

Trinity

College of the Bible And Theological Seminary



Writing Helps Guide

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Writing Information and Help – Writing and Style Index

An index of the Writing Information and Help pages on Trinity’s website for student writing help at all degree levels. The following pages will help students make the most of their writing skills. The first link is a full PDF of all the Writing Helps that are contained on Trinity’s website. You may download this file and print it or use it as you need. If you redistribute the information in any way, all we ask is that proper credit be given. Trinity students may contact Trinity at contact@trinitysem.edu if they have further questions.

Table of Contents

- [General Research Paper Guidelines](#)
- [Annotated Bibliographies](#)
- [Turabian Style](#)
- [Trinity’s Writing Standards](#)
- [How To Think Logically](#)
- [How To Outline](#)
- [How To Write An Abstract](#)
- [How To Write A Precis](#)
- [How To Write Correct Sentences](#)
- [How To Write Good Paragraphs](#)
- [How To Write A Whole Composition](#)
- [How To Master Diction, Rhetoric, and Style](#)
- [How To Use Headings](#)
- [How To Use Outside Sources](#)
- [How To Write A Critical Paper](#)
- [How To Write A Research Paper](#)
- [Helpful Resources](#)

Research Paper Guidelines

Research papers should follow the guidelines of formal academic writing. The essay should introduce a topic and then present a thesis (argument) about a particular issue. The body of the paper should be a formal expository argument supporting the thesis. The thesis should be derived from academic research and analytical thinking about the research. Remember that evaluators have strong feelings about maintaining the standards of formal academic writing. Thus, poor writing influences the evaluator's ability to assess the depth of learning the student is attempting to convey.

It is important when exploring or developing the ideas and concepts of others, to correctly attribute research sources using an appropriate documentation style. Although you can offer your own interpretations and ideas in your essay, you also need to refer to expert research sources and writers in the field under discussion. Remember to paraphrase your source material rather than to have extensive and frequent quotes. The point here is that the evaluator is not interested in reviewing extensive excerpts from various texts that are inserted for "filler". Unsuccessful essays are those that take voluminous excerpts from texts and then connect them with a few narrative statements written by the student. Inferior essays also tend to wander aimlessly through the narrative, rather than be characterized by clear and concise writing.

Successful essays

Successful essays, in contrast, exhibit critical thinking skills and academic discipline. Analysis, evaluation, synthesis, and logical development are the key skills the student applies to interpret ideas, works of literature, or historical events into a meaningful structure. Research and reading of multiple and conflicting sources are essential to the development of adequate essays. An essay that merely recounts events or facts, summarizes other people's ideas, or reports on a book's characters or plot is not fully developed.

Clearly, then, a number of reputable scholarly sources should be consulted. A portion of these should be recent publications (published within the last fifteen years) that provide a broad overview of your topic. An additional number of sources may be more narrowly focused on the particular issue under consideration. Knowledge of current theory and recent research is necessary. Use scholarly literature that describes recent theories and

research. The student's own experience may be used to support the thesis in the essay, but it should play a secondary role.

Students should carefully and deeply probe a specific topic or the content of a scholarly work. Essays should be well-developed, well-organized, interesting, original, and supported with reference to criticism. They should reflect an understanding of the time period or of the genre or of a particular theme. They should reflect critical thinking and awareness of the theory related to the content. They should follow the guidelines of formal academic writing.

Graduate and postgraduate papers differ from undergraduate papers in several ways. First, graduate and postgraduate essays contain more discussion and insight into the theory and background of the field. These essays may, if appropriate to the course, discuss several different theoretical approaches and provide more discussion about emerging and state-of-the-art issues, ideas, and practices. These essays will contain more citations and references.

Students need to back up their opinions with sources that demonstrate the validity of their approach as well as demonstrate opposing points of view. Students should be just as concerned with the quality of the sources in a reference list as in the quantity of sources. The evaluation of the quality of a source is based on its contribution to current theory, the timeliness of the source, and the depth of information the source provides.

How To Write Annotated Bibliographies

Annotated bibliographies, especially those done by graduate and post-graduate students, need to do more than give a brief synopsis of the work's contents. They need to discuss – in a concise but substantive fashion – the entry's relative strengths and weakness, especially in comparison with the representative body of literature in the field.

Your annotations should include the following elements. You should name the author of the source (or if it is anonymous use terms like “the author” or “the writer”) followed by a rhetorically accurate verb (such as asserts, argues, suggest, believes, reports, insists, indicates, contends) and a ‘that’ clause containing the major proposition (thesis statement) of the work. Then explain how the author develops or supports the thesis, usually reflecting the order of development in the work. You should also state the author's apparent purpose followed by an ‘in order to’ phrase. Finally, you should describe the intended audience of the source. You will also want to evaluate the usefulness, reliability, strengths and weaknesses of the source. You should use a standardized referencing format.

Example:

Goodall, Jane, “Primitive Research is Inhumane” *Animal Rights: Opposing Viewpoints*. Ed. Janelle Rohr, San Diego, Greenhaven, 1989, 95-100.

Goodall argues that most laboratories using primates engage in inhumane practices. She supports her argument through detailed descriptions of lab environments and draws special attention to the neglect of psychological comforts which these primates endure until they sometimes become insane. Her purpose is to speak on behalf of the chimpanzees (because they cannot speak for themselves) in order to persuade her readers to see that if we do not fight for improvements in lab care “we make a mockery of the whole concept of justice.” Goodall writes for a non-specialist audience interested in the issues of animal rights; there were no extensive footnotes or bibliography, and the diction was aimed at a well-educated but general audience. This source was a useful introduction to the topic and seems reliable, but was fairly short and very basic. Goodall is a well-known primate researcher and is passionate in her defense of primates, but did not present all points of the issue or counter arguments.

