. Become familiar with word families. Word families are different variations of the same word and can be used as different parts of speech as well. Here are some examples of word families:
Checking for correct word form and word order often goes hand in hand. So, the next time your sentence does not “sound” right, be sure the forms for each part of the sentence are correct. This is the perfect place for you to use your dictionary if you have questions. You can also take advantage of the Writing Center’s Q&A Service.

**Are My Sentences Complete? Are There Any Fragments?**

A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete idea. A sentence must have a subject and a conjugated verb. The verb expresses the action and the subject performs the action. In addition to your grammar check program, you can use some additional techniques to check for sentence accuracy. For example, you might print a hard copy of your work, and go through each of your sentences highlighting your subjects one color and your verbs another.

**Example:**

1. Mary **traveled** to Mexico last year.

2. Once **arrived**, she **called** her friend Jose Luis.

In sentence 1, we see a subject (Mary) before the verb (traveled). This is a well-structured sentence because it meets the requirement of a sentence having a subject and verb. In addition, this sentence presents a complete idea.

In sentence 2, we see two verbs (arrived, called) with one subject (she) in between the two verbs. Because this violates the English SVO
word order, this group of words should send up a red flag that something is wrong with its structure.

Revised, this sentence would read:

*Once she arrived, she called her friend Jose Luis.*

**Trouble Spots with Sentences**

**Sentence fragments** are passages that begin with a capital letter and end with a period or other end mark but do not have all the elements needed for a complete sentence or clause. There are two types of fragments.

A **phrase fragment** is a group of words that does not have a subject and verb.

Examples:

*Came home late.* (No subject)

*The man on the street.* (No verb)

A **clause fragment** is a group of words that contains a subject and verb but cannot stand alone because it begins with a connecting word, such as *since, because,* or *when.*

Examples:

*Because I love to bake.* (This is not a complete thought. *Because* indicates this clause needs to be connected to another clause, such as *I bought a new oven because I like to bake.*)

*When it stopped snowing.* (This is not a complete thought. *When* indicates this clause needs to be connected to another clause, such as *They plowed the roads when it stopped snowing.*)

**Are My Verbs in the Correct Tense and Form?**

Verbs convey the action of the sentence. The action can be physical, mental, or a state of being. The sentence *He is happy* illustrates a state
of being. Notice that because he is a singular subject noun, the verb is also in its singular form. The sentence They are happy uses plural subject and verb forms. The verb must always “agree” with the subject in this way. Verbs also convey the time an action took place, such as whether it was in the past or the present. All sentences require a verb.

**Trouble Spots with Verb Forms and Tenses**

Every subject is either a noun or pronoun, so subjects are in either the plural (two or more) or the singular (one) form. Therefore, to have subject-verb agreement, the verb that follows the subject must agree in number with the subject by either being in the plural form or singular form. For example, “The boy studies hard.” In this sentence, both the subject and verb are singular.

**Tense** is a verb conjugated to convey the time of the action: past, present, or future: They ran; they run or they are running; they will run. **Tense switching** (a problem for ELL students) is when there is an unintentional switch of tenses during discourse.

Example:

> Lawrence studies and works very hard every day.
> Yesterday, he got up at 6 a.m. and go to work for eight hours. After work, he went to visit his friend and go out to dinner. (The simple present and past simple tense are not used accurately.)

An edited version would be the following:

> Lawrence studies and works very hard every day.
> Yesterday, he got up at 6 a.m. and went to work for eight hours. After work, he went to visit his friend and went out to dinner.

*Do* and *did* are used as auxiliary verbs for the simple present and simple past tenses. These are **helping verbs** that help these tenses to form negatives and questions.
Examples:

Leonard eats dinner at 7 p.m. every day. (Simple present tense)

Does Leonard eat dinner at 7 p.m. every day?

Leonard does not eat dinner at 7 p.m.

Leonard ate dinner at 7 p.m. yesterday. (simple past tense)

Did Leonard eat dinner at 7 p.m. yesterday?

Leonard did not eat dinner at 7 p.m. yesterday.

Are My Proper Nouns Capitalized Appropriately?

In English, you capitalize all proper nouns, which are nouns that name a particular person, place, or thing. Sometimes it is hard to tell what a proper noun is. One way to know is to ask how many persons, things, or ideas are there with the name.

Example:

She lives in a white house. (There are many white houses in the world.)

She lives in the White House. (There is only one White House in Washington, D.C.)

