

PROFESSIONAL WRITING

THE COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE WRITING GUIDE



STUDENT TEXT 22-2
MARCH 2024

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PROFESSIONAL WRITING: THE COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE WRITING GUIDE

STUDENT TEXT 22-2

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PREFACE

Effective written communication is a differentiator as a field grade. Written communication not only provides me an opportunity to share ideas within my organization, but also to influence strategic decision makers.

—LTC Dana Gingrich, CGSC Class of 2019.

Professional Writing: The Command and General Staff College Writing Guide aims to help Command and General Staff College (CGSC) students improve their writing skills. But this guide isn't just for CGSC students. It can help all Army professionals craft writing that meets Army standards by being clear, concise, well-organized, and easy to read and understand.¹

This guide's central idea is that writing is a process, not a product.² Whether composing academic essays at Fort Leavenworth or professional products in a tactical unit, the process is the same. Once writers understand the process, they can use it to produce whatever product circumstances demand.³

We designed this guide for writers who already know how to write but want to improve. We assume the reader understands the basics of standard written English. Readers needing help with grammar, spelling, or mechanics should consult a suitable source.

Finally, a word of encouragement. You can write! You will struggle, but all writers do because writing is hard. Do not be disappointed when your writing is not "born perfect."⁴ Writing never is. Rewrite it. Use the process. This guide can help.

PROJECT AUTHORS

¹ Dept. of the Army, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence*, 7.

² Murray, *The Essential Don Murray*, 3-6.

³ Murray, 3-6.

⁴ Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, 83.

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WRITING PROCESS QUICK GUIDE

| | Do these activities... | ...to meet these standards. |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Analyze the task. ✓ Make a writing plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve the purpose. |
| Research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Gather strong evidence. ✓ Avoid bias. ✓ Take organized notes. ✓ Keep track of sources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance a coherent thesis. • Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning. • Cite all sources using correct formatting. |
| Draft | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Write an introduction, main body, and conclusion. ✓ Organize the main body logically. ✓ State claims clearly and support them with evidence and reasoning. ✓ Consider counterarguments. ✓ Integrate sources using quotes, paraphrases, and summaries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve the purpose. • Advance a coherent thesis. • Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning. • Write a clear introduction, main body, and conclusion. • State the thesis early in the introduction. • Arrange paragraphs and sections in a logical order. |
| Revise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Revise for substance and organization. ✓ Writing is thinking. Do more research and drafting if needed. ✓ Murder your darlings. ✓ Revise paragraphs. ✓ Use paragraph transitions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance a coherent thesis. • Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning. • Write a clear introduction, main body, and conclusion. • State the thesis early in the introduction. • Arrange paragraphs and sections in a logical order. • Organize paragraphs around one idea. |
| Edit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Make writing clear. ✓ Prefer simple words and short sentences. ✓ Use concrete language. ✓ Prefer active voice. ✓ Write cohesive sentences. ✓ Omit needless words. ✓ Avoid hedging and throat clearing. ✓ Avoid nominalizations. ✓ Maintain a professional tone. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer clear, concise sentences. • Prefer active voice. • Prefer simple words and omit unnecessary words. • Maintain a professional tone—formal but conversational and confident. • Cite all sources, and format citations correctly. |
| Submit | <p>Before submitting or turning in, confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The essay achieves its purpose. ✓ The introduction and conclusion agree. ✓ The essay meets all administrative requirements (e.g., word count). ✓ Name or ID number is on the paper. ✓ The document is correctly formatted. ✓ The filetype is correct (some professors may ask for a PDF). ✓ All sources are cited. ✓ Citations are complete and accurate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve the purpose. • Advance a coherent thesis. • Use conventional punctuation, spelling, and grammar. • Cite all sources, and format citations correctly. • Format documents correctly. |

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CHAPTER 1

PROFESSIONAL WRITING

Writing is hard work. A clear sentence is no accident. Very few sentences come out right the first time, or even the third time. Remember this in moments of despair. If you find that writing is hard, it's because it is hard.

—William Zinsser

This guide aims to help Command and General Staff College (CGSC) students succeed by writing well. Effective writing skills enable CGSC students to succeed academically. But more importantly, they empower CGSC graduates to excel professionally. Commanders expect field grade officers to write clearly and concisely. This guide prepares field grade writers to meet these demands.

Effective professional writing is purposeful, credible, and clear. *Purposeful* writing achieves its aim by meeting the reader's needs. *Credible* writing is objective and supported by strong evidence and sound reasoning. Finally, *clear* writing is simple, concise, and easy to understand. Purposeful, credible, clear writing meets the academic demands of the CGSC and the professional demands of military leadership.

Writing Myths

Many people have mistaken beliefs about writing.⁵ One of the most common and harmful is that the ability to write well is a rare gift or unique talent. But writing is neither. Writing is a skill that people can learn and improve. Anyone willing to work at it can learn to write well.

Other writing myths include:⁶

Myth: Writing is easy for good writers but hard for weak writers.

Fact: Writing is hard for everyone. Good writers write well because they work hard at it. Their first drafts are just as terrible as everyone else's and require many rewrites. Ernest Hemingway, for example, rewrote the last page of *A Farewell to Arms* 47 times.⁷

Myth: Good writers use big words to sound smart. Simple words sound dumb.

Fact: The best writers use simple, clear, and concise language. Good writing is easy to read and understand, whereas fancy language muddies writing and can often hide weak ideas.

Myth: Only weak writers need feedback.

Fact: All writers benefit from feedback; the best writers seek it out. Feedback helps writers develop and improve. Even successful professional writers get feedback from their editors.

Myth: Good writers have everything figured out before they start writing.

Fact: Writers rarely know exactly what they will write until they write it. Writing is not just a way of communicating—it is a way of learning. Moving ideas from the brain to the page reveals their strengths and weaknesses. The process of rewriting what is on the page strengthens and sharpens the thinking behind it. Essays evolve as writing and thinking become clearer.

⁵ Irvin, "What is 'Academic' Writing?" 4-5; Saint Louis University Writing Services, "10 Myths."

⁶ Irvin, 4-5; Saint Louis University Writing Services.

⁷ Bracken, "A Farewell to Arms."

*Myth: Good writing is beautiful.*⁸

Fact: To be sure, good *literary* writing is beautiful. But people read literature for fun in their personal time. At work, people are busy—they expect effective writing that gets to the point.

Myth: Good writing is a matter of opinion.

Fact: Although *beautiful* writing is a matter of opinion, good *professional* writing is not. Cognitive science research has discovered well-defined strategies that help writers communicate their ideas. These strategies underpin this writing guide.

Writing Standards

To achieve the goal of purposeful, credible, clear writing, writers must meet the CGSC writing standards in four areas of performance: substance, organization, style, and correctness.

Substance is the writing's intellectual content.

- Achieve the purpose.
- Advance a coherent thesis.
- Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning.

Good writing is about
telling the truth.

—Anne Lamott

Organization is how the writer arranges elements and ideas.

- Write a clear introduction, main body, and conclusion.
- State the thesis early and clearly.
- Arrange sections and paragraphs in a logical order.
- Organize paragraphs around one idea.

Style is how the writer communicates ideas through word choice, phrasing, and tone.

- Write clearly so the text is easy to read and understand.
- Prefer clear, concise sentences.
- Prefer simple words and omit unnecessary ones.
- Prefer active voice.
- Maintain a professional tone—formal but conversational and confident.

Correctness is using the conventions of standard written English and citing sources.

- Use conventional punctuation, spelling, and grammar.
- Format documents correctly.
- Cite all sources using correct formatting.

The CGSC writing standards are interdependent and equally important. Although writers may be tempted to focus only on substance while neglecting the other standards, that is a mistake. Even if the substance is strong, commanders will not accept disorganized, confusing, error-ridden writing. Professionals must meet all four standards to achieve the overall goals of purpose, credibility, and clarity.

The Writing Process

The secret to writing is *rewriting*.

Writing is not just turning ideas into words, sentences, and paragraphs. That is *drafting*, which is only one activity in the writing process. All writers draft, and all first drafts are terrible (yes, *all* of them).

⁸ Rogers and Lasky-Fink, *Writing for Busy Readers*, 5-6.

However, good writers use the writing process to rewrite terrible first drafts and make them better. Poor writers do not.

Writing is a *process* that involves six activities: planning, research, drafting, revising, editing, and submitting (Figure 1).

- *Planning* involves assessing the writing task and building a writing plan to accomplish it.
- *Research* is collecting, organizing, and analyzing evidence.
- *Drafting* is turning ideas and facts into words, sentences, and paragraphs.
- *Revision* is rewriting a draft to improve substance, organization, coherence, and cohesion.
- *Editing* involves rewriting a revision to make it clear, simple, and concise.
- *Submitting* includes proofreading the final draft and submitting the product.

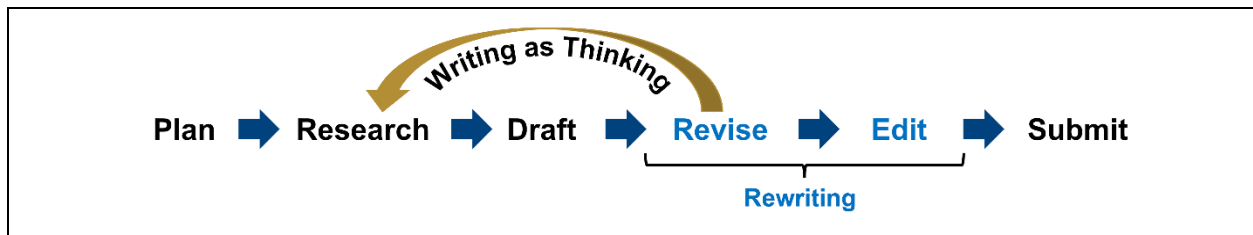


Figure 1. The writing process

The writing process is nonlinear. Writers go back and forth between activities as they write and rewrite.⁹ Although frustrating at times, this laborious back-and-forth is necessary to transform disjointed drafts into effortless essays.

Tools, Not Rules

This is a guide, not a rulebook. Writing is not about following rules; it is about making choices. For example, [Chapter 6](#) advises writers to avoid hyperbole. But [Chapter 5](#) ignores this advice by directing writers to “murder your darlings”—a hyperbolic statement urging writers to be ruthless in cutting (murdering) passages (darlings) that do not advance the thesis. Although “murder your darlings” is hyperbole, it is also a memorable way to communicate a key idea. Using passive voice is another writing choice. The [style standard](#) advises writers to prefer active voice. Yet [Chapter 6](#) discusses several situations in which passive voice is effective.

Writers must make choices. What works well in one sentence, paragraph, or paper might not work well in the next. This guide offers tools to help writers make effective choices. Like carpenters or mechanics, writers must learn to use many tools, then choose the best ones for each job.

All that said, there is one rule professional writers can always apply: ABC—Always Be Clear. No matter the choice, choose the option that most clearly communicates the message to the reader.

★ QUICK TIP ★

Quick tips are helpful ways to accomplish writing tasks and solve common problems. They draw on experienced writers’ best practices and appear in shaded boxes like this one.

⁹ Irvin, “What is ‘Academic’ Writing?” 4.

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CHAPTER 2 PLAN

Writing is thinking on paper.

—William Zinsser

Writing standards to focus on when planning:

Substance

- Achieve the purpose.

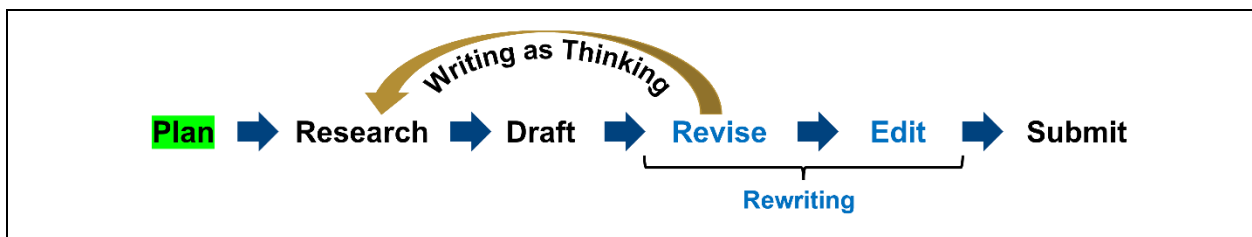


Figure 2. Planning and the writing process

Most professional writing begins with a directed purpose. A professor assigns an essay, or a commander asks for an information paper. Before putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard), the writer must understand the purpose the writing will achieve and build a writing plan to accomplish it.¹⁰

Analyze and Understand the Task

Analyzing a writing task may seem simple—even trivial. But many writers have launched headlong into a writing project only to later discover they answered the wrong question, analyzed the wrong article, or otherwise misunderstood the task. Analyzing and understanding the task at the start avoids wasted effort.

At the CGSC, professors often assign writing tasks with an essay prompt. For example:

In 750 words or less, analyze the Egyptians' crossing of the Suez Canal in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Use current Army doctrine as your analysis framework.

The prompt includes three tasks: Analyze the crossing of the Suez Canal, use current Army doctrine as the analysis framework, and limit the essay to 750 words. The writer must accomplish all three of these tasks. If not, they have failed to meet the most important writing standard: *Achieve the purpose*.

Study, reflect on, and understand the prompt before starting a project. It is easy to get off track. Given the task above, for example, a writer could mistakenly omit Army doctrine from the analysis. Such an essay, no matter how carefully researched and skillfully written, fails to achieve its purpose.

¹⁰ Scholarly works, such as theses, monographs, or academic articles, require the author to establish an essay's purpose with a compelling research question. But this task is beyond the scope of this guide. Student researchers should consult a research methods text, such as Booth et al., [*The Craft of Research*](#).

★ QUICK TIP ★
Keep the task at the top

Stay focused by putting the writing task (e.g., the essay prompt) at the top of research notes, outlines, and drafts. Keeping the writing task visible helps writers stay on track.

Make a Writing Plan

After understanding the task, build a writing plan to accomplish it. The time needed depends on length and complexity. For most writers, short essays (less than ~750 words) require one to two weeks.¹¹ Table 1 shows a short essay writing plan.

Table 1. Short essay writing plan

| <u>Day</u> | <u>Goal</u> |
|------------|--|
| Monday | Analyze the task and begin research |
| Tuesday | Finish research |
| Wednesday | Draft |
| Thursday | Revise; Additional research and drafting |
| Friday | Rest |
| Saturday | Revise |
| Sunday | Rest |
| Monday | Edit |
| Tuesday | Extra day |
| Wednesday | Proofread and submit (submit) |

Longer essays (more than ~750 words) may take several weeks.¹² Start the writing process well before the due date. Table 2 shows an long essay writing plan.

Table 2. Long essay writing plan

| <u>Week</u> | <u>Goal</u> |
|-------------|--|
| Week 1 | Analyze the prompt and begin research |
| Week 2 | Research |
| Week 3 | Draft |
| Week 4 | Revise; Additional research and drafting |
| Week 5 | Revise |
| Week 6 | Edit |
| Week 7 | Extra week |
| Week 8 | Submit (submit) |

Writing plans should include breaks between drafts, revisions, and edits. Returning to the work after a break helps writers read it with fresh eyes and notice problems they would otherwise miss. It is also a good idea, as shown in the plans above, to include an extra day (or week) for unexpected delays.

¹¹ One page of writing with 1-inch margins, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font is about 250 words. Thus, a 750-word essay is about 3 pages.

¹² Longer essays require more time, not just because the writer must write more words, but also because they tend to be more complex and thus require more research and rewriting.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH

Don't raise your voice. Improve your argument.

— Desmond Tutu

Writing standards to focus on while researching:

Substance

- Advance a coherent thesis.
- Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning.

Correctness

- Cite all sources, and format citations correctly.



Figure 3. Research and the writing process

After understanding the task and building a writing plan, the next stage is *research*—the process of collecting, organizing, and analyzing evidence.

Keeping Track of Sources

Before starting research, have a plan to track source citation information.

Writers cite sources for three reasons.¹³ First, academic ethics and copyright laws require authors to give credit to other authors. Second, citations make writing stronger by showing that the evidence for claims comes from credible sources. Finally, citations tell readers where to go to view the evidence for themselves.