In these annotations you should concentrate on analyzing the source to discover how credible it is and the persuasive strategies used by its author. The annotations should help you keep track of your sources as well as encourage you to read carefully and thoroughly. Additional questions you might consider in writing your annotations:

1. Is the author “qualified” to write on the subject and in what way?
2. Does the author have a bias or agenda or make assumptions that affect his or her data or argument?
3. What method of collecting data to support claims is used by the author? Interviews? Library research? Laboratory experiments? Case studies? Questionnaires?
4. How does this study compare to similar studies? Does it agree or disagree with conventional wisdom, established scholarship, government policy, and so on? Are there other works to which this one is specifically indebted or against which it reacts?

Your annotations should be detailed but also succinct, probably no more than 300 words. As in the example, you should give bibliographic information in an approved style for a list of works cited.

Turabian Style

A Note About Using Turabian Style

Trinity requires Kate Turabian's *A Manual of Style of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* for all written work submitted to Trinity. Turabian allows for three kinds of notes: footnotes, end notes, and parenthetical notes. When footnotes and end notes are used, a bibliography is required. When parenthetical references are used, a reference list is required. The formatting differs according to each style.

It is appropriate to use abbreviations or full spellings for books of the Bible. Turabian would require abbreviations, but spelling out the names is preferable for assignments at Trinity. Title pages, tables of contents, spacing, the use of headings, etc. are all covered in the manual. Generally, for all work except for Major Writing Projects, Master Theses, Doctoral Theses, and Capstone Ministry Projects, use one inch margins at the top, bottom, right side, and left side of the paper. Twelve point Times New Roman font should be used throughout. No color print should be used. These general rules are also true for Major Writing Projects, Master Theses, Doctoral Theses, and Capstone Ministry Projects except a one and one-half inch margin should be used on the left hand side of the page.

Different departments and different disciplines prefer different styles of footnoting. For example, the Bible and Theology department prefers footnoting whereas the social science studies (psychology and education are examples) usually utilize parenthetical notes. Refer to the appropriate sections of Turabian for rules related to these styles. Before beginning Major Writing Projects, Master Theses, Doctoral Theses, and Capstone Ministry Projects, check with your committee to see if one style of notes is preferred over another.

[Examples in Turabian Citation](#)

[Further Examples and Samples in Turabian Citation](#)

Writing Standards At Trinity

Writing is one of the central activities through which students learn, communicate, and demonstrate learning. Academic writing differs from other forms of writing in that it usually:

- is appropriately narrow in focus,
- presents an argument based on sound critical thinking,
- draws upon and properly acknowledges the work of others, and
- presents new understanding in an organized fashion.

Unless otherwise indicated by the instructor, all writing in Trinity classes—from electronic bulletin boards, to personal essays, to formal research papers—will be evaluated on the basis of Standard American English, especially in terms of quality, creativity, effectiveness of argumentation, and accuracy of information. In addition, academic writing will be evaluated on the selection and use of appropriate supporting material. Any information not original to the student must be cited in an acceptable format found in the current edition of Kate Turabian's *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Use of information or material from outside sources without proper citation is plagiarism and is grounds for disciplinary action.

Academic Honesty: Fundamental to Trinity's mission and purpose statement is a commitment to principles of ethical academic integrity. Every person of the Trinity learning community is responsible for upholding the highest standards of honesty at all times.

Students, as members of this community, are also responsible for adhering to the principles of academic honesty. Violation of honesty standards will result in penalties given at the discretion of the faculty member. Offenders will be reported to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Students charged with a violation will have the right to appeal any disciplinary action to the Academic Committee.

Activities that have the effect or intention of interfering with education, pursuit of knowledge, or fair evaluation of a student's performance are prohibited. Examples of activities include, but are not limited to, the following definitions.

1. **Cheating:** Using or attempting to use unauthorized assistance, material, or study aids in examinations or other academic work, or preventing or attempting to prevent another from using authorized assistance, material, or study aids. Examples: using a cheat sheet in an exam; altering a graded exam and resubmitting it for a better grade, and so on.
2. **Plagiarism:** Using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific and proper acknowledgement. Examples: misrepresenting another's work (paper, report, article, or computer work) as one's own original creation and submitting it for an assignment; using some else's ideas without attribution; failing to cite a reference or to use quotation marks where appropriate, and

so on.

3. **Fabrication:** Submitting contrived or altered information in any academic exercise. Examples: making up data; fudging data; citing nonexistent or irrelevant articles, and so on.
4. **Multiple Submissions:** Submitting, without prior permission, any work submitted to fulfill another academic requirement. Example: submitting as your dissertation work done for some other purpose at another institution without the committee's express prior approval.
5. **Misrepresentation of Academic Records:** Misrepresenting or tampering with or attempting to tamper with any portion of a student's transcripts or academic record, either before or after coming to Trinity. Examples: forging a Enrollment Agreement Form or a grade report; tampering with computer records, and so on.
6. **Facilitating Academic Dishonesty:** Knowingly helping or attempting to help another violate any provision of this code. Example: working together on an exam or others' assignments intended to be an individual project without the instructor's express or prior approval.
7. **Unfair Advantage:** Attempting to gain unauthorized advantage over fellow students in an academic exercise. Examples: gaining or providing unauthorized access to examination materials (either past or present); obstructing or interfering with another student's efforts in an academic exercise; lying about a need for an extension for an exam or paper; continuing to write even when time is up during an exam etc.