In addition to proper nouns, you capitalize other nouns like the months of the year (June, July, or March) and the days of the week (Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday), but you do not capitalize the seasons of the year (spring, fall, or summer).
Are My Possessive Nouns Accurately Written?
Possessive nouns use an apostrophe (‘) and an –s at the end of the noun to show possession.

Example:

*I know that student’s name.* (Use ‘s with singular form nouns.)

*I know those students’ names.* (Use s’ with plural form nouns.)

An irregular plural noun is a plural noun that does not end in –s. With these nouns, use ‘s.

Example:

*The children’s toys were all over the floor.* (The noun children is an irregular plural noun that does not end in –s, so the possessive form uses ‘s at the end of the noun.)

Am I Using the Correct Pronouns to Replace My Nouns?
Pronouns are words that take the place of a noun. There are many kinds of pronouns, such as *he, she, my, your,* and *their.* They are categorized according to the noun you want to replace.

Trouble Spots with Various Types of Pronouns
Due to the various types of pronouns in the English language, it is easy for ELL students to get confused as to which pronoun to use.

Personal pronouns (*I, you, he, she, we,* and *they*) replace the nouns that name persons.

Example:

*Mary loves to watch movies.*

*She loves to watch movies.* (*She* replaces the noun Mary.)
I, you, he, she, we, and they replace nouns that generally are found in front of the main verb of the sentence. I, you, he, she, it, we, and they are generally found after the sentences’ main verbs.

Example:

Mary gave Joseph a present. (Mary and Joseph are both personal nouns.)

She gave him a present. (She replaces the noun Mary and him replaces the noun Joseph.)

**Reflexive pronouns** (myself, yourself, herself, himself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, and themselves) indicate that the person who performs the action of the verb is the same person who receives the action.

Example:

Mary cut Mary. (Mary performs the action and receives the action.)

Mary cut herself. (Herself refers to Mary as the receiver of the action.)

**Possessive pronouns** (my, your, his, her, its, our, and their) are placed in front of the noun they qualify, and they indicate possession.

Example:

Lidia lives in my house. (My tells whose house it is.)

Editing and proofreading your essay allow you to bring all the details into focus so that your work and writing as a whole puts forth a unified and convincing argument that appeals to your readers. Every element of your work, from your stylistic choices to the structure and organization, combine for a common goal. Revising a paper involves taking a look at larger, more structural issues in your writing, whereas editing focuses on the smaller (but just as important) details, such as
Supplementing English Language learners' grammar and mechanics. Always be sure to revise your writing before you spend time editing.

**ELL Tutoring and Outreach Program through the KU Writing Center**

To be the best writer you can be, your first strategy should be to write regularly. The very act of writing stimulates the brain in the same way that learning does. Writing leads to “Aha!” moments for all, and non-native speakers arguably even more so. Imagine being a racecar driver and being given a bus to drive around the track. You are a skilled driver who knows the road and where you want to end up, but in this new vehicle, all the curves feel different, even cumbersome. The accelerator, gears, even the sights through the mirrors are different. Language is a vehicle, and whether you are driving one that is natural to you or a foreign one that feels awkward, with attention, persistence, and patience, you can and will master your road. New ways of seeing the world are waiting for you.

English might be your second language, or your third, or your fourth, but it need not ever inhibit you. You are in route to a higher degree to advance your career, and in the United States, Standard American English is the ideal language to get you where you want to go. Language is, of course, a far bigger vehicle than a car or even a bus; it is a cultural phenomenon, a science, and an art. You can study the form and learn the rules, but you must also position yourself in the middle of it, embrace the unfamiliar nuances, and keep your focus on your goals. This allows you to express yourself honestly, advance your knowledge, and demonstrate your mastery over a subject.

The Writing Center ELL Tutoring and Outreach Program exists to help you accomplish these goals by providing resources and services for developing a stronger command over your writing while also helping you discover your voice in Standard American English. Every day that you are writing, getting ready to write, or reading what you have written, the Writing Center’s virtual doors are open to you. Help
is always available through online documents and media as well as online tutors. You can be an incoming freshman, an upperclassman, a transfer student, or a graduate student returning for a higher degree after years in a profession. You can be a new immigrant to the United States, an international student living here temporarily, or a longtime resident or native citizen; the Writing Center has something for everyone, and the ELL Tutoring and Outreach Program was designed with great consideration of student diversity. English Language Learners have their own linguistic and educational background and goals; the Writing Center’s ELL program celebrates this and is customized accordingly to be personal and responsive to every student’s unique needs.