The CGSC prefers Chicago-style citations.¹⁴ To learn Chicago style, consult the *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS) 17th Edition or *Turabian: A Manual For Writers* 9th Edition (Chicago and Turabian citations are identical).¹⁵ CGSC students and faculty can access CMS online through the [Combined Arms Research Library](#) (CARL). [Appendix B](#) describes the basics of Chicago-style citations and how to cite sources that the CMS does not cover (e.g., military doctrine).

¹³ Univ. of Mississippi, “Why Do We Cite Borrowed Information?”

¹⁴ Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14.19, 14.29; see also Dept. of the Army, *Staff Action Process*, 12; Dept. of the Army, *Army Publishing*, 15.

¹⁵ Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/citation-guide.html>.

Research notes are a good way to track sources. Effective research notes record citation data and separate source information (quotations, paraphrases, and summaries) from the researcher’s analysis.

Table 3. Two-column research notes format

| Van Creveld, Martin L. <i>Command in War</i>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987. | |
|--|---|
| Source Information | Notes/Analysis |
| 222-223 “[Elazar] ...had insisted on personally approving company-sized moves that were taking place a couple of hundred miles away.” | Excessive control is not a substitute for lack of trust. Unfortunately, excessive control is often the byproduct of mistrust, but that doesn’t translate to tactical success. Commanders must trust subordinates, regardless of the degree of control imposed. |
| 228 “...mutual trust, however, was lacking at Southern Command because of very bad personal relations among the senior commanders.” “[Elazar]’s distrust of Gonen led him to reserve approval of the most important moves to himself. Gonen, in turn, was thereby compelled to restrict Adan and Sharon in a similar way, and so right down the line.” | |
| 230 “...the Israeli failure was not primarily due to technological inadequacy. Having enjoyed six years in which to turn the Sinai into a fortress, the IDF in 1973 had a communications system that was technically about as good as it could be. It was certainly much superior to the one employed in 1967 and may indeed have been too good insofar as it enabled Elazar to proceed as he did.” | A good point about letting technology drive C2 rather than the other way around. Also, may reference page 229, in which commanders positioned themselves on the battlefield to best maintain communications with higher, rather than the best position to overwatch their forces. |

Citation Software

Citation software, like [Zotero](#), [EndNote](#), and [Mendeley](#), can save writers time by producing footnotes and bibliographies with a few clicks. Most have web browser plugins that allow users to save citation data with one click. They also readily convert documents from one citation system to another. And once a source is saved, the writer can easily reuse it in multiple projects.

However, computer-generated citations are only as good as the information in the software database. If the user enters bad data, or the software retrieves bad data from the internet, the citations will be wrong. Always review software-generated notes and bibliographies for accuracy. The software can do most of the work, but the author is still responsible for complete, accurate citations.

Arguments

Writers gather evidence to support arguments. *Arguments* are claims supported by evidence and reasoning. Naturally, arguments are central to argumentative essays. But they are also important in most professional military writing. For example, the running estimates Army staff officers build during planning require strong arguments.¹⁶ Staff officers gather evidence, such as facts and assumptions about

¹⁶ Dept. of the Army, *Commander and Staff*, p.2-3.

friendly forces, the enemy, civilians, and the environment. They analyze this information and recommend courses of action to the commander. These recommendations are claims (“we should do...”) that staff officers must support with evidence from the running estimate (“for these reasons...”).

Arguments are everywhere in professional writing—point papers, white papers, and decision papers. Even an award recommendation is an argument that someone should receive an award (claim) for certain achievements (evidence). Field grade officers rarely write without making claims. Commanders need to know the facts, but also what the facts mean and the conclusions they support. Constructing sound arguments is a critical staff officer skill.

Claims, Evidence, and Reasoning

An argument consists of three parts: 1) a *claim*, 2) *evidence* that supports the claim, and 3) *reasoning* that explains how the evidence supports the claim.¹⁷

A *claim* is an assertion or conclusion.¹⁸ A strong claim is:¹⁹

- *Relevant*. The claim is important to the topic or thesis.
- *Clear and specific*. The reader can understand the claim’s intent and scope. The claim is focused and simple, not broad and complicated.
- *Supportable*. A writer can supply sufficient evidence to support the claim. Specific claims are easier to support because they need less evidence than broad claims.

Evidence is the data, such as facts and examples, that support claims.²⁰ Evidence makes writing credible. Without evidence, writing is not professional writing—it is opinion or fiction. Strong evidence is:

- *Relevant*. The evidence is clearly related to the claim.
- *Sufficient*. There is enough evidence to convince the reader that the claim is true. A claim supported by only one source, even a credible one, is weak. Strong claims require evidence from multiple, credible sources.
- *Credible*. The sources are trustworthy, and the writer provides citations to prove it.
- *Unbiased*. The evidence does not unfairly lead the reader to accept or reject the claim.
- *Accurate*. Summaries and paraphrases reflect the original source fairly and reliably.²¹

Finally, *reasoning* is the logic and analysis that connects the evidence to the claim.²² Sound reasoning is:

- *Explanatory*. It explains *how* and *why* the evidence supports the claim.
- *Logical*. The elements of the explanation are true and allow a fair-minded reader to infer that the claim is true.
- *Clear*. The reader can easily follow the logic from the evidence to the claim.

Evidence Sources

Effective arguments require convincing evidence from trustworthy, objective sources. Scholarly works written and peer-reviewed by experts make the strongest evidence (Table 4). Avoid noncredible sources that lack expert authorship. Tools for finding credible evidence include the [Combined Arms Research Library](#), [JSTOR](#), and [Google Scholar](#).

¹⁷ McNeill and Krajcik, “Inquiry and Scientific Explanations,” 123-24.

¹⁸ McNeill and Krajcik, 123.

¹⁹ Univ. of Mississippi, “Claims, Reasons, and Evidence.”

²⁰ McNeill and Krajcik, “Inquiry and Scientific Explanations,” 123.

²¹ Harvey, “A Brief Guide,” 2.

²² Mass. Institute of Technology, “Claim-Evidence-Reasoning.”

Table 4. Sources of evidence.

| Low | ← Credibility → | | High |
|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-expert editorials • Predatory (pay-to-publish) journals • Personal websites and blogs • Partisan, tabloid, and entertainment media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy group literature • Wikipedia • Self-published books | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality news media • Non-scholarly trade journals • General news media • General audience books | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books from experts (non-academic presses) • US gov't publications • Military doctrine • Expert talks • Peer reviewed journals • Books from academic presses • Expert-reviewed encyclopedias |
| Adapted from: Univ. of Colorado, "Public Administration Research"; Univ of Arizona, "What is a Scholarly source." | | | |

★ QUICK TIP ★
Using [Wikipedia](#)

Avoid citing Wikipedia directly. Since anyone can edit Wikipedia articles, writers cannot be sure they are trustworthy. However, Wikipedia can still be a useful research tool. Many Wikipedia articles link to credible sources. Instead of citing the Wikipedia article, find the articles sources, confirm they say what Wikipedia says they say, then cite them directly.

Bias

Bias is any deviation from the truth, intentional or unintentional, that leads to false conclusions.²³

- *Confirmation bias* means collecting and interpreting evidence in a way that confirms the author's predetermined conclusion. It involves gathering evidence to support a conclusion while avoiding, downplaying, or being unfairly skeptical of disconfirming evidence.²⁴
- *Distorting the facts* means using exaggerated or imprecise language to make information seem more or less extreme than it is.²⁵ For example, "Everyone knows Douglas MacArthur was a terrible leader." *Everyone* is an exaggeration, and *terrible* is imprecise.
- *Misrepresenting sources* means paraphrasing or summarizing information incompletely or misleadingly. This bias often occurs when authors distort the original author's intent by quoting a source out of context.²⁶
- *Inflammatory bias* occurs when writers use language that elicits an unfair emotional response.²⁷ For example, labeling the irregular soldiers of the American Revolution as "patriots" or "terrorists" could elicit emotions that lead a reader to biased conclusions.

²³ Simundic, "Bias in Research," 12.; Univ. of Mississippi, "Bias and Research."; Labree, "Evaluating Sources."

²⁴ Univ. of Mississippi, "Glossary of Biases."

²⁵ Labree, "Evaluating Sources."

²⁶ Labree.

²⁷ Labree.

Strategies to avoid bias:²⁸

- *Use scholarly and credible sources.*
- *Focus on facts not opinions.* It is normal to have opinions about a topic. But professionals stay objective, present the evidence fairly, and do not allow their personal opinions to influence their conclusions.
- *Keep an open mind.* Having a preliminary guess (hypothesis) about a topic is normal. But do not commit to a position before doing at least some research.
- *Read broadly.* Study the range of views on a topic. Avoid gathering evidence only from sources that agree with a preliminary hypothesis.
- *Be willing to change your position.* During research, writers sometimes discover the evidence for their initial position is weak. If so, they must modify or reject weakly supported claims.

★ QUICK TIP ★
Read strategically

Reading strategically is a technique for efficient research.²⁹ Graduate students and military professionals do not always have time to read everything from beginning to end. Reading strategically helps readers save time without compromising research depth and quality.

- *Understand the purpose.* Why are you reading? What is the critical information you need from the reading?
- *Consider the author.* Why is the author writing? What is their point of view? What are their biases?
- *Scan the headings, figures, and tables.* Get a sense of how the reading is organized.
- *Read the abstract, introduction, and conclusion.* These sections clarify the reading's main ideas.
- *Read only what is necessary to achieve the purpose.* Completing the steps above provides a better sense of which parts of a reading to study in detail, scan, or ignore. Sometimes reading every word is necessary, but not always.

Outlines

Outlines help writers visualize an essay's organization and flow. As writers research a topic, it can be useful to organize the research in an essay outline. Writers can then use the outline as a guide when drafting (Table 4).

²⁸ Univ. of Mississippi, "Strategies for Making a Successful Argument."

²⁹ Univ. of Nebraska, "Reading Strategically."

Essay Outline Template

Essay question or prompt.

- Introduction
 - Topic
 - Thesis
 - Signposts
- Main body
 - Major point or supporting claim #1
 - Evidence and reasoning
 - Evidence and reasoning
 - Evidence and reasoning
 - Major point or supporting claim #2
 - Evidence and reasoning
 - Evidence and reasoning
 - Evidence and reasoning
 - Major point or supporting claim #3
 - Evidence and reasoning
 - Evidence and reasoning
 - Evidence and reasoning
 - Counterargument
 - Turn away
 - Turn back
- Conclusion
 - Restated thesis
 - Restated supporting claims

Figure 4. Essay outline template

CHAPTER 4

DRAFT

When you first start writing...you're scared to death that if you don't get that sentence right that minute it's never going to show up again. And it isn't. But it doesn't matter—another one will, and it'll probably be better. And I don't mind writing badly for a couple of days because I know I can fix it and fix it again and again and again, and it will be better.

—Toni Morrison

Writing standards to focus on while drafting:

Substance

- Achieve the purpose.
- Advance a coherent thesis.
- Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning.

Organization

- Write a clear introduction, main body, and conclusion.
- State the thesis early and clearly.
- Arrange sections and paragraphs in a logical order.

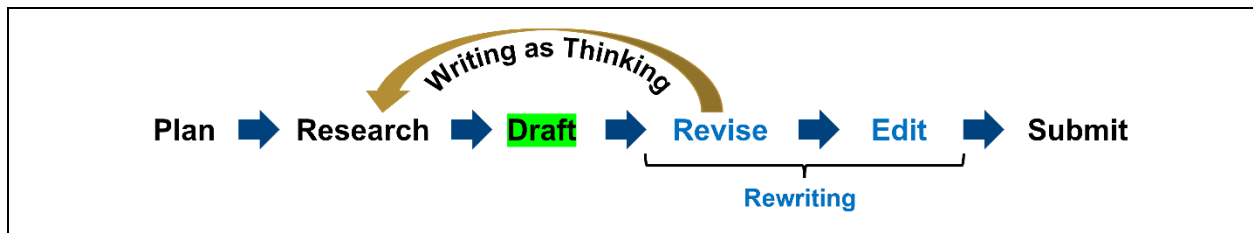


Figure 5. Drafting and the writing process

Drafting is turning ideas and research into words, sentences, and paragraphs. The goal of drafting is to quickly write the bulk of the essay without stopping to fix style and correctness problems. Drafting focuses on quantity, not quality.

Fast drafting is tough. Many writers cannot resist revising and editing as they draft. But this slows writing and wastes effort. As we will see in Chapter 5, first drafts often require significant cuts. Rewriting while drafting risks wasting time improving passages that may end up being cut during revision.

Do not try to write a perfect first draft, or even a good one. *All first drafts are ugly.* Do not try to make them otherwise. Draft fast!

Formatting

Draft on a correctly formatted document (see [Appendix A](#)). Correct formatting is essential in professional writing—especially when organizations establish standardized formats. Professional, consistent formatting makes a positive first impression with the reader and helps senior leaders consume information efficiently. Senior leaders become distracted (and irritable!) when products stray from established standards.

Structure

A basic essay has three parts: the introduction, main body, and conclusion (Figure 6).

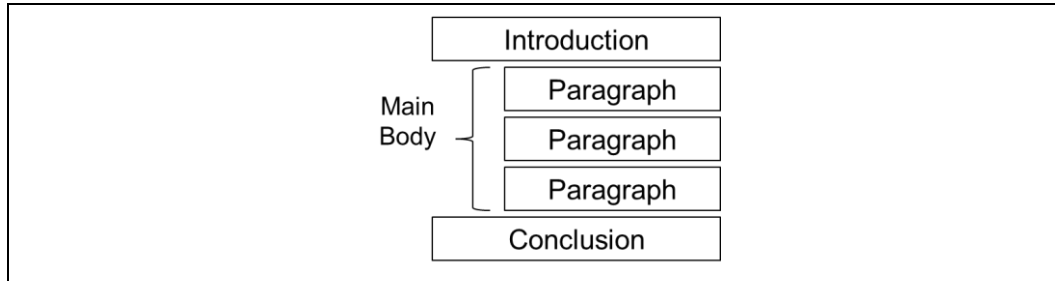


Figure 6. Basic essay structure

Introduction

There are many ways to introduce an essay.³⁰ However, a common and effective approach is a summary introduction that explains the topic or purpose, states the thesis, and lists the major points it will discuss (signposting).³¹

Thesis statement

A *thesis statement* explains the essay’s main idea.³² A good thesis statement is short (usually one sentence) and direct. The thesis statement’s structure depends on the essay’s purpose.

An argumentative thesis statement establishes the writer’s position and the reasons it is legitimate.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine shows that intangible factors still matter in war. The Russians’ poor performance is a result of low morale, poor discipline, and ineffective leadership.

An analytical thesis statement describes the topic analyzed and the resulting conclusions.

Analyzing Field Marshal William Slim’s leadership during the Burma Campaign shows that shared values, cross-cultural awareness, and transcultural leadership inspire success in multinational operations.

³⁰ Univ. of Lynchburg, “Types of Introductions.”

³¹ When writing for publication, authors often begin the introduction with a “hook” to get the reader’s attention. For example, the author might explain why their topic is important or discuss the interesting puzzle their essay solves. For most professional writing, however, a hook is unnecessary. The writer already has the reader’s attention because the commander or professor who assigned the writing is surely interested in the finished product. Thus, the writer can keep the introduction short—topic, thesis, and signposts.

³² Univ. of Arizona, “Writing a Thesis Statement.”

An expository thesis statement lists the topic and key points.

Factors that influenced the Battle of the Bulge include logistics, terrain, intelligence, and leadership.

Expository essays are rare in professional writing because they communicate facts without analysis. As discussed earlier, commanders (and CGSC professors) want more than just facts. They ask, “So what?” They expect field grade writers to analyze facts, draw conclusions, and recommend actions.

Main Body

The main body presents the essay’s substance in a series of paragraphs. In longer essays, writers may organize several paragraphs into sections. Paragraphs and sections should appear in a logical order that supports the thesis. Good organization makes it easy for the reader to understand how each paragraph is related to the one before it and how it supports the thesis.

Below are common frameworks writers use to organize an essay’s main body.³³

- *Chronological*. Present events in the order they occurred.
 - First... Second... Third...
 - At first... Next... Finally...
- *Causal*. Discuss causes then effects.
 - X occurred...X caused A, B, and C.
- *Sequential*. Discuss ideas in a logical order.
 - Tactical... Operational... Strategic...
 - Enlisted... NCOs... Officers...
- *Comparative*. Compare two or more items using common criteria.
 - Compare US and Chinese armies regarding people, technology, and doctrine.
- *Compare and Contrast*. Discuss similarities (compare) and differences (contrast).
 - The US Army and Marine Corps are similar in A, B, and C, but different in X, Y, and Z.
- *Evaluative*. Discuss positives and negatives, strengths and weaknesses, etc.
 - He did A and B well but failed at C and D.
 - A and B are advantages, while C and D are disadvantages.
- *Problem and Solution*. Discuss the problem, then how to solve it.
 - The problem is A. The problem occurred because of B and C. However, we can solve the problem with X, Y, and Z.
- *Categorical*. The order does not matter.
 - Here are brief overviews of the US Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force.