Computer Crimes: Damaging or modifying computer programs without permission. Examples: piracy of copyright protected software; hacking; constructing viruses; knowingly introducing viruses into a system; copying programs and data belonging to others, and so on.

How to Think Logically and Logical Fallacies

Base your writing on logical thinking. Learn to use inductive and deductive reasoning in your writing. Avoid common fallacies.

INDUCTIVE REASONING: When you reason inductively, you begin with a number of instances (facts or observations) and use them to draw a general conclusion. Whenever you interpret evidence, you reason inductively. The use of probability to form a generalization is called an inductive leap. Inductive arguments, rather than producing certainty, are thus intended to produce probable and believable conclusions. As your evidence mounts, your reader draws the conclusion that you intend. You must make sure that the amount of evidence is sufficient and not based on exceptional or biased sampling. Be sure that you have not ignored information that invalidates your conclusion (called the “neglected aspect”) or presented only evidence that supports a predetermined conclusion (known as “slanting”).

DEDUCTIVE REASONING: When you reason deductively, you begin with generalizations (premises) and apply them to a specific instance to draw a conclusion about that instance. Deductive reasoning often utilizes the syllogism, a line of thought consisting of a major premise, a minor premise and a conclusion; for example, All men are foolish (major premise); Smith is a man (minor premise); therefore, Smith is foolish (conclusion). Of course, your reader must accept the ideas or values that you choose as premises in order to accept the conclusion. Sometimes premises are not stated. A syllogism with an unstated major or minor premise, or even an unstated conclusion, needs to be examined with care because the omitted statement may contain an inaccurate generalization.

THE TOULMIN METHOD: Another way of viewing the process of logical thinking is through the Toulmin method. This model is less constrained than the syllogism and makes allowances for the important elements of probability, backing, or proof for the premise and rebuttal of the reader’s objections. This approach sees arguments as the progression from accepted facts or evidence (data) to a conclusion (claim) by way of a statement (warrant) that establishes a reasonable relationship between the two. The warrant is often implied in arguments, and like the unstated premise in the syllogism, needs careful examination to be acceptable. The writer can allow for exceptions to a major premise. Qualifiers such as probably, possibly, doubtless, and surely show the degree of certainty of the conclusion; rebuttal terms such as unless allow the writer to anticipate objections.

FALLACIES: A deductive argument must be both valid and true. A true argument is based on generally accepted, well-backed premises. Learn to distinguish between fact (based on verifiable data) and opinion (based on personal preferences). A valid argument follows a reasonable line of thinking.

Fallacies are faults in premises (truth) or in reasoning (validity). They may

result from misusing or misrepresenting evidence, from relying on faulty premises or omitting a needed premise, or from distorting the issues. The following are some of the major forms of fallacies:

Non Sequitur: A statement that does not follow logically from what has just been said; in other words, a conclusion that does not follow from the premises.

Hasty Generalization: A generalization based on too little evidence or on exceptional or biased evidence.

Ad Hominem: Attacking the person who presents an issue rather than dealing logically with the issue itself.

Bandwagon: An argument saying, in effect, “Everyone’s doing or saying or thinking this, so you should too.”

Red Herring: Dodging the real issue by drawing attention to an irrelevant issue.

Either...Or: Stating that only two alternatives exist when in fact there are more than two.

False Analogy: The assumption that because two things are alike in some ways, they must be in other ways.

Equivocation: An assertion that falsely relies on the use of a term in two different senses.

Slippery Slope: The assumption that if one thing is allowed, it will be the first step in a downward spiral.

Oversimplification: A statement or argument that leaves out relevant considerations about an issue.

Begging the Question: An assertion that restates the point just made. Such an assertion is circular in that it draws as a conclusion a point stated in the premise.

False Cause: The assumption that because one event follows another, the first is the cause of the second. Sometimes called *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* (“after this, so because of this”).

How to Write an Outline for a Paper

Working from an outline helps you structure the logic of your paper. It identifies main ideas, defines subordinate ideas, disciplines your writing, maintains the continuity and pacing, discourages tangential excursions, and points out omissions.

A structured outline uses indentation and numbers to indicate various levels of subordination. Thus, it is a kind of graphic scheme of the logic of your paper. The main points form the major headings, and the supporting ideas for each point form the subheadings.

I. Major idea

A. Supporting idea

1. Example or illustration for supporting idea
2. Example or illustration for supporting idea
 - a. Detail for example or illustration
 - b. Detail for example or illustration

B. Supporting idea

II. Major idea

A. Supporting idea

1. Example or illustration for supporting idea
2. Example or illustration for supporting idea
 - a. Detail for example or illustration
 - b. Detail for example or illustration

B. Supporting idea

etc.

How to Write an Abstract for Trinity's Abstract Assignments

Writing an abstract for Trinity's abstract assignment should be a one page summary of the work being covered. A paragraph should introduce the work and purpose of the text being covered in the assignment, and should be focused primarily on general information regarding the text.

The second paragraph should be a summary paragraph of the contents of the text, point out the major points or thesis of the work, and explain the overall purpose of the text. This paragraph should be broad and inclusive enough so that the reader of the abstract can be familiar with the contents, what is covered in the text, and the overall perspective of the author of the text.

The third paragraph of the text should be a personal evaluation of the text. It should also discuss the strengths and weaknesses (if any) of the text, give some discussion of what personal insights gained from having read and understood the material, and how the material will be beneficial to life, ministry, understanding, etc. (or not).