The ELL Tutoring and Outreach Program Services
At Kaplan University, the ELL Tutoring and Outreach Program can be found within the Writing Center. There, you will find handouts and media-rich resources for immediate viewing and download. You will also find a calendar of synchronous (live) workshop events along with archived recordings of recent ELL workshops. If you prefer to work directly with a tutor, you can attend an ELL Live Tutoring session, make an appointment for a one-on-one consultation, or request an ELL Personalized Language Plan. Highly qualified ELL tutors staff all of these services.

At Kaplan University, a student must first self-disclose as being an English Language Learner before a professor can initiate a referral for ELL support. Please—if you need help with the English language, reach out to an instructor, advisor, or the Writing Center right away. Once you take the first step, you will find a welcoming environment in which to learn, practice, and master the English language. Here is an overview of the ELL program’s primary resources:

- **ELL Personalized Language Plan (PLP):** Welcomes ELL students and is issued to any student referred by a Kaplan University professor, advisor, or administrator. ELL students may
also request a PLP on their own. Upon a referral or request, an ELL tutor analyzes the submitted writing sample and sets forth goals that students can apply immediately to advance their command of English. With this, the PLP provides strategies and resources for ongoing and advanced language learning along with contact and program information for continued support through the ELL Tutoring and Outreach Program.

- **PELL One-on-One Consultation:** Offers personalized support. ELL students can request a 30-minute consultation with an ELL tutor regarding their current writing projects at any stage of the writing process. Consultations occur in an Adobe Connect online meeting room where students can speak to a tutor using audio and share their writing by pasting it to a board or uploading it as a .pdf document. To schedule a one-on-one tutorial, visit the Writing Center for ELL program contact information.

- **PELL Live Tutoring:** ELL students can attend a Live Tutoring session, which occurs in an Adobe Connect meeting room where students may speak to tutors using audio and share their writing by pasting or uploading it in the room.

- **PELL Workshop and Forum Series:** Provides a safe place for nonnative speakers to write, question, and discuss college-level English. ELL students are invited to come, meet other members of Kaplan University’s international and multilingual community, collaborate on interesting workshop activities, and become more fluent and confident writers. The Writing Center can provide you with a list of current workshops offered throughout the month as well as access to archived recordings of previous workshops, including the following:
  - Captioning a Photograph: Developing Cohesive and Detailed Paragraphs
  - In Your Own Words: Paraphrasing, Summarizing, and Avoiding Plagiarism
Research Strategies: Finding and Using Sources from the KU Library
Proposing a Solution: Crafting an Essay with a Persuasive Thesis and Logical Organization
Verbs That Behave Like Nouns: Recognizing and Using Gerunds and Infinitives
Text Coding: A Reading Strategy for Writers

Writing Help Is Here!
In conjunction with the Writing Center’s services for all students, including the Q&A Service and Paper Review service, the ELL Tutoring and Outreach Program provides a safe place for English Language Learners to work on their command of English while learning the content in their courses. The old English adage, what you put into something, you get out of it threefold, is true—the effort you make will return to you bountifully. Congratulations on the choices you have made thus far that have led you here. As you continue your studies, please know that the Kaplan University Writing Center and the ELL Tutoring and Outreach Program are at your service!
What does it take to do well in your classes? Many students will say such things as “a good instructor,” or “hard work,” or “you have to like the course.” All of these things are important, but developing good reading habits can make all the difference when we talk about academic success.

GOOD STUDY HABITS
Grades depend almost as much on effort as they do on “smarts.” Even if you are an excellent student, you might be able to improve your reading skills, which will increase your comprehension and even help you develop stronger writing skills. Students who earn good grades tend to work smarter, not just longer or harder. There are specific tools you can learn for successful reading, but it is helpful to set reasonable goals and approach assignments with purpose and a positive attitude. A few suggestions follow:

- **Tell yourself that the assignment is manageable.** Avoid negative thoughts such as “I’ll never understand this,” or “This looks boring.” Negativity almost always guarantees poor concentration. Try to find a way to connect with the subject. Then stay active while reading by questioning or challenging the authors as you move through the materials.

- **Set goals for yourself.** Don’t start an assignment and plan to work on it indefinitely. Instead, decide how much is reasonable to cover in one sitting and when you expect to finish.
- **Read with a purpose.** If you are looking for specific information as you read, it is easier to stay focused on the material. Try taking the headings of each section and turning them into questions. For instance, if you are reading an essay called “Harvesting Techniques of Cranberry Growers,” ask yourself, “What are the harvesting techniques of cranberry growers?” Then you have a purpose for reading the section.

Now that you are ready to read, what tools can you use to help you understand and retain what you are reading? The reading strategies discussed in the following sections will successfully guide you on your path to academic success.