³³ Royal, *The Little Red Writing Book*, 29-33.

Conclusion

The conclusion tells the reader what they should take away from the essay by restating the thesis and major points.³⁴

Integrating Sources

Writers integrate sources in essays by quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing.³⁵

Quoting replicates a source text word-for-word.³⁶ Quote sparingly. Quotations make writing lengthy. Worse, using too many quotations signals weakness. When writers rely too much on others' words, readers assume the writer does not understand the sources well enough to paraphrase or summarize them. Avoid quotations unless a paraphrase or summary will distort the original meaning.

Here is a quotation from *The Gettysburg Campaign* by Reardon and Vossler (p. 40):

When the men of the 20th Maine had exhausted their ammunition, Chamberlain ordered them to fix bayonets. Accounts vary about the impetus for what happened next, but suffice to say that the 20th Maine's refused flank led the charge down Little Round Top's eastern slope, the line of onrushing men swinging out like a giant gate. "The effect was surprising," Chamberlain reported, "many of the enemy's first line threw down their arms and surrendered." A Confederate officer fired his pistol at Chamberlain while offering his sword in token of surrender. The 20th Maine routed the exhausted Alabamians, but Chamberlain lost 124 of his 386 men during the fight, 42 of them killed or mortally wounded.

Paraphrasing restates source material in the writer's own words. Paraphrases are better than quotations because they shorten the original passage and give the writer more flexibility to link the source to the writer's analysis. Paraphrasing also shows that the writer understands the source material well enough to extract the main ideas, explain them, and use them as evidence.

Here is a paraphrase of the quotation above:

When his soldiers ran out of ammunition, Chamberlain ordered a bayonet charge. The 20th Maine rushed down the slope of Little Round Top. Many of the surprised Alabamians surrendered. The charge sealed the 20th Maine's victory. But nearly one-third of Chamberlain's regiment were dead or wounded.

Summarizing omits details and reduces the source text to the key points. Here is a summary of the quotation above:

When his soldiers ran out of ammunition, Chamberlain ordered a bayonet charge. The charge succeeded but at a terrible cost.

³⁴ When writing for publication, the conclusion may reiterate the topic's significance, make recommendations, or suggest future research. For most professional writing, however, these elements are unnecessary. A short conclusion that restates the thesis and main points is enough.

³⁵ Nash, "Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing."

³⁶ [Appendix B](#) discusses inline and block quotation formatting.

Organizing Arguments

Writers use the essay’s introduction, main body, and conclusion to advance arguments. Essay structure varies based on the number and complexity of the arguments it presents. The figures below show how a writer might organize different essays. Figure 7 shows a simple essay that makes one claim—the thesis—and supports it with three major points.

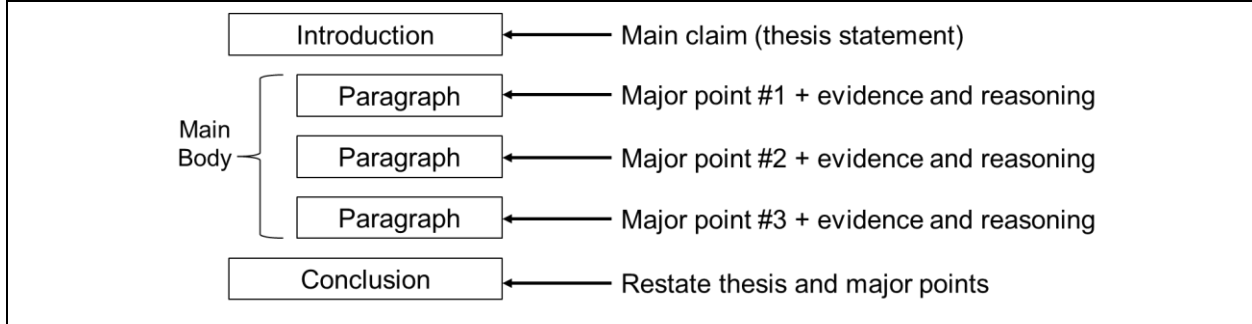


Figure 7. Argument organization in a short essay

Figure 8 shows a longer essay with one main claim (the thesis) and several supporting claims. The essay has been divided into three major sections aligned with each supporting claim. Each major section resembles a short essay with a section introduction, main body, and conclusion.

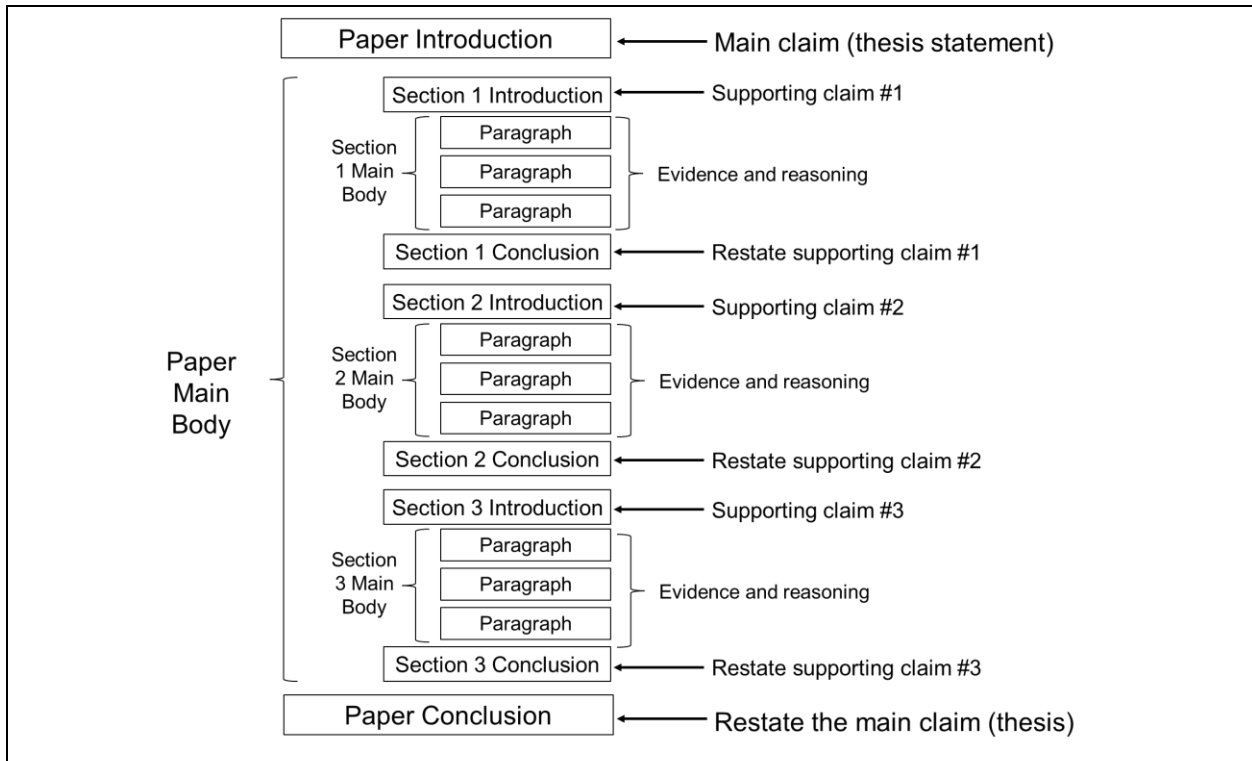


Figure 8. Argument organization in a long essay

Headings and Subheadings

In longer papers, headings and subheadings help the reader navigate the paper.³⁷ They also serve as transitions between major arguments. When used, headings and subheadings should align with the signposts in the introduction. For example, if the introduction signals three major arguments, the main body should have three corresponding headings. Keep heading and subheading formatting simple and professional (see [Appendix A](#) for details).

Counterarguments

Counterarguments dispute claims.³⁸ When credible counterarguments to a claim exist, readers will be skeptical of the claim unless writers acknowledge and contest the counterarguments.

Although there are many ways to handle counterarguments, an effective technique is the turn against/turn back method.³⁹

First, the writer *turns against* their own argument by acknowledging and explaining the counterargument. For example, a writer may acknowledge:

- Perceived problems with a claim, like weak evidence or flawed reasoning.
- Perceived bias presentation or omission of evidence.
- Potential disadvantages or drawbacks to a proposal.
- Alternative conclusions supported by the evidence.

Next, the writer *turns back* to their argument by showing that the original claim is still valid.⁴⁰ Strategies for the turn back include refuting, acknowledging, and conceding.

- *Refute* the counterargument by showing that it is flawed.
- *Acknowledge* that the counterargument is plausible, but on balance, weaker than the original claim and not enough to refute it.
- *Concede* that the counterargument is valid and complicates part of the original claim. Importantly, the counterargument should weaken only *part* of the original claim. If it undercuts the original claim completely, the claim is fatally flawed.

Confronting counterarguments may require a few sentences, a paragraph, or a major section. For example, a writer might refute a counterargument to a minor idea in the same paragraph that introduces the idea. Alternatively, if there are strong counterarguments to a writer's thesis, the writer may need several paragraphs or a major section to refute them.

★ QUICK TIP ★

Use citation placeholders while drafting.

Use citation placeholders to draft quickly. Instead of stopping to create a note, simply insert a placeholder and continue drafting. Change the placeholder to a proper note later when rewriting.

When his Soldiers ran out of ammunition, Chamberlain ordered a bayonet charge. The charge was successful, but at the cost of 124 Soldiers dead or wounded ([cite Reardon and Vossler, 40](#)).

³⁷ Univ. of Washington, "Using Headings and Subheadings."

³⁸ Univ. of Mississippi, "Counterargument."

³⁹ Harvard College Writing Center. "Counterargument."

⁴⁰ Harvard College Writing Center. "Counterargument."

CHAPTER 5 REVISE

When a draft is completed, the job of writing can begin.

—Don Murray

Writing standards to focus on when revising the *paper*:

Substance

- Advance a coherent thesis.

Organization

- Write a clear introduction, main body, and conclusion.
- State the thesis early in the introduction.
- Arrange sections and paragraphs in a logical order.

Writing standards to focus on when revising *paragraphs*:

Substance

- Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning.

Organization

- Organize paragraphs around one idea.



Figure 9. Revising and the writing process

Revising means “re-seeing” writing to ensure it says what the writer intends.⁴¹ Paper-level revision improves the essay’s substance and organization; paragraph-level revision improves paragraphs.

When revising, focus on substance, organization and logic. Avoid correcting grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. Wait until editing to fix these problems.

Writing as Thinking

Writing is not the product of thinking—it *is* thinking. Drafting helps writers discover what they know about a topic; revising often reveals that they know less than they need to. Arguments that seem strong during drafting may appear less so when revisited. This process of “thinking on paper” prompts writers to do more research and drafting.

Good writers...sometimes discover in the act of writing that what looked persuasive when floating vaguely in the mind looks foolish when moored to the page.

—Deirdre McCloskey

⁴¹ Jones, “Revision and Editing.”

Going back to do more research can be frustrating. But it is a normal and necessary part of the writing process. Iterating through research, drafting, and revising refines, strengthens, and sharpens arguments.

Coherence and Cohesion

Rewriting makes essays coherent and cohesive. *Coherence* is a macro concept that describes how well the parts of the essay work together to advance the thesis.⁴² Writers build coherence by stating a clear thesis and supporting it with a well-organized main body. Building coherence also requires writers to cut everything that does not support the thesis (more on this below).

Cohesion is a micro concept that describes how well the elements of an essay “hold together.”⁴³ Cohesive writing pulls the reader along by helping them understand how each new sentence and paragraph flows from the previous one. Writers create cohesion using paragraph transitions, signal words, and logical sentence structures.

Paper Revision

Paper revision focuses on substance and overall organization. The writer’s goal is to confirm they have clearly stated the thesis and supported it with a logically organized main body.⁴⁴

To revise a paper, re-read it to answer these questions:

- Does the paper achieve its purpose? Does it answer the question(s) or complete the required task(s)?
- Does the introduction discuss the topic, state the thesis, and signpost the major points?
- Is the thesis statement clear?
- Does each major section and paragraph in the main body build support for the thesis?
- Do the major sections and paragraphs in the main body appear in a logical order? Is it easy to see how each section or paragraph flows from the previous one?
- Is everything in the main body relevant to the thesis (see *murder your darlings* below)?
- Does the conclusion restate the thesis and the main points? Do the introduction and conclusion agree?

The essence of writing is rewriting. Very few writers say on their first try exactly what they want to say.

—William Zinsser

★ QUICK TIP ★
Use a reverse outline to check for logic and coherence.

To create a reverse outline, highlight the main idea of each paragraph, write it in the margin, or scribble it on a clean page. Next, examine the overall structure and flow, ignoring everything but the main ideas. Do they support the thesis? Do they appear in a logical order? Are there gaps? Do ideas repeat? Reorganize and rewrite the paragraphs as needed to ensure all parts of the essay work together as a whole to advance the thesis.

⁴² Regent Univ. Writing Lab, “Coherence and Cohesion,” 1-2

⁴³ Regent Univ. Writing Lab, 2-3

⁴⁴ Jones, “Revision and Editing.”

Murder Your Darlings

Paper-level revision often reveals passages that do not advance the thesis. Remove them, or as experienced writers say, “murder your darlings.”⁴⁵ As this dramatic metaphor implies, removing unnecessary passages is often painful. Writing is hard work; throwing away some of that work can feel like killing something loved. But removing excess is essential to produce clear, concise writing. *Good writers are ruthless editors.*

When you write a story, you’re telling yourself the story...When you rewrite, your main job is taking out all the things that are *not* the story.

—Stephen King

The need to cut useless passages reinforces the advice from [Chapter 4](#) about drafting fast without rewriting. Unrevised drafted passages are easier to cut than rewritten ones. Writers who rewrite during drafting become emotionally attached to their passages (darlings) and will struggle to cut (murder) them during revision.

★ QUICK TIP ★

When time is short, write a draft and a half.

Although rewriting is always best, busy professionals often write on short notice. In such cases, write a draft and a half.⁴⁶ Draft, then revise once to remove clutter. Delete unneeded passages (murder your darlings). Summarize, paraphrase, or cut long quotations. Omit unnecessary words. A single revision to remove clutter is less effective than a full revision and edit, but better than a raw first draft.

Paragraph Revision

The second stage of revision focuses on building effective paragraphs. A paragraph is a *unit of thought*. Each paragraph coherently develops *one* idea using a series of related sentences.

There are no rules for paragraph length. Some suggest paragraphs should be a certain number of sentences or measure a certain depth on the page. This is bad advice. A paragraph is a unit of thought. Make it as long as it needs to be to communicate the thought (but no longer).

Complex thoughts may require multiple paragraphs. Two or three short paragraphs are usually better than one long one. Paragraph breaks allow the reader to “take a breath”—pause and process the preceding idea before moving on to the next one. Divide complex thoughts into logical (not necessarily equal) parts and place paragraph breaks where they fit naturally.

The MEAL Model

MEAL is a model for organizing paragraphs.⁴⁷ MEAL stands for main idea, evidence and analysis, and link back to the larger claim.⁴⁸

- The topic sentence states the paragraph’s main idea.
- The middle sentences discuss the evidence and analysis that support the main idea.
- The last sentence links the paragraph to the main idea of the paragraph, section, or paper.

The paragraph should be a more or less complete discussion of one topic.

—Deirdre McCloskey

⁴⁵ Quiller-Couch, *On Style*

⁴⁶ Clark, *Writing Tools*, 51.

⁴⁷ MEAL is only one of many paragraph models. See Univ. of New Castle, [Writing Strong Paragraphs](#).

⁴⁸ Duke Univ Writing Studio, “Paragraphing: The Meal Plan.”

Main Idea

A well-organized paragraph discusses one idea. The topic sentence, which is usually the first one, states that idea.