The final paragraph of an abstract assignment should be a concise summary statement about the work overall, as well as any final impressions about the text.

How To Write A Précis

A précis is a concise restating of a book, journal article, or some other work. The word comes from the Old French and means to “cut short” (dictionary.com), so this is essentially what writing a précis entails. The purpose is to explain the main points, the supporting points, and the outline of the original work, but in a truncated manner. A précis is not a critical analysis or evaluation of the work, nor a personal evaluation of the work. Rather, it is objective in nature and demonstrates that the material has been understood and represented accurately.

When writing a précis, one should begin by reading the assigned text. As one goes through the text, it is helpful to take notes along the way and summarize in a couple of sentences the main point or each section, as well as make notes on any supporting evidence used to support the main point. Be sure to restate the author’s points in your own words.

It is helpful, especially with larger works, to build up your précis paper as you go along. Read a chapter, follow the steps above, and then write that portion of the précis from the notes made from that section. Be sure that your précis paper follows the outline of the original work.

When you structure your précis, the introductory paragraph should state the nature and purpose of the author’s work being, describe the discipline and field of the work, and what the main purpose of the work. The subsequent paragraphs should be summaries of the various sections of the work, and then the concluding paragraph should state the author’s concluding thoughts and also restate the main thesis of the work over all.

How To Write Correct Sentences

Master the essentials of the sentence as an aid to clear thinking and effective writing. Writing a good sentence is an art, and you can master that art by developing your awareness of what makes a sentence work. As you become more familiar with the relationships among sentence elements, you will strengthen your writing skills and will be better able to make your meaning clear to your reader (i.e., your grader!).

The most common sentence problems in student writing are: comma splice and fused (or run-on) sentence, sentence fragment (or incomplete sentence), agreement, and shifts. If you are unfamiliar with these terms and others such as subject, verb, object, complement, phrase, main clause, independent clause, subordinate clause, coordinating conjunction, number, person, etc., you are strongly encouraged to research their meanings and application in a standard English grammar book. Please see the list of recommended books in this Survival Manual or consider enrolling in a local or distance writing course.

Keep a few simple principles in mind:

COMMA SPLICE AND FUSED (OR RUN-ON) SENTENCE

Do not link two main (independent) clauses with only a comma (comma splice) or run two main clauses together without any punctuation (fused sentence).

Examples:

Comma Splice: The wind was cold, they decided not to walk.

Fused Sentence: The wind was cold they decided not to walk.

To correct comma splices and fused sentences: 1) Place a period after the first main (independent) clause and write the second main clause as a sentence; 2) use a semi-colon to separate main clauses; or 3) insert a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet) after the comma; or 4) make one clause subordinate to the other.

Revisions:

The wind was cold. They decided not to walk.

The wind was cold; they decided not to walk.

The wind was cold, so they decided not to walk.

The wind was so cold that they decided not to walk.

SENTENCE FRAGMENT

Avoid sentence fragments. The term fragment refers to a group of words beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period. Although written as if it were a sentence, a fragment is only a part of a sentence – such as a phrase or a subordinate clause.

Examples:

Larry always working in his yard on Saturdays.

Because he enjoys his flowers and shrubs.

Which help to screen his house from the street.

For example, a tall hedge with a border of petunias.

Eliminate fragments by making them into complete sentences or by connecting them to existing sentences. One way to eliminate many sentence fragments is to be sure that each word group has at least one subject and one predicate.

Corrections:

Larry always works in his yard on Saturdays.

He enjoys the flowers and shrubs.

OR: He enjoys the flowers and shrubs that help to screen his house from the street – for example, a tall hedge with a border of petunias.

AGREEMENT

Make a verb agree in number with its subject; make a pronoun agree in number with its antecedent.

A singular subject takes a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb.

Singular: The **car** in the lot **looks** shabby. [car looks]

Plural: The **cars** in the lot **look** shabby. [cars look]

When a pronoun has an antecedent (an antecedent is the noun to which the pronoun refers), the noun and pronoun should agree in number.

Singular: A **dolphin** has **its** own language. [dolphin – its]

Plural: **Dolphins** have **their** own language. [dolphins – their]

SHIFTS

Avoid needless shifts in person and number.

Shift: If a **person** is going to improve, **you** should work harder. [shift from third person to second person]

Better: If **you** are going to improve, **you** should work harder. [second person]

OR If **people** are going to improve, **they** should work harder. [third person]

OR If **we** are going to improve, **we** should work harder. [first person]

GENDER REFERENTS

Avoid awkward “his/her” and “he/she” gender constructions.

Awkward: The client is usually the best judge of his or her counseling.

Better: The client is usually the best judge of the value of counseling. [Omit gender referents.]

OR Clients are usually the best judges of the value of the counseling they receive. [Change to plural]

OR The best judge of the value of counseling is usually the client. [Rephrase the sentence.]

How To Write Good Paragraphs

A good paragraph is a mini-essay. It should demonstrate three components:

1. Introduction, i.e., a topic sentence
2. Body, i.e., supporting details
3. Conclusion or a transitional sentence to the paragraph that follows.

A good paragraph is characterized by unity, coherence, and adequate development.

Unity: State the main idea of the paragraph in a clearly constructed topic sentence. Make sure each sentence is related to the central thought.

Coherence: Arrange ideas in a clear, logical order. Provide appropriate transitions to the subsequent paragraph.

Adequate development: Develop your paragraphs with specific details and examples.

Strategies for adequate development:

Elaborate: Spell out the details by defining, or by clarifying and adding relevant, pertinent information.