**ANNOTATING**

Annotating is a valuable tool for improving reading comprehension and retention. Whether you need to read an entire book or a short assignment, annotations will help you to get the most out of a reading assignment. You might find that studying and test taking become much easier when you follow these simple steps:

1. **Gather your supplies.** Annotation requires the use of highlighters and pens or pencils. Sticky notes are also helpful for writing notes and marking pages, especially if you cannot write in the book.

2. **Read the first paragraph and highlight the main idea.** The main idea is usually a single sentence that effectively sums up what the passage is saying. Do this for each paragraph in your reading.

3. **Read over the highlighted main ideas.** With a pen or pencil, write a short summary in the margins. Try turning the book sideways for more room.

4. **Underline important ideas.** For example, underline recurring words or themes. If you are annotating literature, identify metaphors, similes, and other literary devices.
5. **Circle the main words or phrases that the page discusses.** This is especially helpful when you are reviewing the passage before an exam.

6. **Make notes to yourself in the margins as you read.** Write any questions or comments next to each passage. Write a question mark (?) above words that you are not familiar with, and look up their definitions when you are done with each page.

Do the same for each page of reading, but be careful not to write so many notes on a page that it becomes difficult to read. Try using different pen, highlighter, or sticky note colors for specific purposes. When it comes time to study, read margin notes and underlined/circled portions, and you will be very glad that you took the time to learn the art of annotation. Figure 10.1 is an example of what an annotated page may look like.

---

**Figure 10.1: The Art of Annotation**
PYRAMID NOTES

This simple note-taking strategy allows you to analyze your reading in an orderly manner. The top-to-bottom method creates a visual pyramid that breaks down the subject, main idea, supporting details, and developing details. It is then simple to summarize, synthesize, respond, or reflect upon your reading. The following steps describe how to employ this note-taking strategy. Figure 10.2 provides an illustrative description of this strategy.

1. Write the subject of your reading at the center and top of a sheet of paper.
2. Beneath the subject, write the main idea. This is what the author is saying about the subject.
3. Now list the supporting details in columns under the main idea. There will probably be at least three. Use examples and/or quotations that effectively illustrate the main idea.
4. Beneath each of the supporting details, explain how they relate to the main idea. These are known as the developing ideas.

Now you can use the pyramid notes to write a paragraph, draft an essay, or use as a study guide.

Figure 10.2: Pyramid Notes
KEEPING A READING JOURNAL
A reading journal is a record of everything you read, with added comments and analyses. Any notebook will suffice, but some people like to use a hardbound diary or moleskin-style journal. If you are technologically inclined, a word-processor file, blog, or wiki can work nicely. No matter what format you choose, you will use your journal to record what you read, key ideas and quotes from the text, and your own reflections on the material.

There is no standard for what a reading journal should look like, but you might want to include the following pieces of information:

- **Write a short summary of each piece of reading material.** If you are reading a piece of literature, you can copy this from the back cover or abstract. If you are reading a textbook, note that chapters are often summarized at their beginnings.

- **Copy quotes that capture essential points in the text.** If you have been annotating while you read, you can copy any highlighted or underlined portions when you are done. Be sure to record the page number of each quote.

- **Write down any questions you have.** Sometimes what you read leaves unanswered questions that might lead you to research the material further. These questions can turn into future essays or research projects.

- **Include full citations.** Make sure you have all the pieces of information you’ll need for a bibliography.

- **Write a personal response to the materials.** Try to capture your impressions of why it is (or is not) important and what the author is trying to say. Record any thoughts, arguments, or feelings about what you have read. Just because something is in print doesn’t make it absolute. As a student, it is essential to read critically, actively question what you are reading, and strive to connect in some meaningful way to the materials.
A reading journal can prove to be invaluable in not only your current studies, but also your future academic work as well. Often, material from one class becomes source material for research papers and later classes, and it is always better to have that material at hand, rather than having to reread the book.

**READING RESPONSES**

A reading response can be a separate, reflective piece of writing and differs from a summary in that it requires higher level thinking, a personal connection, and *metacognition*, or thinking about thinking. You can write a reading response in many different formats, but the following two meet the preceding requirements: The *hexagonal essay* is particularly effective for a response to a piece of literature, and the *two-column response* is excellent for all kinds of texts.

**Hexagonal Essay**

This reading response allows you to respond to a piece of literature from six different perspectives that correspond to the six levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy:

1. **Basic knowledge**: Do you understand all the terms? Can you identify and name characters? If you have annotated or kept a journal while reading, you are ready to move through the next five levels using the hexagonal essay method.