Clearly stating each paragraph's main idea helps the writer and the reader. It helps the writer organize the paragraph by clarifying what the paragraph is about, and thus, what evidence and analysis are necessary. Clearly stating the main idea helps the reader understand the paragraph because they know what it is about from the start.

Although stating the main idea up front seems obvious, most writers do not do it—at least not in first drafts. Instead, they bury the main idea in the middle of the paragraph or, more often, at the end. This occurs because the main idea is the *conclusion* the writer wants to communicate, and conclusions come naturally at the end of a thought.

Good writers overcome this natural tendency by stating the conclusion—the main idea—first. During revision, find the main idea of each paragraph and move it to the topic sentence.

| Main idea buried | Main idea up front |
|--|--|
| As the commander of the Fourteenth Army, Lt. Gen. William Slim personally visited his soldiers and united them around shared values of freedom and human decency. He appealed to their shared interest in fighting for a just cause against a brutal enemy. As a result, his soldiers committed themselves to the cause of victory. Slim's approach demonstrates how commanders can use shared values and interests to gain commitment in multinational operations. | Lt. Gen. William Slim's command of the Fourteenth Army demonstrates how commanders can use shared values and interests to gain commitment in multinational operations. Slim personally visited his soldiers and unified them around shared values of freedom and human decency. He appealed to their shared interest in fighting for a just cause against a brutal enemy. As a result, his soldiers committed themselves to the cause of victory. |

Evidence and Analysis

The middle sentences of a paragraph present and analyze evidence.

Evidence is the facts that support the main idea. Evidence may include paraphrases, summaries, quotations, and examples from sources.

Analysis explains how the evidence supports the main idea. Analysis is critical in professional writing. Evidence never “speaks for itself.” The author must explicitly describe how the evidence supports the main idea.

Linkage

The last sentence links the paragraph back to the main idea of the paragraph, section, or paper. Which main idea the last sentence links to depends on the paragraph's role in the essay. In all cases, however, the last sentence should help the reader understand why the paragraph they have just read is relevant and how it fits into the overall scheme of the section or essay.⁴⁹

To understand the MEAL model, consider the passage below—the first two paragraphs of an essay analyzing Robert E. Lee's command at the Battle of Gettysburgh:

⁴⁹ Duke Univ., “Paragraphing: The MEAL Plan.”

Confederate general Robert E. Lee lost the Battle of Gettysburg because he made three tactical mistakes. Before the battle, he used his cavalry ineffectively. On the first day of the battle, he did not seize key terrain when he had the opportunity to do so. And on the last day of the battle, he ordered a futile attack against the Federal center.

On June 23rd, Lee allowed his cavalry commander J.E.B. Stuart to take his best cavalry units, leave the army's main body, and ride around the Federal army.¹ Lee did not trust the remaining cavalry units and did not use them to scout ahead of the army. On July 1st, two of Lee's corps stumbled into Federal cavalry northwest of Gettysburg.² Neither the corps commanders nor Lee knew how much of the Federal army they were fighting or whether the terrain was favorable for a battle.

¹ Arthur and Ballard, *Gettysburg Staff Ride*, 4–5.

² Sears, *Gettysburg*, 197–202.

The opening paragraph states the thesis and signposts three supporting points—the first one being Lee's poor use of cavalry. The author then presents this major point in the second paragraph. However, the second paragraph is ineffective because it omits three of the four MEAL elements. The first sentence does not state the main idea. The middle sentences provide evidence, but the author does not analyze it. And the last sentence does not link the paragraph to anything.

Contrast the passage above with the one below. The first paragraph is the same, but the second paragraph has been revised to include all four MEAL elements. The blue text is new.

Confederate general Robert E. Lee lost the Battle of Gettysburg because he made three tactical mistakes. Before the battle, he used his cavalry ineffectively. On the first day of the battle, he did not seize key terrain when he had the opportunity to do so. And on the last day of the battle, he ordered a futile attack against the Federal center.

Main idea Lee's first mistake was misusing his cavalry before the battle. On June 23rd, Lee allowed his cavalry commander J.E.B. Stuart to take his best cavalry units, leave the army's main body, and ride around the Federal army.¹ Lee did not trust the remaining cavalry units and did not use them to scout ahead of the army. **Consequently, Lee had little intelligence about Federal movements and local terrain.** On July 1st, two of Lee's corps stumbled into Federal cavalry northwest of Gettysburg.² Neither the corps commanders nor Lee knew how much of the Federal army they were fighting or whether the terrain was favorable for a battle. **Without effective cavalry, Lee was drawn into battle with an information disadvantage.**

Analysis

Link to thesis

¹ Arthur and Ballard, *Gettysburg Staff Ride*, 4–5.

² Sears, *Gettysburg*, 197–202.

The revised passage is much more effective. The first sentence clearly states the main idea. Then, after discussing Lee misusing his cavalry between June 23rd and July 1st, it analyzes the consequences of Lee's decisions. The analysis helps the reader appreciate the second piece of evidence—how Lee stumbled into battle without knowing much about the enemy or terrain. Finally, the last sentence links back to the thesis by discussing how Lee's mistakes contributed to the battle's outcome.

The figure below shows how the argument presented in the passage above aligns with the essay structure discussed earlier.

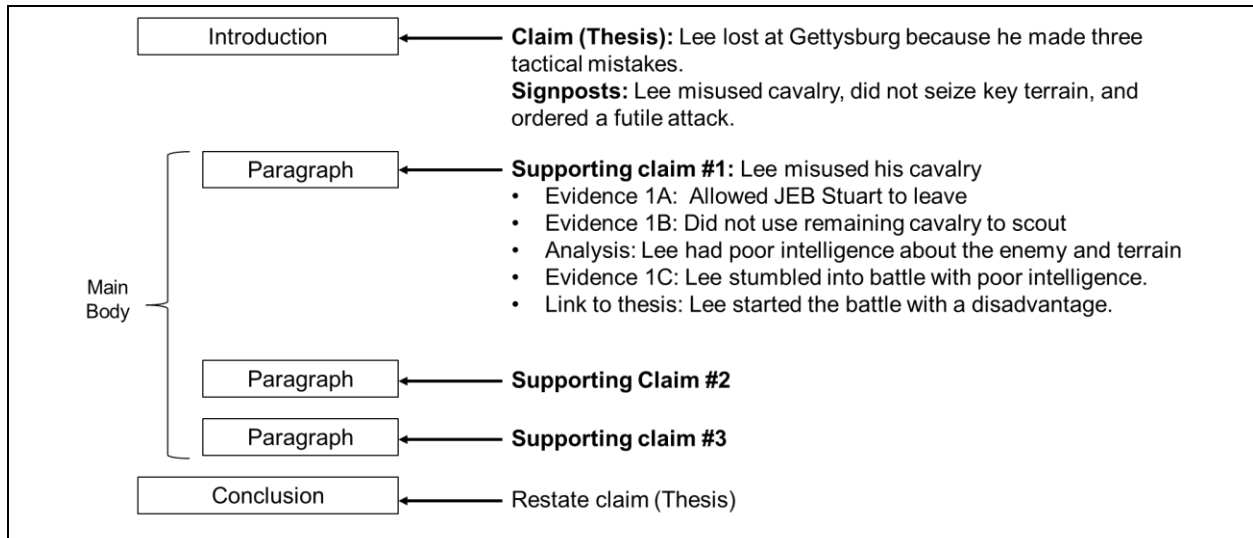


Figure 10. Organizing arguments in an essay

Paragraph Transitions

Paragraph transitions help the reader understand how two paragraphs (ideas) are related. A logical main body structure makes these transitions easier to build (Chapter 4 discusses [logical structures](#)). When paragraphs appear in a logical order, signaling the logic with transitions is straightforward.


Signal Words

Signal words make simple but effective paragraph transitions.

Table 5. Signal words

| To signal this relationship... | ...use these signal words. |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Time or sequence | First...second...third, initially...next...finally, simultaneously, subsequently, beforehand, afterward |
| Continuation or additional support | Moreover, further, furthermore, additionally, also, |
| Compare | Also, likewise, similarly, just as, |
| Contrast | However, yet, nevertheless, in contrast, still, conversely |
| Cause and effect | Thus, hence, consequently, therefore, so, as a result |
| Example | For instance, for example, in fact, specifically, to illustrate |

The passage below shows one way to use signal words. Using *first* to open the first paragraph makes *second* a natural transition to the second one.


 **First**, Lee put his army at a disadvantage before the battle by misusing his cavalry....*[middle sentences]*... Without effective cavalry, Lee was drawn into battle with an information disadvantage.

Second, Lee failed to seize key terrain on July 1st. After intense fighting throughout the morning...

Transition Phrases

Transition phrases appear in the topic sentence of the second paragraph. Transition phrases refer to information in the previous paragraph before introducing the main idea of the next one.


Lee put his army at a disadvantage before the battle by misusing his cavalry....*[middle sentences]*... Without effective cavalry, Lee was drawn into battle with an information disadvantage.

 **Lee compounded his initial disadvantage** by failing to seize key terrain on July 1st. After intense fighting throughout the morning...

Transition Sentences

Transition sentences are workable but rarely necessary. Signal words and transition phrases are more concise. Although the transition shown below is effective, it is wordy and pushes the main idea of the second paragraph into the second sentence.

Lee put his army at a disadvantage before the battle by **misusing his cavalry**....*[middle sentences]*... Without **effective cavalry**, Lee was drawn into battle with an information disadvantage.

 **Misusing his cavalry was only the first of Lee's blunders.** His second was failing to seize key terrain on July 1st. After intense fighting throughout the morning...

A common mistake is transitioning out of one paragraph using the topic sentence of the next paragraph. For example:

Lee put his army at a disadvantage before the battle by misusing his cavalry....*[middle sentences]*... Without effective cavalry, Lee was drawn into battle with an information disadvantage. **Lee's next mistake was failing to seize key terrain on July 1st.**

After intense fighting throughout the morning...

The last sentence of the first paragraph, although intended as a transition, merely confuses the reader. It disrupts the first paragraph's conclusion by introducing a new, unexpected idea. It also robs the next paragraph of its topic sentence. Avoid this mistake by moving the transition to the next paragraph:

Lee put his army at a disadvantage before the battle by misusing his cavalry....*[middle sentences]*... Without effective cavalry, Lee was drawn into battle with an information disadvantage.

Lee's next mistake was failing to seize key terrain on July 1st. After intense fighting throughout the morning...

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CHAPTER 6

EDIT

Clutter is the disease of American writing.

—William Zinsser

Writing standards to focus on when editing:

Style

- Write clearly so the text is easy to read and understand.
- Prefer clear, concise sentences.
- Prefer simple words and omit unnecessary words.
- Prefer active voice.
- Maintain a professional tone—formal but conversational and confident.

Correctness

- Use conventional punctuation, spelling, and grammar.
- Cite all sources, and format citations correctly.

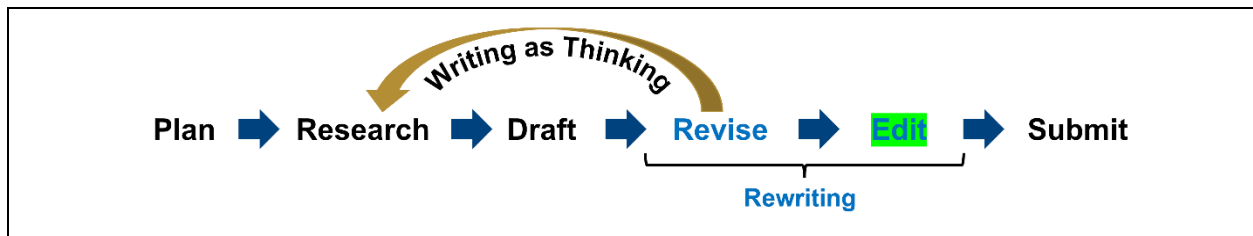


Figure 11. Editing and the writing process

Editing is rewriting phrases, sentences, and words to make writing *clear* (easy to read and understand). Clear writing tends to use simple words arranged in short, direct sentences that get to the point and rely mostly on nouns and verbs.

Editing for Style

Style is the way a writer expresses ideas through their choice of words, sentence structure, and tone. The Army writing style urges writers to use short words, active voice, and short sentences.⁵⁰ This chapter builds on these ideas.

Effective style is clear, simple, and concise, and as a result, effortless to read. In contrast, when style is ineffective, the reader must work to understand the writing because it is confusing, complicated, and wordy.

The first duty in writing a sentence is to make it clear.

—Dierdre McCloskey

⁵⁰ Dept. of the Army, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence*, 7.

The passages below show how style choices affect length, complexity, and clarity. The original passage uses an academic style. In contrast, the rewritten passage uses a professional style. The rewrite communicates the same meaning as the original but is shorter, simpler, and clearer.

| Academic style | Professional style |
|--|--|
| <p>This perspective is intended to serve as a primer that outlines in general terms how the Russian military would conduct combat operations in the event of a high-intensity conflict with a capable peer or near-peer adversary. The discussion here blends how Russian theorists and leaders have written about modern warfare with demonstrated Russian capabilities and history. Russia has shown the ability to tailor its combat operations to specific operational and strategic requirements. The Russian military does not have one standard way of conducting operations; rather, Russia likely has developed a series of contingencies for strategic planning, based on several variables like correlation of forces, military potential of opposing forces, strategic geopolitical context, escalation potential, and others.</p> | <p>This paper discusses how the Russian military would fight a high-intensity war against a capable enemy. It examines Russian history, current capabilities, and recent writing on modern warfare. It finds that the Russians do not have a standard way of fighting. Instead, they tailor their approach to strategic and operational demands. The Russians have developed several contingency plans based on potential enemies, strategic context, escalation potential, and other key factors.</p> |
| <p>Source of original: Boston and Massicot, "The Russian Way of Warfare," 1.</p> | |

Clear Writing

Clarity is the most important stylistic goal of professional writing. Clear writing is easy for the reader to understand.

Clarity comes from using concrete language, active voice, and cohesive sentences.

Concrete language refers to words, phrases, and sentences that help the reader visualize what the writing is about. In contrast, readers struggle to visualize the writer's ideas when the language is vague.⁵¹

| Vague | Concrete |
|---|--|
| Ridgway's leadership impacted the Eighth Army. | Ridgway improved the Eighth Army's fighting spirit . |
| Napoleon had a lot of leadership experience. | Napoleon had ten years of leadership experience. |
| The S4 is working the fuel problem. | The S4 ordered extra deliveries to fix the fuel problem. |

Clichés are worse than vague language. While vague language makes it hard for the reader to visualize the writer's idea, clichés cause the reader to visualize something else entirely. Avoid clichés. Use concrete language instead.

⁵¹ Pinker, *The Sense of Style*, chapter 2.

| Cliché | Concrete |
|---|---|
| Finding the enemy is like finding a needle in a haystack . | Finding the enemy is difficult . |
| She thinks outside the box . | She thinks creatively . |
| We need a ballpark figure . | We need an estimate . |

Hyperbole is another type of vague language to avoid. Hyperboles are exaggerated statements not meant to be taken literally. Instead of hyperbole, use specific, concrete alternatives.

| Hyperbole | Concrete |
|--|---|
| The battalion commander wanted to kill them . | The battalion commander was angry . |
| Ridgway was the epitome of military leadership . | Ridgway was an effective leader . |
| Captain Jones is a peerless leader with unlimited potential . | Captain Jones is a skilled leader who would make an excellent battalion commander . |

Active and Passive Voice

Prefer active voice means writing sentences that focus on actors, not actions.

Active voice sentences follow the subject-verb-object pattern. The doer (subject) comes before the action (verb) and the person or thing receiving the action (object).

Private Jenkins **fired** the weapon.
 Subject Verb Object

Passive voice sentences, in contrast, reverse the subject and the object.

The weapon **was fired** by Private Jenkins.
 Object Verb Subject

Passive voice sentences can also omit the subject altogether.

