



The Brainfuse Writing Lab Essential Development Guide

A Quick Reference for Developing your Essay

Addressing the Assignment's Purpose

When beginning any writing assignment, always read the instructions to determine what type of paper you will write. Common types of writing assignments include argumentative essays, rhetorical analyses, book reports, and literary analyses. **Different types of assignments have different requirements; not all essays are the same!** For example:

- A *rhetorical analysis* may require that you evaluate the effectiveness of an author's argument.
- An *argumentative essay* may require that you evaluate several sources to develop your own stance on a topic.
- A *book report* may require that you summarize the contents of a book in a formal essay.
- A *literary analysis* may require that you analyze how an author conveys a certain theme using certain literary devices.

Length and formatting requirements: The length of the paper may help you determine the amount of research you will need to do. For example, a twelve-page paper will likely include more outside source material than a four-page paper.

Before you begin the writing process, it's important to note that you do not need a ready-made main idea or answer to something your instructor asks. **Oftentimes, your research will develop and inform your stance on a particular topic.** Thus, try to begin your writing process with questions, not answers. An excellent paper typically responds to a question that does not have a simple answer.



Developing your Argument: Cohesion & Synthesizing Sources

Cohesion refers to an essay's flow and how ideas are connected. To understand paragraph-level cohesion, let's look at the typical structure of a body paragraph:

1. **Claim:** a statement that supports your main idea and serves as the topic sentence for the paragraph.
2. **Evidence:** information from an outside source that attests to the validity of your claim (and is followed by appropriate citations.)
3. **Reasoning:** an explanation of how an outside source supports your claim using your own words. This is where you will *synthesize* your sources.

To ensure your paper is cohesive:

- The topics for your body paragraphs should be presented in the same order as your thesis.
- Explain outside source material before shifting topics! Don't simply quote the author and leave it uncommented upon.

Students commonly make the mistake of ending a paragraph with a quote or other form of evidence. Instead, end body paragraphs by **synthesizing sources** and forming **transitional sentences**.

Synthesis is the process of using one or multiple sources to explain an idea. For example, a literary analysis may include a paragraph that uses evidence directly from a novel, scholarly source, or both. The concluding sentences of this paragraph should discuss a common idea between the two texts before transitioning to the next paragraph.

Transitions help your reader understand how ideas are connected. After synthesizing sources with the claim made in the topic sentence, consider discussing a similarity between the topic of one paragraph and the next. Here's an example of a transition that could be used in a paper on point of view in the novel *As I Lay Dying*:

While Faulkner uses 15 different points of view in As I Lay Dying to provide insight into many characters' interior monologues, he also uses these perspectives to undermine the characters' ability to verbally communicate with one another.

This transition implies that while interior monologues and verbal communication are the topics of different paragraphs, they are connected through the main idea of the paper (Faulkner's use of point of view).



Style

In writing, style is defined by *how* information and text is formatted and presented to readers. There are many styles of writing such as academic papers, novels, or business letters. Many factors influence style including word choice, tone and voice.

Word Choice can greatly affect and change the style, voice, and tone of a particular text. Certain words can spark different emotions in a reader such as suspense, happiness, sadness, anger or educated. Some words can make a text sound academic and scholarly while others set a more personal and emotional tone. Therefore, using the right vocabulary is extremely important!

Tone is the overall approach and attitude the writer takes toward the writing. Generally, tone is intentionally developed in order to convey the writer's intended message. Different types of tone include:

Formal & Informal

- **Formal Language:** Commonly found in academic articles, reports, and textbooks. Usually employs a pedagogic tone.
Example: According to the Institute for National Health Care, 47% of middle-aged Americans are in danger of contracting the flu this winter.
- **Informal Language:** Found in more personal and relaxed forms of writing such as personal journals, post-cards, children's and young adult fiction.
Example: Don't forget to get your flu shot this winter!

Energetic: Creates an upbeat and positive or motivating atmosphere.

Example: Patience. Persistence. Practice. Those are the three skills that any novice writer looking to write the next big bestseller needs!

Suspense: Instills a sense of uneasiness or uncertainty in the reader.

Example: There was a loud bang and then silence. Sarah could hear her heart beating as loud as a drum. The sound of the intruder's footsteps suddenly thumped just outside the door, getting closer and closer.

Happy/Positive: Creates a cheerful and jovial visualization; relaxes the reader.

Example: The feathery clouds slowly drifted across the clear blue sky. The sun shone brightly, casting an illuminating glow over the hills and flowers. The sounds of birds cheerfully chirping filled the air.



Voice is the distinct personality or attitude found in a piece of writing. Voice and tone are closely related and *heavily* impacted by the writer's word choice. Using different perspectives in writing also influences and changes the style and tone of the text:

First person perspective is used when the speaker is referring to him or herself with first person pronouns such as I/me/we. This *informal* style of writing creates a personal bond between reader and writer.

Example: The teacher asked me a question but I didn't know how to answer it. I felt so embarrassed!

Second person perspective is used to address the reader directly with the pronoun you/your. This can create an instructional tone to one's writing.

Example: If you want to make cookies, you will need flour and sugar.

Third person perspective is usually used in business and academic writing. By objectifying the topic and employing text that is devoid of all personal references or feelings, the author is able to present an argument in a way that appears unbiased and formal. This perspective uses pronouns such as she/he/they/it.

Example (APA): In a recent research study on the central nervous system, Chan (2019) noted how stimuli respond to pain provocations in human beings under stress.

Example (MLA): In a recent research study on the central nervous system, Chan noted stimuli respond to pain provocations in human beings under stress (21).