2. **Comprehension**: When reading a literary piece, you can probably visualize the scene(s) and plot. For the first part of your reading response, paraphrase (put in your own words) or summarize (discuss main ideas from the reading). At this stage, you might have questions or not completely understand the story.

3. **Application**: While reading, you might have connected with the story in some way, perhaps recognizing familiar themes or putting yourself in a character’s place. For the second part of your reading response, try to discuss the theme as you understand
it and as it relates to you. Some possible ways to start this response might be *This story reminds me of my sister when*... or *I kept thinking about how similar I am to the main character because*...

4. **Analysis:** For the third part of your reading response, begin to actively compare and contrast with other pieces of literature and your personal experience(s), analyze character motivations, and identify any cause-and-effect patterns. Your response might take the form of questions or might lead you to think further about your initial summary of the story.

5. **Synthesis:** This is the stage of the hexagonal essay where you are encouraged to think more deeply about the story itself. Has your perspective changed from when you first began your reading response? Reread the first part of your hexagonal essay and reflect upon what you have written. Then summarize again, trying to answer any questions you might have initially asked. Often, the synthesis portion becomes an entirely new reflection upon the story. You might have formed new opinions, drawn different conclusions, or even decided to change your writing style.

6. **Evaluation:** Now is the time to evaluate the theme(s) and discuss your opinions. Do you have any moral or value judgments to express? Have you gained any insights? For this final step in the reading response, decide if the reading has merit. Was it compelling? Have you changed from reading the article?

**Two-Column Response**

This reading response requires you to select specific quotes from the text and then respond to each in one or two sentences. Accurate copying of a quote requires careful reading, and responding to a quote requires careful thinking.

Fold a piece of paper in half vertically, and copy a quote from your reading into the left column. Try to choose one that leaps out at you or inspires a comment or question. Be sure to write the page number
after it. In the right column, write what is in your head as you read the quote. Sometimes your response will be a paraphrasing of the quote, but you might find yourself questioning the author, commenting on the action of a character, or predicting an outcome. The two-column response is a simple way to actively puzzle over and pose questions, remember key portions of a text, and effectively learn the material.

**ONLINE READING HABITS**

Although the previous methods described are appropriate for reading course material, when you do online research, you need to use the search-and-find reading method. Online information is not stored or presented in a linear manner, so you have to think about possible connections between the text you are reading and the text you might have just read, or one that might contain the information you are looking for. A few considerations when searching for information on the Internet include:

1. **Start narrow.** Internet search engines are very effective. You can type in a word and within a few moments you will have thousands of pages to look at, most of which will not contain the information you need. If you know what you want, ask for it as precisely as possible.

2. **Use exact phrases.** Sentences and phrases can be very predictable and tend to be memorable as well. Use the exact phrase field in a search engine, or place quotation marks around the phrase you want to search. For example, instead of using felo-

3. **Follow citations.** Many online articles cite their sources. If you found a valuable piece of information, more than likely the author has listed the source at the end of the article. Why not go straight
to the source yourself? Following citations can be a very useful and speedy way to get a lot of valid information. This brings us to the most important part of search-and-find reading—evaluating your sources.

4. **Evaluate your sources.** Putting documents and pages on the Internet is easy, cheap, and unregulated. This means that many things found on the Web are not reliable. You need to carefully evaluate whatever you find. When researching, it is always best to stick with professional and scholarly journals, articles, and studies. Examine the three-letter suffix found at the end of the Web address:

- **.edu** represents an educational or collegiate site.
- **.gov** denotes a government site.
- **.com** indicates a commercial provider.
- **.net** suggests a network.
- **.org** is usually a nonprofit organization.

Can site users change the information? Wikis allow readers to actively add or change information. Wikipedia is helpful for providing an overview of a topic and often has helpful sources listed, but should rarely, if ever, be used as an academic source. Make sure that the author is named and a list of works cited is provided. Try to ascertain if the sources are unbiased and accurate. The burden is on you, the reader, to establish the validity, authorship, and integrity of what you find.

The information available on the Internet can seem overwhelming and endless, so you need to evaluate quickly whether what you are reading is what you need. Learn to scan pages to look for key information in headings, bulleted lists, menu bars, and links. Most well-designed links let you know what to expect when you click on them, as well as give you a way to get back.
In order to get the most from your course materials and research associated with your classes and projects, you have to become an active and engaged reader. To do so means to interact with the text by using annotation techniques and taking notes. Ask questions and make connections! It is this kind of engagement with the text that will make you a stronger reader, and consequently, a stronger writer.