The weapon **was fired**.
 Object Verb

In most cases, active voice is better than passive because it is more direct, clear, and concise.

| Passive voice | Active voice |
|---|---|
| The high ground was occupied by the battalion and the attack was defeated . | The battalion occupied the high ground and defeated the attack. |
| The operation was planned by Patton . | Patton planned the operation. |

Passive voice can lead to vagueness when the writer omits the subject.

| Passive voice | Active voice |
|---|---|
| The organizational vision must be communicated . | Leaders must communicate the organizational vision. |
| It has been suggested that we postpone the attack. | The staff suggested that we postpone the attack. |

Although writers usually prefer active voice, passive voice is appropriate in some situations.⁵²

Use passive voice when the doer of an action is unknown or unimportant.

| Passive voice | Active voice |
|---|---|
| Gaddafi ruled Libya until he was killed in 2011. | Gaddafi ruled Libya until militia gunmen killed him in 2011. |

Use passive voice to state a general truth.

| Passive voice | Active voice |
|--|--|
| General Jones is a well-respected leader. | People inside and outside the Army respect General Jones as a leader. |

Use passive voice to emphasize the subject.

| Passive voice | Active voice |
|--|--|
| Tanks have been used in combat since the First World War. | Armies have used tanks in combat since the First World War. |

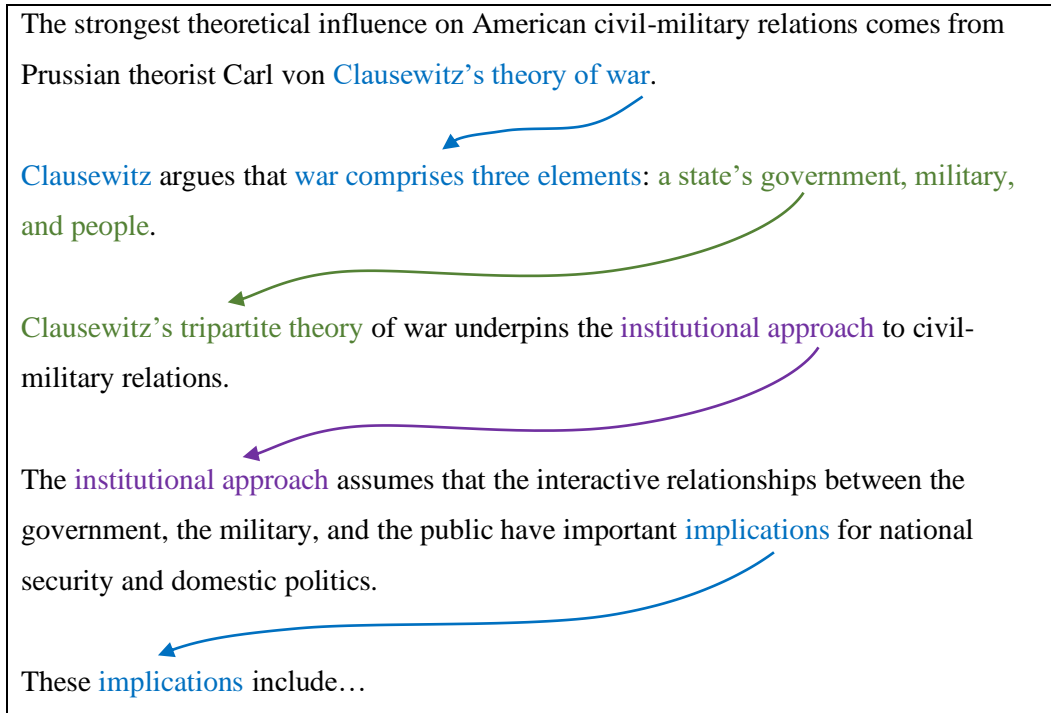
Writers can also use passive voice to maintain cohesion between sentences (see below).

Cohesive Sentences

Writing cohesive sentences involves using words and phrases that make it easy for the reader to see how sentences are related. Recall that [cohesion](#) describes how well the elements of an essay are connected and “hold together.” Writers use several techniques to create cohesion, including presenting information from old to new, as well as using signal words, parallel construction, and passive voice.

⁵² Univ. of Toronto, “Passive Voice.”; Greene, *Writing with Style*, 39-41.

Presenting information from old to new means putting information the reader already knows at the beginning of a sentence and information the reader does not yet know at the end.



Adapted from: Lythgoe, *The Soldier and the Citizen*, 6-7.

Using signal words creates cohesion by showing how sentences are related to each other. Recall that [signal words](#) show a relationship between two elements.


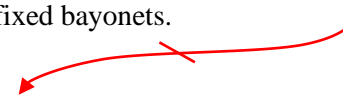
| Without signal words | With signal words |
|--|--|
| The French commander ordered a counterattack. The Germans occupied a key ridge near Bulson. The counterattack failed. | The French commander ordered a counterattack. However , the Germans occupied a key ridge near Bulson. As a result , the counterattack failed. |
| The French Army's methodical battle doctrine cast armor in a supporting role to the infantry. The counterattack moved at the pace of a foot march. | The French Army's methodical battle doctrine cast armor in a supporting role to the infantry. Consequently , the counterattack moved at the pace of a foot march. |

Adapted from Lythgoe, "Controlling Chaos," 217.

Using *parallel construction* means using the same grammar structure to show the relationship between two or more ideas. Parallel construction makes sentences clear, easy to read, and often more concise.

| Not parallel | Parallel |
|--|--|
| The soldiers reached the position, established a defense, and began waiting for battle. | The soldiers reached the position, established a defense, and waited for battle. |
| The cadre evaluated the soldiers on their skill , how tough they were , and their leadership . | The cadre evaluated the soldiers on their skill , toughness , and leadership . |
| At the next staff meeting, we will hold a discussion of the deployment plan, whether to revise our standard operating procedures, and then a draft deployment order will be developed . | At the next staff meeting, we will discuss the deployment plan, decide whether to revise our standard operating procedures, and draft a deployment order. |

Using *passive voice appropriately* is another way to write cohesive sentences. Because passive voice puts the action before the actor, it allows writers to structure sentences with the action first. This arrangement is useful if the last element of the previous sentence (the “old” information) was an action.

| Passive voice / cohesive | Active voice / not cohesive |
|--|---|
| Unable to retreat, the 20th Maine did the only thing they could: a desperate charge with fixed bayonets.  The charge was ordered by a professor-turned-soldier named Joshua Chamberlain . | Unable to retreat, the 20th Maine did the only thing they could: a desperate charge with fixed bayonets.  Joshua Chamberlain , a professor-turned-soldier, ordered the charge . |

In both passages above, the first sentence ends with the bayonet charge. The left passage creates cohesion by using passive voice to begin the second sentence where the first one ended—the bayonet charge. In contrast, the right passage is less cohesive because it introduces new information—Joshua Chamberlain—before the bayonet charge.

Simplicity

Simplicity enhances clarity and concision. Simple writing uses plain language—simple words arranged in short, direct sentences. Simple language is persuasive because it is easy to understand, whereas complicated language frustrates readers, and frustrated readers are hard to persuade. Simplicity also reduces grammar and punctuation errors. It is easy to spell simple words correctly and see problems in simple sentences.

The secret of good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components.

—William Zinsser

To keep writing simple, avoid using complex words when simple words will do.

| Instead of a complex word... | ...use a simple one. |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| assistance | help |
| numerous | many |
| initial | first |
| sufficient | enough |
| attempt | try |
| utilize | use |
| expedite | hurry |
| erroneous | wrong |
| cognizant | aware |

Simplicity also means preferring short, direct sentences. Long sentences can be confusing and difficult for the reader to follow. Here is a long, confusing sentence:

Lee, who did not trust the remaining cavalry units and did not use them to scout ahead of the army, had little intelligence about Federal movements and local terrain, and as a result, let two of his corps stumble into Federal cavalry northwest of Gettysburg on July 1st.

Here is the same passage broken into smaller sentences.

Lee did not trust the remaining cavalry units and did not use them to scout ahead of the **army**. **Consequently**, Lee had little intelligence about Federal movements and local **terrain**. **As a result**, on July 1st, two of Lee's corps stumbled into Federal cavalry northwest of Gettysburg.

Although short, direct sentences increase clarity, several short sentences in a row make the writing sound stiff and boring. Avoid this problem by using medium and long sentences to give the writing variety and pleasant rhythm.

Concision

Editing for concision means removing clutter. Strip out everything but the minimum words necessary to communicate ideas.

Writers sometimes struggle to distinguish content from clutter. One way to do this is by asking if a word or phrase is doing "useful work."⁵³ Write the sentence with and without the word or phrase in question. If removing it changes the sentence's meaning, it is doing useful work. Keep it. But if removing it does not change the meaning, it is not doing useful work. It is clutter. Cut it.

I believe the road to hell is paved with adverbs...

—Stephen King

⁵³ Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, 15.

| Wordy | Concise |
|---|---|
| Eisenhower took an opportunity to conduct a rapid assessment of the problem that he was facing. | Eisenhower assessed the problem. |
| Cota failed to demonstrate an ability as the commander to understand the operational environment he was operating in. | Cota did not understand the operational environment. |

Writers make sentences concise by omitting needless words, avoiding hedging and “throat clearing,” avoiding needless prepositions, and avoiding nominalizations.

“Omit needless words” speaks for itself.⁵⁴ Remove words that are not doing useful work.

Walker’s plan was **very** risky.

The attack was **extremely** slow.

Many everyday phrases include needless words. Omit them.

very real

absolutely nothing

generally tend

entirely possible

perfectly normal

general consensus

freely admit

distinct advantage

close **proximity**

abundantly clear

object failure

know **for a fact**

know **full well**

fully intend

a **world of** difference

a **palpable** sense

proven track record

in any way, **shape, or form**

as a **general** rule of **thumb**

more often **than not**

Many “lee” adverbs are needless. Omit them.

The troops fought **extremely** hard.

Patton’s troopers were **definitely** better than the enemy.

Underestimating the Egyptians was **truly** a mistake.

The fighting was **intensely** fierce.

The regiment was **really** low on ammunition.

Schwarzkopf was **totally** committed to battle.

The defenders resisted **mightily**.

Dayan **quickly** resolved to counterattack.

Avoid using two adjectives or adverbs with similar meanings. Choose the stronger word and omit the other.

Their response was deliberate ~~and measured~~.

The tanks **quickly** ~~and~~ easily bypassed the strong points.

⁵⁴ Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, 30.

Avoid overusing prepositions and prepositional phrases. Prepositions show relationships between nouns and other nouns or parts of a sentence.⁵⁵ Examples include words that show position (*at, above, between, below*), direction (*in, to, into*), time (*before, during, after*), and source (*of, from*). Prepositions are easy to overuse. Cut them when possible:

| Instead of prepositions... | ...use simpler alternatives. |
|---|--|
| The most valuable resource of the US Army is people. | People are the Army's most valuable resource. |
| Move the convoy without delay . | Move the convoy now . |

Complex prepositions, also called prepositional phrases, are phrases that form a preposition (e.g., *for example, according to, in case of*).⁵⁶ Many complex prepositions are unnecessary. Replace them with simpler alternatives.

| Instead of prepositional phrases... | ...use simpler alternatives. |
|---|---|
| The commander approved the mission in spite of the staff's concerns. | The commander approved the mission despite the staff's concerns. |
| The team inspected the unit in accordance with the regulation. | The team inspected the unit according to the regulation. |

Use passive voice to shorten sentences when the agent (doer of an action) is unimportant.⁵⁷

Smith commanded the battalion until **the brigade commander relieved him**.
 Smith commanded the battalion until **he was relieved**.

Avoid starting sentences with hedging, "throat clearing," and other unnecessary qualifications that clutter writing and imply the writer lacks confidence.

~~In my opinion~~, the counterattack was too slow.
~~Although some people may disagree, I believe~~ the plan was flawed.
~~It is clear that~~ the brigade was well-trained.
~~It is important to remember that~~ US doctrine favors a decentralized approach.
~~A key aspect of this case that we must not overlook is that~~ the French outnumbered the Germans.
~~"An important point to be noted in this context is the fact that~~ the Israeli failure was not primarily due to technological inadequacy."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 5.174.
⁵⁶ Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 5.172-5.173.
⁵⁷ Green, *Writing with Style*, 41.
⁵⁸ Van Creveld, *Command in War*, 230.

Avoid nominalizations. Nominalizations are nouns created from other parts of speech, such as adjectives (*quick* becomes *quickness*), other nouns (*favorite* becomes *favoritism*), and verbs (*prepare* becomes *preparation*). Nominalizations clutter writing because they require writers to add a verb to make sentences work. In the passage below, for example, *planning*—a nominalization of the verb *plan*—requires the verb *conduct*. Changing *planning* back to a verb makes the sentence more direct and concise.

The staff **conducted planning** for the attack.

The staff **planned** the attack.

More nominalizations:

| Instead of nominalizations... | ...use verbs. |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| conduct an attack | attack |
| conduct a defense | defend |
| make preparations | prepare |
| make a decision | decide |
| take action | act |
| give a response | respond |
| bring to an end | end |
| hold a meeting | meet |
| make a recommendation | recommend |
| take into consideration | consider |
| have the ability | can |

Balancing Clarity with Simplicity and Concision

The most important style goal is *clarity*. Simplicity and concision should improve clarity, not diminish it. When simplicity or concision conflict with clarity, choose the clearest alternative even if it is not the simplest or most concise.

For example, complex words are sometimes clearer than simpler ones. Choose the word that best communicates the idea but does not require an advanced vocabulary.

- Smith was a toxic leader with a **bad** temper.
 _____ an **explosive** temper.
 _____ a **meteoric** temper.
 _____ a **murderous** temper.

Although *bad* is the simplest of the choices above, *explosive*—a concrete word that most people know—is better. *Meteoric* is obscure, and *murderous* is hyperbole (unless Smith actually kills people when he gets angry).

A thesaurus is useful for making word choices; [Microsoft Word's built-in thesaurus](#), [OneLook Thesaurus](#), and [Thesaurus.com](#) are among the best.

As with simplicity, writers must balance concision with clarity. If removing words reduces clarity, choose the clearer longer alternative.

- Jones analyzed the failure, gathered a team, and **attacked the problem**.
 Jones analyzed the failure, gathered a team, and **attacked it**.

Replacing *the problem* with *it* makes the second sentence more concise but confuses its meaning. Is Jones attacking the problem or the team? The first sentence is longer but clearer.

French commanders, unlike their German opponents, had to wait for written orders before acting. As a result, the French counterattack was **painfully** slow.

The writer could omit the “ly” adverb *painfully* to make this passage more concise. However, keeping it gives a clearer sense that the French having to wait for orders put them at a severe disadvantage against the faster Germans.

Ukraine fought **surprisingly** well against Russia.
Ukraine fought well against Russia.

Again, the writer could make this passage more concise by omitting *surprisingly*. However, it is doing useful work by communicating that when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, few people expected Ukraine to fight as well as it did.

★ QUICK TIP ★

Test readability using the Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level checker

Effective professional writing is easy for a general audience to read and understand. Microsoft Word's Flesch Reading Ease and Grade Level tools can assess your text's readability of your text. [Microsoft's website](#) describes how to access these tools.

The Flesch Reading Ease test measures how easy a text is to read on a scale from 0 to 100. Higher scores indicate easier readability. The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test estimates the grade level required to understand a text. For example, a score of 12.0 means that high school graduate can understand the text. Lower scores (grade levels) indicate easier readability.

For most Army writing, aim for a reading ease score of 50 or higher and a grade level score of 12 or lower. Improve writing that does not score well by using shorter sentences and simpler words.

Tone

Tone refers to the writer's attitude toward the content and the reader.⁵⁹ A professional tone is formal but conversational and confident.

Formal

Professional language aims for a middle ground between the informality of everyday conversation and the excessive formality of academic and bureaucratic writing. For example, the three sentences below say the same thing using different tones. The first alternative is wordy and evasive; the third is too informal. The second alternative is concrete and precise.

The division commander **decided to go in a different direction** with the brigade.
The division commander **relieved** the brigade commander.
The division commander **canned** the brigade commander.

Avoid contractions (can't, won't, didn't) unless they appear in quotations. Contractions are too casual for most professional writing.

⁵⁹ Ober, *Contemporary Business Communication*, 134.

Avoid military jargon and slang:

| Instead of slang... | ...use concrete words. |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| azimuth check | review |
| come up on the net | talk |
| beans and bullets | supplies |
| pop smoke | leave |
| green-suiter | service member |
| suspense | deadline |
| alibi | additional input |

Conversational

Write as if having a conversation with a professional colleague. Treat the reader as an intellectual equal. Avoid over-explaining. Instead, give the reader credit for understanding the conventions of everyday conversation. For example, a writer who asserts that “Patton attacked from the south” should assume the reader understands that Patton’s unit attacked from the south, not Patton alone.