Illustrate: Paint a verbal picture that helps make or clarify your point(s). Well illustrated pieces are easier to read and follow than those on a high level of abstraction.

Argue: Give the reasons, justifications, and rationales for the position or view you have taken in the topic sentence. Draw inferences for the reader and explain the significance of assertions or claims being made.

Narrate: Relate the historical development of the phenomenon at issue.

Process: Describe how something works.

Describe: Observe without preconceived categories.

Classify: Organize phenomena or ideas into larger categories that share common characteristics.

Analyze: Divide phenomena or ideas into elements.

Compare and Contrast: Show similarities and differences between two or more phenomena or ideas.

Relate: Show correlations and causes (beware of logical fallacies, however!)

A paragraph should be neither too short nor too long. A good paragraph in a Trinity exercise should be 5-6 sentences long. As a general rule, avoid single-sentence paragraphs. If your paragraphs run longer than a page, you are probably straining the grader's thought span. Look for a logical place to make a break or reorganize the material. Indent each new paragraph five spaces.

How To Write A Whole Composition

The following is a general structure to follow for many kinds of writing. Adapt it to specialized assignments as appropriate.

I. Introduction

The introduction is intended to draw the reader into the body of material to follow. It should begin with a general statement or question, sometimes called the “thesis statement” or “thesis question,” followed by a quick narrowing down to the main theme to be developed in the body. Set the stage quickly, give appropriate background, then move right into a transition sentence that will set up the reader for the body.

II. Body (Argument)

The body of a written piece is where you elaborate, defend, and expand the thesis introduced in the introduction. The body should support your main contention with supporting evidence and possible objections. A good body presents both sides of a case, pro and con. As you make your case, save your best argument for last. When presenting contrary views, be sure to set forth the strongest arguments so you can avoid being charged with erecting a “straw man.” The body includes three components:

Elaboration: Spell out the details by defining, or by clarifying and adding relevant, pertinent information.

Illustration: Paint a verbal picture that helps make or clarify your point(s). Well illustrated pieces are easier to read and follow than abstract ones.

Argumentation: Give the reasons, justifications, and rationales for the position or view you have taken in the introduction. Draw inferences for the reader and explain the significance or assertions or claims being made.

When moving from one sub-point or argument to another, use connecting or transitional words and phrases that enable your reader to easily follow the flow of your thinking. The following is a partial list of logical connectors that you can use:

exceptions – *but, alas, however, etc.*

illustrations – *for instance, for example, etc.*

conclusions – *thus, so, therefore, consequently, etc.*

comparisons – *similarly, by contrast, etc.*

qualifications – *yet, still, etc.*

additions – *moreover, furthermore, etc.*

III. Conclusion

Make your final appeal to the reader, a finishing, all-encompassing statement that wraps up your presentation in a powerful or even dramatic fashion. Normally a single paragraph, brief and concise, will suffice. The purpose of the conclusion is to leave the reader with an idea or thought that captures the essence of the body while provoking further reflection and consideration.

How To Master Diction, Rhetoric, and Style

Diction

How To Master Diction, Rhetoric, and Style Diction refers to precision and clarity in word choice as well as appropriate levels of usage. Make certain that every word means exactly what you intend it to mean. Eliminate ambiguity. Avoid informal, colloquial, regional, dialectical, nonstandard, archaic, and cliché expressions.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the art of using language effectively. Rhetoric involves the writer's purpose, the consideration of audience, the arrangement and organization of thought, smoothness, clarity, logic, and economy of expression.

Purpose

The clearer your purpose, the better your writing is likely to be. The purposes of nonfiction writing may be classified as expressive, expository, and persuasive. These purposes are often combined in an extended piece of writing. Expressive writing emphasizes the writer's subjective feelings and reactions. Expository writing focuses the reader's attention on the objective world. Persuasive writing is intended to influence the reader's attitudes and actions. Most writing is to some extent persuasive; however, it is usually called persuasive if it is clearly arguing for or against a position.

Audience and Occasion

Keep in mind the audience and the occasion for which you are writing. Your understanding of audience and occasion will determine your choice of words, examples, details, and tone. Tone is a reflection of your attitude toward your subject. It must be appropriate to your purpose, audience and occasion.

Arrangement and Organization of Thought

Thought units—whether single words, a sentence or paragraph, or longer sequences—must be orderly. You must aim for continuity in words, concepts, and thematic development from the opening statement to the conclusion so that readers (i.e., graders) will understand what you are presenting.

Continuity can be achieved in several ways. Punctuation marks contribute to continuity by showing relationships between ideas. They cue the grader to the pauses, inflections, subordination, and pacing normally heard in speech. Neither overuse nor underuse one type of punctuation, such as commas or dashes.

Continuity is also achieved through the use of transitional words. A pronoun that refers to a noun in the preceding sentence serves as a transition and also helps avoid repetition. Other transition devices are time links (then, next, after, while, since); cause and effect links (therefore, consequently, as a result); or contrast links (however, but conversely, nevertheless, although, whereas).

Smoothness, Clarity, and Logic of Expression

Aim for clear and logical communication. Sometimes when you spend much time close to your own material, you lose objectivity and may not see certain problems, especially inferred contradictions. Avoid setting up ambiguity, inserting the unexpected, omitting the expected and suddenly shifting the topic, tense, or person. These devices can confuse or disturb graders.