Don’t say you were a bit confused and sort of tired and a little depressed and somewhat annoyed. Be confused. Be tired. Be depressed. Be annoyed. Don’t hedge your prose with little timidities. Good writing is lean and confident.

—William Zinsser

Confident

Confident writing is powerful and persuasive. Following the principles this section has already covered will contribute to a confident tone. Avoid starting sentences with timid phrases like *in my opinion*, *I think*, *I suppose*, etc. Also, avoid needless qualifying words that convey lack of confidence: *probably*, *typically*, *most likely*, etc.

Confident writing demands boldness. Unnecessary hedging, throat clearing, and qualification clutter writing and erode the reader’s trust.⁶⁰ Readers will not accept the arguments of a writer who seems unsure of themselves. Write boldly and confidently.

⁶⁰ Zinsser, 70.

CHAPTER 7

SUBMIT

Mechanics come last. It is important to the writer, once he has discovered what he has to say, that nothing get between him and his reader. He must break only those traditions of written communication which would obscure his meaning.

—Don Murray

Writing standards to focus on before submitting:

Substance

- Achieve the purpose.

Correctness

- Format documents correctly.
- Cite all sources, and format citations correctly.

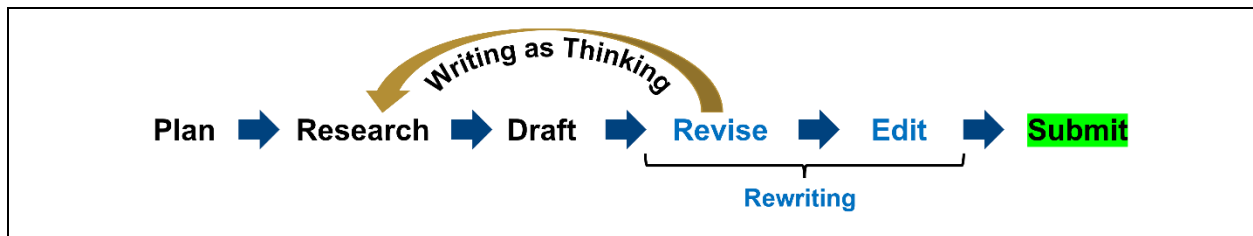


Figure 12. Submitting and the writing process

The last activity of the writing process is submitting the final product—turning in an assignment to a commander or professor, or if writing for publication, sending it to a professional journal or publisher (see [Appendix F](#) for more information on writing for publication).

Proofreading

Proofreading for errors is the last step before submitting. Techniques for effective proofreading include:

- Let the paper “rest” for a day or two after the final edit.
- Read the paper aloud to hear errors (some word processors have read-aloud tools).
- Read the paper one sentence at a time from end to beginning. This technique focuses the writer on one sentence at a time rather than the big ideas.
- Ask a friend or someone else, preferably someone who is not familiar with the subject, to read it and provide feedback.
- Software aids like [Grammarly](#), [Hemingway Editor](#), [The Writer’s Diet](#) and [Microsoft Editor](#) can be useful for proofreading. Still, these tools do not always recommend sound changes. Use good judgment; do not assume online tools are always correct.

Submitting

Things to check before submitting an essay:

- ✓ The essay accomplishes its purpose.
- ✓ The essay meets administrative requirements (e.g., word count).
- ✓ The author's name (or identification number) is on the paper.
- ✓ The document is correctly formatted.
- ✓ The file type is correct (some professors may ask for a PDF).
- ✓ All sources are cited.
- ✓ Citations are complete and accurate.
- ✓ Turn in the essay using the directed method (Blackboard? Email? Hard copy?).

APPENDIX A FORMATTING

When formatting standards exist, staff officers must follow them. An improperly formatted product makes the reader assume the author is sloppy, and commanders will not trust sloppy authors with important work. Using correct formatting helps staff officers establish a reputation for attending to details and producing quality work.

Formatting guidelines vary by product, organization, and audience. Some guidelines are well known and widely followed. For example, all Army organizations format correspondence according to [Army Regulation 25–50 Preparing and Managing Correspondence](#). Other formatting guidelines are found in local regulations, specified in organizational procedures, or left to the author’s discretion.

Fonts

The Army and the CGSC prefer Arial and Times New Roman fonts.

Times New Roman is the Army’s preferred serif font. Serif fonts have lines or tapers (sometimes called feet and tails) at the ends of the letterform (Figure 13). Times New Roman is a good choice for long, text-laden products like essays and white papers. Most readers find serif fonts like Times New Roman easier to read than sans serif fonts.⁶¹ However, Times New Roman is a poor choice for presentations because serifs often appear fuzzy on large screens.

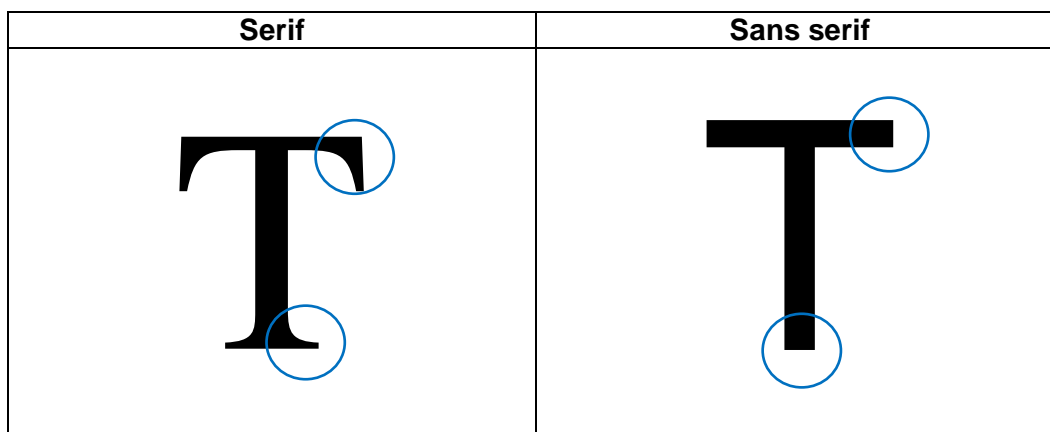


Figure 13. Serif and sans serif letterforms

The Army’s preferred sans serif font is Arial. Sans serif fonts feature a letterform with a uniform width and no serifs. Arial works well (and is often required) for short products like information papers, orders, and memoranda. It gives documents a clean, modern, professional appearance. Arial is also an excellent choice for presentations. Simple lines and uniform width make Arial letters appear crisp and clear on large screens. However, Arial and other sans serif fonts can become difficult to read in a long, text-laden paper.

Some products combine Arial and Times New Roman to take advantage of the contrast between them—Army doctrine and this guide, for example. However, Army writers rarely need to mix fonts except when

⁶¹ Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster’s Manual*, 330-331; Dept. of the Army, *Design and Production*, 23.

writing doctrine, training, or administrative publications.⁶² Do not mix fonts in staff products and academic papers.

Additionally, avoid script and decorative fonts in documents and presentations. They give products an amateurish appearance and can be difficult to read.

For academic essays, the CGSC requires 12-point Times New Roman font which, along with double-spaced lines, creates space for grading marks and comments. However, for other text-laden professional products (e.g., white papers), single-spaced lines and 11-point Times New Roman are good choices that keep pages compact yet readable.

No single font is best for all products. If standards exist, follow them. Otherwise, pick a font that best communicates the message in a neat, professional way.

Staff Products

Use the format specified in the appropriate reference for common Army staff products:

Table 6. Staff product references

| Staff product(s) | Reference(s) |
|---|--|
| Correspondence (memoranda and letters) | <u>Army Regulation 25–50 Preparing and Managing Correspondence</u> |
| Executive summaries, decision memoranda, and information papers | <u>HQDA Policy Notice 25-52 Staff Action Process Correspondence Policies</u> or <u>TRADOC Regulation 1-11 Staff Procedures</u> . |
| Point papers | <u>TRADOC Regulation 1-11 Staff Procedures</u> |
| Staff studies and decision papers: | <u>Commander and Staff Organization and Operations (FM 6-0)</u> |
| Operations orders, plans, and running estimates | <u>Planning and Orders Production (FM 5-0)</u> |
| White papers | No specified Army standard. |

⁶² See [DA PAM 25–36 Design and Production of Instructional Publications](#)

Academic Paper Formatting

Use these guidelines for academic papers and assignments without a specified format:

- Use 8.5 x 11-inch paper with 1-inch margins.
- Use 12-point Times New Roman for the main text and 10-point for footnotes.
- Use a title page.
 - Write the paper title about one-third of the way down from the top of the page.
 - Write the subtitle (if used) below the title.
 - Write the author's name or identification number, course number and title, and date about two-thirds of the way down from the top of the page.
- Place page numbers in the bottom margin, centered. Do not number the title page. Start page numbering at "1" on the first page of text.
- Use headings and sub-headings as needed for organization and clarity. Distinguish between levels with alignment (center/left) and emphasis (bold/italics/underline) and case (headline or sentence). Use any convention that is professional and consistent.

Level 1: Centered, Bold, Title Case

Indented text starts a new paragraph...

Level 2: Left-aligned, Bold, Title Case

Indented text starts a new paragraph...

Level 3: Left-aligned, Italics, Title Case

Indented text starts a new paragraph...

- Indent paragraphs 0.5 inches. Do not add an extra line between paragraphs.
- Double-space the lines.
- Place one space between sentences.
- Format the footnotes and bibliography following the *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS) (<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/>) and [Appendix B](#) of this guide.

The next few pages show a correctly formatted academic essay.

Essay Title: ← Title about 1/3 of the way down the page
Subtitle ← Subtitle (optional)

DODIN: 123456789 ← Name or identification number, course, and date about 2/3 of the way down the page
Course Number: Course Title
August 6, 2022

No page number on the title page



Paragraph indent 0.5 inches 12-point Times New Roman font One-inch margins

Double-spaced lines

This essay discusses how to format, cite, and submit an academic essay. It is also an example of a correctly formatted essay. Following this example will help students meet the CGSC writing standards.¹

One line between paragraphs

First, format the essay correctly. Set the page margins at one inch. Use 12-point Times New Roman font. Indent the first line of each paragraph one half inch and double-space the lines. Do not put an extra line between paragraphs. For longer essays, use section headings for organization and clarity. A properly formatted essay makes a positive first impression.

Next, cite all sources. Use Chicago-style shortened footnotes and bibliography.² A shortened note consists of the author(s), abbreviated title, and page number(s) or other pointing information (if necessary). Put the bibliography on a new page at the end of the essay. Include entries for all cited sources. Proper citations avoid plagiarism and strengthen the writer's arguments.

Finally, turn in the essay. Write the essay title, author's name or identification number, the course number and title, and the date on the title page. Submit the essay on Blackboard or follow alternate instructions from the professor.

These guidelines are straightforward but essential. Using correct format, proper citations, and proper turn-in procedures ensure that administrative mistakes do not detract from what could otherwise be an excellent essay.

10-point Times New Roman footnotes

¹ Lythgoe et al., *Professional Writing*, 2.
² Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14.19, 14.29.

1 ← Page numbers centered in the bottom margin beginning on the first page of text

Start the bibliography on
a new page

→ **Bibliography**

Entries single-spaced

0.5-inch
hanging
indent

Lythgoe, Trent J., Allan S. Boyce, Sean N. Kalic, Richard A. McConnell, Mary L. Noll, and

←→ Bruce J. Reider. *Professional Writing: The Command and General Staff College Writing Guide*. Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2024.

University of Chicago. *The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th Edition*. The Chicago Manual of Style Online, 2017. <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>.

←
One line between
entries

APPENDIX B CITATION SUPPLEMENT

This appendix is not a comprehensive citation guide and does not replace the CMS. Instead, it provides a quick reference for common citation tasks. It also describes the CGSC’s interpretation of CMS guidelines where CMS guidance is vague or unspecified (e.g., military doctrine, CGSC courseware, etc.).

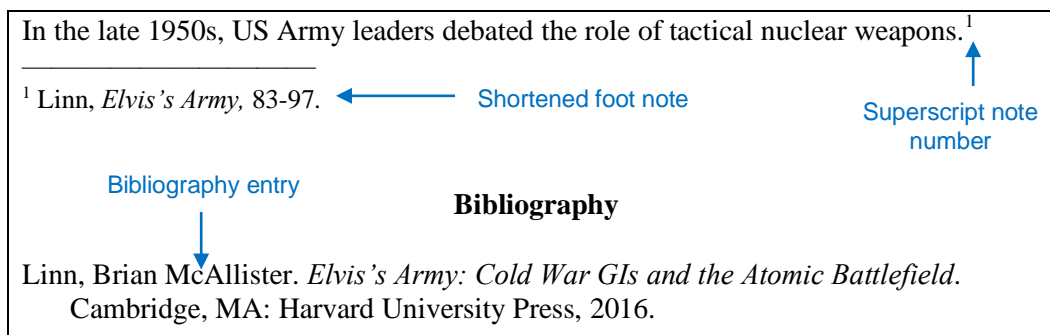
The CGSC uses Chicago-style citations as described in the *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS) 17th Edition and *Turabian: A Manual For Writers* 9th Edition. Chicago-style citations include two versions: author-date and notes and bibliography.

For routine academic assignments, CGSC students will use *shortened footnotes and bibliography* described in CMS chapter 14 (see section 14.19 for an overview). The next section describes this system in detail. CGSC research programs, the Master of Military Art and Science (MMAS) program and the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), have different citation requirements. Students in those programs should consult the appropriate program guide.

Although the CMS is thorough, it cannot cover every situation. Fortunately, the Chicago citation system is flexible. Authors can modify CMS conventions as long as the modifications are logical, defensible, and consistent throughout the text. Keep in mind the main goals: to provide enough information for readers to find the sources used for evidence and give credit to the authors of those sources.⁶³

Citation Basics

A Chicago-style shortened footnote citation has three parts: a *superscript note* in the text, a *shortened footnote* at the bottom of the same page, and *bibliography entry* after the last page of text. Authors use shortened footnotes throughout the document—including the first note. Since authors provide full source information in the bibliography, they do not have to duplicate that information in long notes.



Shortened Footnotes

A shortened note consists of the author’s last name, the title of the work, and if necessary, page number(s) or other pointing information.

- For works with one, two, or three authors, list them all. For works with four or more authors, list the first author’s name followed by “et al.”
- Use the full title if it is four words or less. For longer titles, abbreviate the title (two to four words).

⁶³ Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14.1, 14.4.

- It is okay to abbreviate or initialize corporate authors in shortened notes (e.g., Department to Dept., University to Univ., Headquarters, Department of the Army to HQDA), but be consistent. See [Bibliography Entries](#) below for more details.
- When citing an entire source, page numbers are not required. When citing part of a source, include page numbers or other directing information.

Huntington argues that professionalism is the key to maximizing military effectiveness while minimizing the threat to the state.¹ However, Feaver counters that Huntington’s theory of professionalism fails to explain observed patterns of civil-military relations.²

¹ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*.

² Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematique.”

- When citing the same source consecutively, omit the title in the second reference.
- **Do not use *ibid.***

¹ Linn, *Elvis’s Army*, 83-97.

² Linn, 108-109.

Note Number Placement

Chicago style has no rules about where to place note numbers.⁶⁴ The overall goal is to clearly distinguish outside sources from the writer’s own ideas without cluttering the text. While each situation is different, the conventions below work in most contexts.

Paraphrases and Summaries

Place a note number at the end of the first sentence that paraphrases or summarizes the source (after the punctuation). **Do not place note numbers in the middle of a sentence** (see below for how to cite multiple sources in the same sentence with one note number).

Correct: Mission command requires trust.³

Wrong: Mission command requires trust³.

Wrong: Mission command³ requires trust.

Wrong: Mission command requires trust.^{3 4}

Wrong: Mission command requires trust.^{3,4}

⁶⁴ Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, FAQ 0113.

Quotations

Place the note number at the end of the quotation. Use quotation marks for short quotations of four lines or less. Use block formatting (single-spaced text indented 0.5 inches) for quotations of five lines or more.

Students of warfare have long puzzled over how to develop coup d'œil. Napoleon Bonaparte believed that the keys are study and experience. “Commanders-in-chief are to be guided by their own experience or genius...generalship is acquired only by experience and the study of the campaigns of all great captains...”¹ Army doctrine recommends a similar approach:

[Army] leaders train for various tactical situations, learn to recognize their important elements, and practice decision making under realistic conditions. They develop these abilities through years of professional military education, self-study, practical training, and operational experiences. These experiences sharpen the intuitive faculties required to solve tactical problems.²

That modern doctrine offers little more than Napoleon highlights the enduring significance of coup d'œil and how little progress has been made in unlocking the puzzle of its underlying principles and processes.

¹ Colegrove, *Distant Voices*, 19.

² Dept of the Army, *Offense and Defense*, p. 1-4.

Adapted from: Lythgoe, “Cognition and Coup d'œil,” 100.

One Source, Multiple Sentences

When multiple sentences refer to the same source, do not place a note number after each sentence. Instead, place one note number at the end of the first sentence that draws on the source. Then, use signal words and sentence flow to show continuing reference to the same source. In some cases, it may be appropriate to add a second note after the last sentence.

When continuing to use the same source over a paragraph break, place a note number at the end of the first sentence of the new paragraph (even if also using a signal phrase).

Multiple Sources, One Sentence

Do not place more than one note number at the end of a sentence. Instead, use a single note number, then list the sources in the order they appear in the text, separated by semicolons.

Mental agility is critical for Army commanders in large-scale combat. The high tempo and lethality of large-scale combat create rapid change.^① Yet, despite its importance, Army doctrine does not examine mental agility in depth. Doctrine acknowledges that leaders develop mental agility through study and experience.^② However, it describes neither how mental agility works, nor the kinds of studies and experiences needed to develop it.

Author's claim Evidence: Summary of Lundy and Creed (note 1).
Author's second claim.
Evidence: Summary of two sources (note 2).
Signal words show continued use of the note 2 sources.

¹ Lundy and Creed, "The Return of FM 3-0," 15.

² Dept of the Army, *Army Leadership*, p. 4-1; Dept of the Army, *Offense and Defense*, p. 1-4.

Adapted from Lythgoe, "Mental Agility in Combat," 3.

Bibliography Entries

Bibliography entries consist of the author(s), title of work, and facts of publication separated by periods.⁶⁵ List the entries alphabetically by author last name. For works with multiple authors, invert (last name first) only the first author. Capitalized titles of works headline-style. Italicize the titles of larger works (e.g., books and journals); use quotation marks for smaller works (e.g., articles and chapters); do not use quotation marks for websites, blogs, or social media.

- *Books and Larger Works.*
- "Journal Articles, Book Chapters, and Smaller Works."
- Websites, Blogs, and Social Media.

Do not abbreviate or initialize bibliography entries. When using initialized foot notes, put the initialism in parentheses after the corporate author. For example:

HQDA, *Army Leadership*, 1-4-1-5.

Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA). *Army Leadership and the Profession*. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22. Washington DC: Department of the Army, 2019.

https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN20039-ADP_6-22-001-WEB-0.pdf.

⁶⁵ Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14.20-23.

Common Sources

This section shows correctly formatted shortened notes and bibliography entries for common sources. Refer to the CMS for more details.

Book

Hastings, The Korean War, 201.

Hastings, Max. The Korean War. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2015.

Chapter of an Edited Book

McMaster, "Adaptive Leadership," 215.

McMaster, H. R. "Adaptive Leadership: Harold G. 'Hal' Moore." In *The Art of Command: Military Leadership from George Washington to Colin Powell*, edited by Harry S. Laver and Jeffery J. Matthews, 209–30. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008.

Print Journal Article

O'Connell, "A Simplified Framework," 185

O'Connell, Patricia K. "A Simplified Framework for 21st Century Leader Development." *The Leadership Quarterly* 25, 2 (April 2014): 183-203.

Report

Riley et al., *Annual Survey*, 10-12.

Riley, Ryan P., Kaitlyn Mihalco, Jennifer Harvey, Jon J. Fallesen, Kate Lambourne, and Matt McDonough. *2018 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army, May 2019.

Websites

List the publication or revision date if available:

Bazin, "Clausewitz's Military Genius"

Bazin, Aaron. "Clausewitz's Military Genius and the #Human Dimension." The Strategy Bridge, December 11, 2014. <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2015/12/28/clausewitzs-military-genius-and-the-human-dimension>.

List the access date if the publication or revision is unavailable:

Moore and Galloway, "LZ Xray Day 1."

Moore, Harold G., and Joseph L. Galloway. "LZ Xray Day 1." The Battle That Changed the War in Vietnam. Accessed May 16, 2023. <https://lzxray.com/lz-xray-day-1/>.

Uncommon Sources

This section discusses specific CGSC situations CMS may not cover.

Artificial Intelligence

CGSC students may not use large language model artificial intelligence (AI) applications (e.g., ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, and Google Gemini) for academic assignments unless the course author or instructor authorizes AI assistance in writing.⁶⁶ If authorized, students must cite the AI application. They must also save the prompts used and AI responses and include them as an appendix to the assignment.

Cite AI applications in a footnote. Include the appendix described above in lieu of a bibliography entry.⁶⁷

AI Application, response to “Prompt here,” Company or Website, Date.

ChatGPT, response to “Explain the causes of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War,” OpenAI, May 28, 2023.

Copilot, response to “What is the US Army writing standard?” Microsoft, May 5, 2023.

Course Readings

Cite the author(s) if available. If not, list the academic department or the US Army Command and General Staff College as the author.

Unpublished Reading

For course readings not published elsewhere:

Last, First. “Title of Reading.” In *Course Number and Title*. Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, Year.

Bradbeer, “Ridgeway Takes Command,” 15.

Bradbeer, Thomas. “Ridgeway Takes Command.” In *L400: The Art of Command*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2022.

If no author is listed, cite the department or organization that sponsors the course as the author.

Dept. of Command and Leadership, “The 2nd Armored Brigade,” 5.

Department of Command and Leadership. “The 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team.” In *L400: The Art of Command*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2022.

Published Reading

For published course readings, cite the original publisher. If the lesson includes a reformatted version, cite either one, but be consistent.

Published

McMaster, “Adaptive Leadership,” 215.

McMaster, H. R. “Adaptive Leadership: Harold G. ‘Hal’ Moore.” In *The Art of Command: Military Leadership from George Washington to Colin Powell*, edited by Harry S. Laver and Jeffery J. Matthews, 209–30. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008.

⁶⁶ Kem, “CGSC Bulletin 920,” 3.

⁶⁷ Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, FAQ
<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Documentation/faq0422.html>

Lesson reading

McMaster, "Adaptive Leadership," 6.

McMaster, H. R. "Adaptive Leadership: Harold G. 'Hal' Moore." In *L400: The Art of Command*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2022.

Reprinted Material in a Course Readings Book

Cite the original source followed by "Reprinted in" and the course readings book information. Use the page number from the course readings book for shortened notes.

Clausewitz, "What is War?" 55.

Clausewitz, "What is War?" in *On War*, 75-89. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. Reprinted in Department of Military History, *H100 Book of Readings*, 50-61. Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2022.

Class Lectures

Avoid citing class lectures and slides unless there is no alternative. Instead, cite course readings and other sources. Citing class lectures and slides signals lazy research.

Last, First. "Lecture or Lesson Title." *Course Number and Title*. Class lecture at the US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, lecture date.

Smith, "L403: Adaptive Leadership," 23.

Smith, Jane. "L403: Adaptive Leadership." *L400: Art of Command*. Class lecture at the US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, January 5, 2022.

Computer-Based Instruction

As with in-class lectures, use caution when citing computer-based instruction (CBI) modules. Cite course readings and other sources directly when appropriate. Cite the lesson author, module author, or department as the author. Include the abbreviation CBI in parentheses after the course title.

Last, First. "Lecture or Lesson Title." *Course Number and Title* (CBI). US Army Command and General Staff College. Access date. URL.

Dept. of Distance Education, "L403: Adaptive Leadership," 23.

Department of Distance Education. "L403: Adaptive Leadership." *L400: Art of Command* (CBI). US Army Command and General Staff College. Accessed January 5, 2022. <https://www.cbi-url.mil>.

Guest Speakers, Panels, and Similar Events

Last, First. "Title of Event." Type of event, Location of event, Date of event.

Smith, "The Evolution."

Smith, Jane. "The Evolution of American Civil-Military Relations." Speech, Fort Leavenworth, KS, January 5, 2022.

Military Publications

Department. *Title of Publication (Identification Number)*. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year. DOI or URL.

List the service department (e.g., Department of the Navy) for the author and the publisher. For joint publications, list Joint Chiefs of Staff. Treat doctrine publications as a series. List the publication title in italics followed by the publication series name and number in plain text.

Some military publications, such as Army doctrine, have unusual page numbers that resemble a page range. For example, when page 1-4 refers to chapter 1 page 4, not pages 1 through 4. To avoid confusion, use p. for pages and pp. plus and en dash (–) for a page range.⁶⁸

- One page: Dept. of the Army, *Army Leadership*, p. 1-4.
- Page range: Dept. of the Army, *Army Leadership*, pp. 1-4 – 1-5.
Dept. of the Army, *Army Leadership*, 1-4–1-5.

Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Leadership and the Profession*. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22. Washington DC: Department of the Army, 2019.
https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN20039-ADP_6-22-001-WEB-0.pdf.

Dept. of the Army, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence*, 4.

Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Preparing and Managing Correspondence*. Army Regulation (AR) 25-50. Washington DC: Department of the Army, 2020.
https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN32225-AR_25-50-003-WEB-6.pdf

Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Cyberspace Operations*, III-3.

Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Cyberspace Operations*. Joint Publication (JP) 3-12. Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018. https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_12.pdf?ver=2018-07-16-134954-150

When citing multiple versions or years of the same publication, include the year of publication in parenthesis in the footnote to make clear which source it refers to.

Dept. of the Army, *Army Leadership* (2019), pp. 1-4 – 1-5.

Headquarters, Department of the Army. *Army Leadership and the Profession*. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22. Washington DC: Department of the Army, 2019.
https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN20039-ADP_6-22-001-WEB-0.pdf.

US Government and Legal Documents

Refer to the “[Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide for Government Documents](#).”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14.151.

⁶⁹ Bowdoin College Library, “Chicago-Style Quick Guide.”

Secondary Citations

Writers use secondary citations when they find a source another author has cited, but the writer cannot access the original source. To create the secondary citation, cite the original work followed by “Quoted in” or “Cited in” and the secondary source. Include bibliography entries for both sources.

Napoleon said to his staff officers, “Gentlemen, examine this ground carefully, it is going to be a battlefield; you will have a part to play upon it.”¹

¹ Ségur, *Histoire et Mémoire*, 279. Quoted in Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 413.
[Original source](#) [Secondary source](#)

Bibliography

[List both sources in the bibliography](#)

Chandler, David G. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. New York: Macmillan, 1966.

Ségur, Philippe-Paul comte de. *Histoire et Mémoire*. Paris, 1836.

The quote above appears in Chandler’s *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. However, Chandler cites the 1836 book *Histoire et Mémoire* by Philippe-Paul comte de Ségur. Since this book is unusually old and written in French, it is impractical to find and cite it directly. Thus, a secondary citation is appropriate.

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APPENDIX C

STYLE AND USAGE SUPPLEMENT

The CGSC prefers [Chicago style and usage conventions](#). This appendix is a quick reference for common style errors and misconceptions, as well as military-specific situations that deviate from Chicago style or that *CMS* does not address.

General Conventions

Capitalization

Capitalize only proper nouns, and in some cases, terms derived from or associated with proper nouns.⁷⁰

Army Regulation 25-50 directs these conventions for internal Army correspondence:

Capitalize the word “Soldier” when it refers to a US Army Soldier.

Capitalize the word “Family” when it refers to US Army Family or Family members.

Capitalize the word “Civilian” when it refers to Army Civilians and is used in conjunction with Soldier and/or Family.

Initialisms

Spell out first, then initialize. Do not capitalize the original phrase except for proper nouns. Do not use periods between letters.

commanding general (CG); Army leader requirements model (ALRM); diplomatic, information, military, and economic (DIME); military decision-making process (MDMP)

However, use periods for personal names.

H.R. McMaster; W.E.B. DuBois

Abbreviate United States with periods (U.S.) when using traditional state abbreviations (e.g., N.Y., Fla.) or when required by administrative rules (e.g., official DoD correspondence).⁷¹ For academic work at the CGSC, writers may use either US or U.S.

Familiar abbreviations do not need to be spelled out first.

US (or U.S.); DoD; UN; NASA; NATO

Do not repeat abbreviated words after abbreviations.

The staff executed the MDMP ~~process~~.

The class covered the ALRM ~~model~~.

Consult the Army Publishing Directorate website for authorized abbreviations, brevity codes, and acronyms: <https://armypubs.army.mil/abca/SearchABCA.aspx>.

Non-English Names

Drop particles (e.g., von, van, de) when referring to people by last name unless the common convention is otherwise.

Carl von Clausewitz; Clausewitz;

Charles de Gaulle; de Gaulle

⁷⁰ Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 8.1.

⁷¹ Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 10.4; Dept. of Defense, *Manual for Written Material*, 33.

Numbers

Spell out numbers from zero to nine (including first to ninth). Use numerals for 10 and above, but use all numerals when numbers above and below 10 appear in the same sentence (see **units** below for use of numerals in units).

The staff developed three courses of action.

There were 16 brigades in Iraq.

The unit began with only 9 people, but in 6 months, it had over 100.

Spell out large, rounded numbers.

There are more than one million Soldiers in the US Army.

Use all numerals if it makes writing clearer (when discussing statistics, for example).

Only 5% of Soldiers took the survey.

Do not start a sentence with numerals.

Fifty-nine soldiers took the test, but only 51 passed.

Point of View and Pronouns

Use first person to refer to yourself as the author. Self-reference in the third person is a dated practice and sounds unnatural.⁷²

The author argues...

I argue...

The researcher analyzed three cases.

I analyzed three cases.

Avoid using the second person in academic writing.

You need good leadership.

Armies need good leadership.

Use second person when addressing a specific person (e.g., staff correspondence) where third person would be awkward and excessively formal.⁷³

I recommend **the colonel** attend.

I recommend **you** attend.

Gender-Neutral Language

Do not use *he* to refer to a person of unspecified gender. Instead, use gender-neutral language.⁷⁴ Alternatively, use *they* and related words (them, their, theirs, etc.) to refer to a single person where gender is unspecified or unimportant.⁷⁵

Prepositions and Conjunctions

Contrary to popular belief, writers may start sentences with conjunctions (e.g., and, but, or) and end sentences with prepositions (e.g., of, on, with).⁷⁶

⁷² Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, FAQ 0158.

⁷³ See also Dept. of the Army, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence*, para 1-39.

⁷⁴ Univ. of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 5.255

⁷⁵ Univ. of Chicago, 5.48, 5.526. See also FAQ <https://www-chicagomanualofstyle-org.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/book/ed17/part2/ch05/psec048.html>.

⁷⁶ Univ. of Chicago, 5.180, 5.203.

Verb Tense

Avoid unnecessary shifts between verb tenses—especially in the same sentence or paragraph.

When the Chinese **counterattacked**, UN forces **retreat**.

When the Chinese **counterattacked**, UN forces **retreated**.

Military Words and Phrases⁷⁷

battles, campaigns, and operations Capitalize well-known battles, campaigns, and operations, lowercase otherwise. Do not capitalize the generic terms alone. See also **wars**.

Battle of Gettysburg; the battle
the Vicksburg Campaign and the Gulf War ground campaign; the campaigns
Operation Chromite; the operation

branches Capitalize when referring to US Army branches, lowercase when referring to job titles.

Infantry branch; the Artillery branch chief
infantry soldier; paratrooper; aviator

cardinal directions Capitalize when referring to a place or region, lowercase otherwise.

the East (as in Eastern Europe or Asian culture); drive east; eastern flank

cavalry Lowercase except in unit names. Do not confuse with Calvary

cavalry operations; 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry

chief of staff of the Army Lowercase unless it appears before a name.

James C. McConville, the chief of staff of the Army;
Chief of Staff of the Army General James C. McConville

commander Lowercase except when appearing as a US Navy rank before a name.

the commander; the division commander; Commander Smith, USN

commander in chief Lowercase, not hyphenated.

corps Lowercase unless part of a unit title or referencing the US Army Corps of Engineers or the US Marine Corps.

III Corps; the corps; corps headquarters
Marine Corps; the Corps
The Army Corps of Engineers; the Corps of Engineers

Department of Defense DoD is acceptable on the first reference.

doctrine Lowercase

Army doctrine; joint doctrine

doctrine terms and concepts Lowercase.

the operations process; multi-domain operations (MDO); the military decision-making process (MDMP); intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB)

Family Capitalize when referring to Army Families in internal Army correspondence.