Economy of Expression

Say only what needs to be said. Tighten overly long papers by eliminating redundancy, wordiness, jargon, evasiveness, circumlocution, and clumsiness. Weed out overly detailed descriptions, gratuitous embellishments, elaborations of the obvious, and irrelevant observations or asides. Use no more words than are necessary to convey the meaning. Direct, declarative sentences with simple, common words are usually best. Short words and short sentences are easier to comprehend than long ones (although variety in sentence length can be helpful for readers). Similar precautions apply to paragraph length. Single-sentence paragraphs may be abrupt. New paragraphs provide a pause for the grader – a chance to store one step in the conceptual development before beginning another. If your paragraphs run longer than a page, you are probably straining the grader's thought span. Look for a logical place to make a break or reorganize the material.

STYLE

Style is the author's individual choice and arrangement of words, sentence structures, and ideas as well as less definable characteristics, such as rhythm and euphony. To a limited extent, style can be thought of as the written expression of a writer's personality and quality of thought. In academic writing, personality may need to be subordinated to clarity, simplicity, orderliness, and sincerity.

SOME STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE YOUR WRITING

1. Write from an outline. Sometimes coming up with an outline might prove difficult. In those cases, simply write on a piece of paper whatever comes to mind regarding a topic—questions, impressions, feelings, reservations, etc. From this free-style exercise, you should note how various thoughts might be rearranged into an outline. Then write your essay from this initial outline. At this stage do not be concerned about punctuation, spelling, or diction. Then go to suggestion #2.
2. Put the paper aside and reread it later. If you read the paper aloud, you have an even better chance of finding problems. After this, proofread the essay to correct spelling and grammar. Change sentences around as needed to make your paragraphs clearer.
3. Get critiques from one or two colleagues. Hire professional editorial help if necessary.

How To Use Headings

A system of levels of headings and subheadings can be used to correspond to the levels of subordination in an outline (i.e., the major ideas in your outline can be given a first level heading, the supporting ideas can be given a second level heading, and so on). Organizing your work in levels of subordination that are identified with appropriate levels of headings will make it easier for you to write your paper and will make it easier for your grader to understand your points.

Trinity requires students to use the headings style of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. However, some study guides might specify how your essay should be formatted. Any specifications from the study guide take precedence over Turabian.

KATE TURABIAN STYLE LEVELS OF HEADINGS

Level 1:

Centered Heading, Underlined or in Boldface, Capitalized Headline Style

Level 2:

Centered Heading, Not Underlined or Boldface, Capitalized Headline Style

Level 3:

Side heading underlined or in boldface, capitalized sentence style

Level 4:

Side heading, not underlined or boldface, capitalized sentence style

Level 5:

Heading indented and run into (at the beginning of) a paragraph and underlined or in boldface, capitalized sentence style

How To Use Outside Sources

Writing a research paper usually takes much more time than writing an essay based on what you already know. The distinctive feature of a research assignment is that it requires you to develop a subject in depth by drawing upon outside sources and acknowledging these sources responsibly.

You have several options for including material from other writers. You may quote their exact words, paraphrase them, or summarize them. Whatever option you choose, make sure that you use resources responsibly. Words or ideas taken from other writers should not be distorted in any way, and credit should be given whenever appropriate.

Plagiarism

Failure to cite a source, deliberately or accidentally, is plagiarism — presenting as your own work the words or ideas of another. After you have done a good deal of reading about a given subject, you will be able to distinguish between common knowledge in that field and the distinctive ideas or interpretations of specific writers. If you are in doubt about whether you need to cite a source, the best policy is to cite it.

Direct Quotations

A quotation should contribute an idea to your paper. Select quotations only if they are important and make them an integral part of your text. Direct quotations must be accurate in all details. Pay close attention to form, punctuation, and spacing.

Paraphrase

A paraphrase is a restatement of a source in about the same number of words. Paraphrasing enables you to demonstrate that you have understood your reading; it also enables you to help your audience (your course assessor!) understand the results of your reading. The most common reason for paraphrasing is to restate difficult material more simply.

Your restatement of someone else's words should honor two important principles: your version should be almost entirely in your own words, and your words should accurately convey the content of the original passage. If you simply change a few words in a passage, you have not adequately restated it. As a general rule, begin paraphrases with a phrase that indicates you are about to restate another writer's words, e.g., "Moffatt argued that"

Paraphrase whenever doing so will make your sources clearer or your paper flow more smoothly; quote when you want to retain the beauty or clarity of someone else's words.

Summary

A summary is a concise restatement (shorter than the original source). Summarizing enables writers to report the work of others without getting bogged down in unnecessary detail. When you summarize, you may find it useful to retain a key phrase from your source, but if you do so, put quotation marks around the words in question.

Paraphrase when you want to restate a passage so that it is easier to understand or fits more smoothly into your paper; summarize whenever you can save space by condensing a passage (or in some cases, an entire work).

Use The Following Citation Style And Apply It Consistently In Your Work

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, current edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

How To Write A Critical Paper

“CRITICISM”: n. The art, skill or profession of making discriminating judgments and evaluations.

THE ESSENCE OF CRITICAL THINKING

Ask Four Basic Questions as You Read / Listen:

- What is the book/message about as a whole?
- What is the author/speaker saying in detail, and how is it said?
- Is the book/message true, in whole or in part?
- What is the significance of the book/message?

ELEMENTS OF A CRITICAL PAPER

The following is a general structure to follow for the body of a critical paper. Be sure to include a suitable introduction and conclusion, as described in the previous section, How to Write a Whole Composition.

Adapt it to specific assignments as appropriate.

PART ONE: DESCRIPTION

- Classify the book/message according to kind and subject matter.
- *Very briefly*, state what the whole of the book/message is about.
- Enumerate the major parts of the book/message in their order and relation.

Define the problem or problems that the author/speaker is trying to solve.

PART TWO: INTERPRETATION

- Find the important words (terms) in the book/message and determine the author’s/speaker’s meaning of these terms, with precision.
- Identify the most important sentences (propositions) in the book/message, the ones that express the judgments on which the whole book/message rests. These are the foundational affirmations and denials of the author/speaker. They must be either premises or conclusions. State them in your own words.
- Construct the author’s/speaker’s arguments, beginning with any assumptions and/or self-evident propositions. An argument is the author’s/speaker’s line of reasoning aimed at demonstrating the truth or falsehood of his or her claims, that is, the coherent series of reasons, statements, or facts that support or establish a point of view. If the arguments are not explicitly expressed in the book/message,

you will need to construct them from sequences of sentences.

Determine the author's/speaker's solutions to the problem or question that he or she posed. Ask: Which problems were solved and which were not? Did the author/speaker know which were not solved?

PART THREE: CRITICISM

General Pointers.

From this point on, you will have a chance to argue with the author/speaker and express yourself, but keep in mind the following general maxims of scholarly etiquette:

Do not say that you agree, disagree, or suspend judgment until you have adequately interpreted the book/message. Do not begin criticism until you are able to say, with reasonable certainty, "I understand," i. e., I have done an adequate job with parts one and two. Complete the task of understanding before rushing in.

When you disagree, do so reasonably and not contentiously.

Demonstrate that you know the difference between knowledge and personal opinion by presenting good reasons for any critical judgments that you make.

Three conditions must be satisfied if controversy is to be well conducted:

Make an attempt at impartiality by reading/listening sympathetically.

Acknowledge any emotions that you bring to the dispute.

State your own assumptions explicitly.

Determine, wherever possible, the origins and the consequences of the author's/speaker's arguments.

Try to locate the origins of the author's/speaker's ideas in the larger picture of history. What movements, currents of thought, or other thinkers might have influenced him or her? Then carry the author's/speaker's ideas to their logical conclusions. To the best of your ability and given the academic background that you already possess, relate the author's/speaker's ideas to those of other authors with whom you are familiar.

Judge the soundness of the author's/speaker's arguments.

As called for, show where the author/speaker is *uninformed*. To support your remarks, you must be able to state the knowledge that the author/speaker lacks and show how it is relevant, i.e., how it affects the conclusions.

As called for, show where the author/speaker is *misinformed*, where assertions are made that are contrary to fact. This kind of defect should be pointed out

only if it is relevant to the conclusions. To support your remark, you must be able to argue the truth or greater probability of a position contrary to the author's / speaker's.

As called for, show where the author/speaker is illogical, where there are fallacies in reasoning. In general fallacies are of two sorts. There is the *non sequitur*, which means that the conclusion simply does not follow for the reasons that are offered. Then there is the problem of inconsistency, which means that two things the author/speaker has tried to say are incompatible. To make either of these criticisms, you must be able to show the precise respect in which the author's/speaker's argument fails to be forcibly convincing. Be concerned with this defect only if major conclusions are affected by it.

In addition, show where the author/speaker fails to draw any conclusions that are implied by the evidence given or principles involved.

If you have not been able to show that the author/speaker is uninformed, misinformed or illogical on relevant matters, you simply cannot disagree. You must agree, at least in part, although you may suspend judgment on the whole. If you have been convinced, you should admit it. If, despite your failure to support one or more of these critical points, you still honestly feel unconvinced, perhaps you should not have said that you understood in the first place!

Judge the *completeness* of the author's/speaker's arguments.

Define any inadequacy precisely. Did the author/speaker solve all the problems he/she started with? Did the author/speaker make the best use of available materials and resources? Did the author/speaker see all the implications and ramifications of the problem? Did the author/speaker make all essential or relevant distinctions in his or her presentation?

Judge the *value* of the book / message.

Your final evaluation must be concerned with the truth and significance of the book/message for a given purpose, i.e., its value. This judgment must be based on definite criteria. These criteria should be internal (soundness and completeness) as well as external (relevance to some purpose).

PART FOUR: (OPTIONAL) INTEGRATE THE ACADEMIC AND THE PERSONAL.

Engage the key idea(s) that are most provocative and alive for you. Consider how your experience is similar to or different from what you read. Identify any spiritual issues as they arose for you and your way of responding to or struggling with them. Describe which key ideas, if any, might be applied in your ministry.

How To Write A Research Paper

The Steps You Need to Write a Research Paper

STEP ONE: CHOOSE A TOPIC

Select a specific, focused topic to research. Where do topic ideas come from? If ideas are not suggested in your study guide, you can often find a topic by looking through your textbooks, particularly in the sections that list suggestions for further reading and study. You can go through lecture notes, examine books and articles in the library, look through subject catalogs, or refer to encyclopedias. Often the most interesting topics for you personally are drawn from your own experience – your personal knowledge, interests, and beliefs.

STEP TWO: NARROW YOUR TOPIC BY DEVELOPING SOME RESEARCHABLE QUESTIONS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ANSWER

Rather than beginning with a preconceived thesis (a truth claim) that you then must rationalize, narrow your topic by developing a set of questions related to it. You might start with the classic journalists' questions Who? What? When? Where? How? Why? Or ask, What is positive about "X"? What is negative? What is merely interesting?

Consider your topic from different perspectives. The static perspective focuses on what is. The dynamic perspective looks at action and change. The relative perspective examines relationships and systems. Ask, for example: How can "X" be systematically described? How has "X" changed over time? What other factors are related to "X"? How is one element of "X" related to another?