⁷⁷ Adapted from Dept. of the Army, “WWW.ARMY.MIL Style Guide.”

government Capitalize government bodies, departments, bureaus, and offices, but not the adjectives derived from them.

the US Congress; Congress; congressional record
the UN Security Council; the council meeting
the Department of the Army; the department office
the Army Staff; the staff meeting

Lowercase for generic governmental terms.

the Biden administration; the administration
the federal government; the US government

joint Lowercase unless part of a unit name.

the joint force; joint doctrine; Joint Task Force Smith; the joint task force

military services Capitalize US military services (departs from Chicago style).

the US Army; the Army
the United States Navy; the Navy
the Marine Corps; the Corps
the US Air Force; the Air Force

nation Lowercase.

service to the nation; US national interests

paratrooper Lowercase.

Pentagon Capitalize when referring to the headquarters of the DOD.

president Lower case except when used before the president's name.

President Biden; the president; see also **commander in chief**

ranks Lower case except when they appear where the first name would normally be.

Major General Garcia; the general; the commanding general
Command Sergeant Major Ash; the command sergeant major
Sergeant Peters; the platoon sergeant
Private Smith; the private
officers; warrant officers; non-commissioned officers; junior enlisted

Soldier Capitalize when referring to US Army Soldiers in internal Army correspondence.

the US Army has many Soldiers; all armies need good soldiers

Special Forces Capitalize when referring to the Army branch. Otherwise, use lowercase **special operations forces**.

a Special Forces officer; a mission for special operations forces

theories, models, and frameworks Lowercase except when a proper noun is included

theory of relativity; Newton's first law; ends, ways, and means; Boyd's OODA loop

units Use numerals for all unit names except those that are usually spelled out. Capitalize proper unit names, lowercase otherwise.

3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division; the battalion; the battalion area

2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division; the brigade; brigade headquarters

XVIII Airborne Corps; the corps; the corps command post

First Army; the field army; the army headquarters

Sixth Fleet; fleet headquarters

1st Air Force; the air force commander

wars Capitalize major wars and revolutions but not the generic terms alone.

the American Revolution; the revolution

The Korean War; the war

Do not capitalize recent or ongoing conflicts when a historical convention is not yet established.

the Syrian civil war; the Russia-Ukraine war

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APPENDIX D
WRITING ASSESSMENT AND RUBRIC (FORM 1009W)

| | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| Name | Assignment |
|-------------|-------------------|

| Score | A | B | C | U |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| | 90-100 Superior | 80-89 Satisfactory | 70-79 Marginal | 0-69 Unsatisfactory |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Substance | |
| Organization | |
| Style | |
| Correctness | |

Professional Writing Rubric

| | A Superior | B Satisfactory | C Marginal | U Unsatisfactory |
|---------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Substance | <p>Fully achieves the purpose.</p> <p>Advances a coherent thesis.</p> <p>Supports the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning.</p> | <p>Achieves the purpose with minor shortfalls.</p> <p>Advances a generally coherent thesis.</p> <p>Supports the thesis with evidence and plausible reasoning.</p> | <p>Partially achieves the purpose.</p> <p>Struggles to advance a thesis due to lack of coherence.</p> <p>Struggles to support the thesis due to weak evidence or flawed reasoning.</p> | <p>Fails to achieve the purpose.</p> <p>Fails to advance a thesis or thesis is incoherent.</p> <p>Fails to support the thesis due to lack of evidence or severely flawed reasoning.</p> |
| Organization | <p>Introduction, main body, and conclusion are clear and effective.</p> <p>Thesis is stated early and clearly.</p> <p>Major sections and paragraphs arranged in a logical order.</p> <p>Paragraphs well-organized around one idea.</p> | <p>Introduction, main body, and conclusion are mostly effective.</p> <p>Thesis is clear.</p> <p>Major sections and paragraphs arranged in a generally logical order.</p> <p>Most paragraphs are well-organized around one idea.</p> | <p>Introduction, main body, and conclusion are ineffective.</p> <p>Thesis is vague.</p> <p>Arrangement of major sections and paragraphs often lacks logic.</p> <p>Paragraphs are often unorganized or discuss multiple ideas.</p> | <p>Introduction, main body, and conclusion are missing.</p> <p>Thesis is missing.</p> <p>Arrangement of major sections and paragraphs is confusing and illogical.</p> <p>Nearly all paragraphs are poorly organized and unfocused.</p> |
| Style | <p>Text is clear; easy to read and understand.</p> <p>Sentences are clear and concise.</p> <p>Prefers simple words; omits needless words.</p> <p>Prefers active voice; uses passive voice appropriately.</p> <p>Tone is appropriate; formal but conversational and confident.</p> | <p>Text is generally readable and understandable.</p> <p>Sentences are generally clear and concise.</p> <p>Mostly prefers simple words; omits needless words.</p> <p>Prefers active voice; occasionally uses inappropriate passive voice.</p> <p>Tone is generally appropriate.</p> | <p>Text is often difficult to read and understand.</p> <p>Sentences are often unclear or needlessly lengthy.</p> <p>Often uses unnecessarily complicated words or needless words.</p> <p>Frequently uses inappropriate passive voice.</p> <p>Tone is often inappropriate.</p> | <p>Text is often impossible to read and understand.</p> <p>Unclear, needlessly lengthy sentences predominate.</p> <p>Word complexity and density make the text difficult to read.</p> <p>Frequent inappropriate passive voice impedes understanding.</p> <p>Tone is unprofessional or offensive.</p> |
| Correctness | <p>Free of punctuation, spelling, and grammar errors.</p> <p>Document formatted correctly.</p> <p>Cites all sources using the correct format.</p> | <p>Minor punctuation, spelling, and grammar errors that do not interfere with understanding.</p> <p>Document formatted generally correctly.</p> <p>Cites all sources; citation formatting has minor errors.</p> | <p>Punctuation, spelling, and grammar errors sometimes interfere with understanding.</p> <p>Document formatting has several problems.</p> <p>Cites all sources; citation formatting has major errors.</p> | <p>Severe punctuation, spelling, and grammar errors impede understanding.</p> <p>Document formatting has several major problems.</p> <p>Fails to cite all sources.</p> |

APPENDIX E RESOURCES

- * [An Introduction to Writing Across the Curriculum](#). Colorado State University.
 - * [The Craft of Research](#). Booth et al.
 - * [The Craft of Writing Effectively](#). Larry McEnerney.
 - [Economical Writing: Thirty-Five Rules for Clear and Persuasive Prose](#). Dierdre Nansen McCloskey
 - * [The Essential Don Murray: Lessons from America's Greatest Writing Teacher](#). Donald Morison Murray.
 - [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#).
 - * [Designing Essay Assignments](#). Gordon Harvey, Harvard Writing Project
 - [Harvard Library Writing Guide](#). Harvard University.
 - [Harvard Writing Guides](#). Harvard University.
 - * [In-Class Writing Exercises](#). University of North Carolina.
 - [The Little Red Writing Book](#). Brandon Royal
 - [On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction](#). William Zinsser.
 - [On Writing: A Memoir Of The Craft](#). Stephen King
 - [OneLook Dictionary and Thesaurus](#).
 - [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#). Purdue University.
 - * [Responding to Student Writing](#). Harvard Writing Project
 - [The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century](#). Steven Pinker.
 - [Writing & Research in the Disciplines](#). University of Mississippi
 - [Write Tight: Say Exactly What You Mean with Precision and Power](#). William Brohaugh.
 - [Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing](#).
 - [Writing Strong Paragraphs](#). University of Newcastle.
 - * [Writing to Learn](#). William Zinsser.
 - [Writing Tools: 55 Essential Strategies for Every Writer](#). Roy Peter Clark.
- * Recommended for faculty.

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APPENDIX F

WRITING FOR PUBLICATION

Army professionals publish their writing to improve the Army and steward the Army profession.⁷⁸ Publishing enables leaders to communicate with each other, their units, and the rest of Army. Publishing creates knowledge ecosystems where communities of interest debate ideas so the best ones rise to the top. And publishing embeds writing in the Army’s culture and helps Soldiers develop their writing skills.

Most importantly, professional writing helps the Army win wars. When Soldiers write and publish, their insights and lessons learned travel beyond their organizations and contribute to the collective wisdom of their branches and the Army.

How to Publish

Creating Value

The principles and processes described in this guide apply when writing to publish. Like other professional work, published writing must be purposeful, credible, and clear. Authors can use the writing process to produce work that meets high substance, organization, style, and correctness standards.

Yet, published work requires something more—*value*.⁷⁹ Valuable writing achieves a *useful* purpose for an audience. Noted professional writing coach Larry McEnerney explains that “...more than anything else...your writing needs to be valuable. Because if it’s not that, nothing else matters, it makes zero difference...If it’s clear and useless, it’s useless. If it’s organized and useless, it’s useless. If it’s persuasive and useless, it’s useless.”⁸⁰

Thinking about how a prospective article will create value, and for whom, is the first, most important step when writing for publication. To figure out if a prospective article will be valuable, ask these questions:

- *What’s the problem?* What is the mission or goal? What obstacles are in the way? What do we not understand that we should?
- *Who cares?* Who will be interested in this problem? What community of interest is trying to accomplish the mission or goal?
- *How will your article change or solve the problem?* How will this article help the community of interest understand or solve their problem?

Getting Started

Begin by selecting a valuable topic. Perhaps your recent exercise or deployment revealed a gap in doctrine or new tactics. Or maybe you read about a historical battle or leader that can help solve current problems. These are just a few examples.

Next, narrow the topic. Hone your idea until you can express your thesis clearly in about 10 words. For example, “The Falklands War provides important lessons for operating in the Indo-Pacific.”

Use your thesis statement to build an outline. List the major points and key evidence that will support your thesis.

⁷⁸ The authors thank Major Zach Griffiths for contributing to this appendix.

⁷⁹ McEnerney, “The Craft of Writing Effectively.”

⁸⁰ McEnerney, 14:00, 14:58

Once you have an outline, write an abstract. Convert the thesis statement and outline into a 100-word article summary. Use complete sentences—no bullet points. Writing an abstract will help you clarify and focus your thinking. The abstract is also useful for pitching your idea to a publisher.

Although there are many ways to write an abstract, the SCoRE method is simple and effective:

- **S**ituation. Describe the context and topic.
- **C**omplication. Describe the problem, why it's important, and if necessary, to whom it's important. The complication is the first half of the article's *value proposition*.
- **R**esolution. State how the article changes or solves the problem. The resolution is the second half of the *value proposition*.
- **E**xplanation. Briefly describe how the article will support the thesis by summarizing its major points or key evidence.

The Writing Process

Finally, write the article using the writing process. Whether writing for school, commanders, or publication, the process does not change.

During the process, seek feedback from experts, colleagues, supervisors, mentors, and peers. Feedback may sting (have a thick skin), but it will strengthen the article and help ensure it is valuable, credible, and clear.

Where to Publish?

Journals and publishers cater to specific communities of interest. Successful authors target outlets whose readership will be interested in the article's topic. For example, most Army branches publish a [magazine or journal](#) focused on issues important to people in that branch.

Identifying target publications early also helps shape the final product. Publications vary widely in aim, scope, requirements, and submission process. Most provide these details in an author guide. Target three to five outlets, then write the manuscript to conform roughly to their guidelines.

It may be helpful to pitch the article to prospective publishers. Send an abstract to the editor and ask if the article is a good fit for their outlet.

Submitting

Once the manuscript is complete, send it to your security office and public affairs office for review to ensure it does not contain sensitive information.

Next, submit it using the publisher's instructions. Some may want an abstract first. Some will receive manuscripts by email; others use dedicated workflow software such as ScholarOne.

Submit to one publisher at a time. Publishers may require authors to confirm they have not sent the article elsewhere. But even if they do not, submitting an article to more than one publisher simultaneously is unprofessional.

After submitting, be patient. It may take weeks or months to get feedback. The publisher's author guide or submission page will usually indicate how long the process normally takes. If the expected decision date comes and goes with no feedback from the editor, inquire politely about the article's status.

The process to accept or reject a manuscript varies by publisher. Many military publishers, such as the Army's branch journals, are edited but not peer-reviewed. The editor or editorial committee will review the manuscript and decide to accept or reject.

A peer-reviewed process is more involved. First, the editor decides if the manuscript merits peer review. If not, they will “desk reject” it. If the manuscript makes it to peer review, the editor will ask two or three experts to review it blindly, meaning the reviewers will not see the author’s name or qualifications.

Peer review usually takes two to eight weeks. The reviewers will give the editor feedback and recommend a decision. After considering this feedback, the editor will decide what’s next. They may:⁸¹

- *Accept*. The editor will publish the article as-is or with minor edits.
- *Revise and resubmit* (conditionally accept, often called an “R&R”), which means the editor will publish the article if the author agrees to revise it to satisfy the reviewers’ concerns.
- *Reject with an option to resubmit*. The editor will not publish the article due to significant concerns. However, the editor believes the article has promise and is willing to reconsider a significantly revised version.
- *Reject*. The editor will not publish the article even with significant revisions.

Accept, or Revise and Resubmit

Congratulations! You are a step closer to publishing your manuscript.

Editors rarely accept manuscripts unconditionally; revise and resubmit is far more common. Take a moment to celebrate, then get back to work. The *revise* in revise and resubmit means just that—there is work to do to get over the finish line.

Begin by carefully reading the editor’s comments and recommended revisions (and those of peer reviewers, if available). The comments may sting but do not take them personally. Editors and peer reviewers want to help authors publish quality work.

After reading the comments, prepare a response letter. Begin by thanking the editor for considering the manuscript and the peer reviewers for their time and thoughtful comments. Next, respond to each comment. A good technique is cutting and pasting the comments into the letter and writing a response below each one. Use italics or a different font to distinguish comments from responses.

Authors must decide whether to accept recommended revisions. Usually, the choice is easy. Most suggestions will improve the paper. However, reviewers may occasionally recommend revisions the author deems unnecessary. Nevertheless, it is best to accept the revision if it does not materially change the manuscript. Build goodwill with the editor—do not quibble over minor issues.

For accepted changes, write a brief response describing the change and where in the paper to find it, e.g., page and paragraph.

Sometimes, reviewers recommend changes that materially change the paper. If you believe rejecting a reviewer’s recommendation is justified, stand your ground. Write a detailed response providing a solid rationale. For scholarly articles, citing additional literature and including a reference list at the end of the response letter may be necessary.

No matter what, remain professional. Remember that communicating tone in writing is complex. Most comments that feel like a personal attack are not intended as such. But even if a reviewer’s comments are clearly unprofessional, do not respond in kind. Remember that editors decide whether to publish a paper or not. Respond to reviewers but communicate to the editor.

⁸¹ The decision wording may vary by publisher.

Reject

Editors cannot accept all manuscripts. All writers have their work rejected at some point. It is part of being a writer. While rejection is hard, there are ways of dealing with it.

- Avoid taking it personally. Separate yourself from your work.
- Use rejection to improve. Learn from editor and reviewer feedback.
- Above all, do not quit. Use rejection to renew your desire to write and publish.

Conclusion

Publishing writing is an essential part of being a professional Soldier. Writing connects people and ideas, and it promotes professional discourse and debate. The writing and publishing process is challenging but rewarding.

Write and publish. You might change the Army.

EPIGRAPHS AND QUOTATIONS

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| 1 | Zinsser, <i>On Writing Well</i> , 9. |
| 2 | Lamott, <i>Bird by Bird</i> , 3. |
| 4 | Zinsser, <i>Writing to Learn</i> , 11. |
| 7 | Tutu, <i>The Second Nelson Mandela Lecture Address</i> . |
| 13 | Morrison, <i>What Moves at the Margin</i> , 79 |
| 19 | Murray, <i>The Maker's Eye</i> , 611. |
| 19 | McCloskey, <i>Economical Writing</i> , 7 |
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| 21 | King, <i>On Writing</i> , 57 |
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| 27 | Zinsser, <i>On Writing Well</i> , 6. |
| 27 | McCloskey, <i>Economical Writing</i> |
| 32 | Zinsser, <i>On Writing Well</i> , 6 |
| 33 | King, <i>On Writing</i> , 125 |
| 38 | Zinsser, <i>On Writing Well</i> , 70. |
| 39 | Murray, <i>The Essential Don Murray</i> , 6. |

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