Other strategies for question development can focus on narration, process, cause and effect, definition, classification and division, or comparison and contrast. For example: In what sequence of events does "X" manifest? What precedes and what follows "X"? Is it possible to say what causes "X"? How can "X" be systematically defined? What classes and subclasses of "X" exist, and how are they significant to the whole of "X"? How does "X" compare and contrast with "Y"?

Some ideas will seem worth pursuing; others will seem inappropriate for your purpose, audience, or occasion. You will find yourself discarding ideas even as you develop new ones.

STEP THREE: SURVEY THE FIELD

Create a tentative bibliography of your topic by searching relevant databases, library catalogues, and existing bibliographies in books. For computerized indexes, carefully choose key words that best capture the essence of your

topic. Seek the help of a local professional librarian or Trinity's librarian if necessary.

Skim all of the works on the tentative bibliography to acquire a clearer idea of the topic and to ascertain which are most useful for your paper.

Find the passages in the books and articles that are most germane to your needs. Revise your research questions in light of what your literature survey reveals. Search and revise again if necessary.

STEP FOUR: WRITE THE PAPER

The following is a general structure to follow for many kinds of research papers. Adapt it to specific assignments as appropriate.

Introduction

Announce the subject, set the tone and gain the reader's attention and interest. Provide some general information on the background of your topic.

Statement of the Problem

Announce the purpose of your study. Give the reader a firm sense of what you're doing and why. List the questions that you will address. List your assumptions, those self-evident conditions that you take for granted. Describe your rationale, the underlying principles, and the logical basis for your study. Define the scope of your work and discuss any weaknesses that you can perceive in your approach. Define the key terms that you will use in your paper. Stipulate meanings for ambiguous terms.

Summary of Investigation

Identify the principal works and authors, the main ideas dealing with your topic, and any generally accepted concepts and explanations. Organize your review by themes, systematic propositions, historical sequences, or other important ideas relative to the research questions that you asked. Take note that this is a creative exercise. Do not merely cite a reference, write a few sentences about its content, and then repeat the procedure for the next reference. Organize your summary of the thinking on your topic in such a way as to clarify for your reader the commonly accepted ideas, the current points of debates, and aspects of the topic yet to be investigated adequately.

Analysis of Findings

You must do more than ask and answer questions. You must show how your questions are answered differently and try to say why. You must be able to point to books and articles that support your classification of answers. In a research paper, the solution to the problem or the answer to the question

often is found in the ordered discussion itself rather than in any set of assertions about it. Once again, identify any contradictions, gaps, uncertainties and controversies that you uncovered. Sort, arrange, and define the issues that arise. If a question is clear, and if you can be reasonably certain that authors answer it in different ways, then an issue has been defined. It is the issue between the authors who answer the question in one way and those who answer it in another opposing or variant way. Classify the authors according to their views on the issues. An issue is truly joined when two authors who understand a question in the same way answer it in contrary ways. Remember, however, that differences in answers can often be ascribed as much to different conceptions of the question as to different views of the subject.

Maintain objectivity

Remember that none of the opinions in conflict may be wholly true. Try to see all sides fairly. Make a deliberate effort to balance question against question, to forgo any comment that might be prejudicial, and to check any tendency toward overemphasis or under-emphasis. Avoid animosity and ad hominem arguments. Do not cite authors out of context. Accompany interpretation of authors' views with actual quotations from their texts.

Conclusion

Ask yourself, What conclusions and implications can I draw from my study? Synthesize new information and personal insights in a way that is uniquely yours. Draw on your own insights, make connections, note similarities, discern what is true. Evaluate your findings with respect to your own theological and philosophical perspectives. However, avoid polemics, triviality, and weak theorizing. Make suggestions for future studies if appropriate.

Helpful Resources

ACADEMIC STYLE MANUAL

Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. Current edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION TEXTBOOKS

Baugh, L. Sue. How to Write Term Papers and Reports 2nd ed. VGM Career Horizon / NTC Publishing Group, 1996.

Hodges, John C., Mary E. Whitten, Winifred B. Horner, Suzanne S. Webb, and Robert K. Miller. Harbrace College Handbook Current edition. San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

Hopper, Vincent F., Cedric Gale, Benjamin W. Griffith and Ronald C. Foote, 5th ed. Essentials of English Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 2000.

Strunk, William Jr., Charles Osgood and E. B. White. The Elements of Style, 4th ed. Macmillan, 1999.

OTHER HELPFUL BOOKS

Adler, Mortimer J. and Charles Van Doren. How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972.

Alford, Robert R. The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods, Evidence New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregroy G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams. The Craft of Research (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing and Publishing). University of Chicago Press, 1995.

ONLINE WRITING HELP

NOTE: Websites change from time to time. It may be necessary to do your own Internet searches to find suitable help.

Paradigm Online Writing Assistant – www.powa.org

Online English Grammar – www.edufind.com/english-grammar/english-grammar-guide/

Purdue University Online Writing Lab – owl.english.purdue.edu/

aresearchguide.com: Resources for writing research papers – www.aresearchguide.com

WRITING AND PRESENTING YOUR THESIS OR DISSERTATION

PROFESSIONAL EDITORS

You are encouraged to master the art of scholarly writing on your own. The world will expect you, as a college or seminary degree holder, to be an effective writer. In tough cases, it is possible to hire professional writing, editing, proofreading, design and documentation help. However, Trinity does not recommend, endorse or guarantee the work of any professional editing company. If you choose to employ a professional editor, you are responsible for the choice, the cost and the quality of outcome.