

STEERING THE COURSE

FOR GRADES **9-12**

Strategies for Reading, Researching, Writing and Other Essential Skills



**Gathering
Information**

**Presenting
Information**

**Organizing
Information**

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Organizational Skills	
A Study Plan.	1
Independent Study Courses	2
Managing Courses Effectively	4
Reading Skills	6
Being an Active Reader.	6
Being a Critical Reader	6
Reading Instructions.	9
Writing Skills	
Writing a Summary	11
The Writing Process	14
Pre-Write	15
Write	16
A. Paragraph Structure	19
B. Multi-paragraph Composition (Essay) Structure	21
Reflective Writing	28
Research Skills	
Conducting Research for a Report.	30
Searching the Internet Effectively	35
Citing Sources	37
Examples of Works Cited (MLA Style)	44
Visual Presentation Skills	
Using Graphic Organizers.	46
Creating a Visual Design.	48
How to Read Visual Texts	54
How to Read a Chart or Graph	56
Communication Skills	
Communicating with Teachers	62
Communicating in Online Discussion Boards	64
How to Respond to Discussion	66

Introduction

Welcome to Steering the Course!

Students are the ones who navigate their own academic careers, but parents and tutors can play an important role as ‘guides on the side’. This resource provides valuable information on the essential skills needed for your high school student to succeed, whether they are completing independent study courses or participating in regular classes in the school setting.

Organizational Skills

A Study Plan

Creating a study plan is an effective way for students to stay organized. Here are some points to consider:

- Students are more successful when they work in one-hour chunks on a regular basis rather than putting in three or four-hour marathons once in a while.
- Carving out enough time to complete a given lesson, task or assignment is essential for a study plan.
- Study time should be allotted during a time in the day when the student is most alert. For example, studying in the morning may be better for some, but others may find after dinner best. Students should choose times when they are least likely to be distracted by family, friends, phones, television or social media.
- Creating a study environment that is quiet and a comfortable with few distractions is ideal. These might include:
 - a quiet room at home
 - a local library
 - an empty classroom in the school

The workstation should have comfortable seating and be well lit.

If others use the study space throughout the day, there should be shelf space or a drawer dedicated to storing all study material together safely.

Independent Study Courses

Students who enroll in independent study courses will need to spend the same amount of time studying as students do in the classroom. Each course module should take between 50 to 60 hours to complete. If students are completing more than one module, they will have to allocate more time. If students are unsure of how much time a course will take to complete, they should contact their teacher. There are no shortcuts to a satisfactory result.

Help students who are completing independent study organize their time so that they can work through the course at an even pace. Students may want to develop their own study schedules. A daytimer or calendar will help block out time to work on their courses.

Students will need to calculate how much time it will take to complete the modules.

For example: A module of Family Studies in 12 weeks would be:

$$60 \text{ hours } 10 \text{ weeks} = 6 \text{ hours/week}$$

$$6 \text{ hours} \div 5 \text{ week days} = \text{approximately } 1 \text{ hour and } 15 \text{ minutes / day}$$

Or, if the student wanted to finish the module in 8 weeks:

$$60 \text{ hours } 8 \text{ weeks} = 7.5 \text{ hours/week}$$

$$7.5 \text{ hours} \div 5 \text{ week days} = \text{approximately } 1.5 \text{ hours / day}$$

Here is an example of the study timetable of a student completing four courses through independent study.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30–9:00	Family Studies		Family Studies		Family Studies
9:00–10:00		Math		Math	
10:00–11:00	History	History	Math	History	Biology
11:00–12:00		Biology	History	Biology	Math
1:00–2:00	Biology		Biology		History
2:00–3:00	Math	Family Studies		Family Studies	
3:00–3:30					

Students may prefer to work in longer blocks at certain points. For example, they may want to work through an entire assignment in one day. The assignment may take five hours. In this case, the schedule might look like this:

Personal study Timetable:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00–9:00	Math				
9:00–10:00	Family Studies	Math	Math	Math	
10:00–11:00		History		History	
11:00–12:00			History		
1:00–2:00	Family Studies	Biology	Biology		
2:00–3:00				Biology	
3:00–4:00					

If students have the option to attend a block at their neighbourhood school, they could also work that into their schedules.

The important thing is that students have a realistic plan to complete their course work.

It helps when students are rewarded for a job well done. If they've set up a study plan and followed it, why shouldn't they go to the movies or do something fun? They've earned it!

Managing Courses Effectively

Successful completion of courses will depend, in part, on how students manage their course progress. Consider the following:

- Students should look through the course content as well as the assignments to get a better sense of the overall structure and content of the materials.
- Working through the sections in the proper order is important. If students have difficulty with their course, it is best to wait for each assignment to be graded before working on the next so that they can benefit from corrections and comments from the teacher. They should, however, keep on with the reading of the next lesson while they wait. The assignment checklist that is provided either in the module or by the teacher will help the student keep track of their assignments.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Assignment Part A: The Families of Yesterday
- Assignment Part B: The Families of Today
- Assignment Part C: The Families of Tomorrow

Have students:

- keep a list of course assignments and their due dates with their course materials or posted in their study space, and check off each one as it is completed.
- make sure they do not skip or omit assignments. If they can't do a question because they don't understand it, they should contact their teacher for help.
- use blue or black ink, not pencil, if handwriting assignments. It is okay to cross things out as long as it is done neatly and clearly shows what the student intends to have marked.
- complete one assignment at a time and submit it immediately when finished. Avoid submitting batches of assignments.
- make sure that assignments include their name, student number, course name at the top of every page in case pages get separated.
- complete all quizzes and activities as they help the students learn the material and prepare them for the assignments.
- make sure all their work is their own. They must never copy answers either from books, Internet resources or other students. Plagiarism of any information is an offense. Students must reference all sources of information.

Note: Teachers want to help students do well in the course. To be most effective, learning should be a two-way conversation. Students should contact their teacher if they have any questions, or comments. This can be done through email, text, online discussions, blogs, or journal sharing.

Reading Skills

Being an Active Reader

Being an active reader is an important skill for students. Active reading helps students process and retain course material. The act of reading passages can be broken into three stages:

Stage	Action	Skill
Before Reading	Students think about why they are reading, what they already know about what they are reading, and what they think the article or story may be about.	Predicting
While Reading	Students think about what they have learned so far and what they will continue to learn as they read.	Predicting
	They also make themselves aware of what questions they still have.	Questioning
After Reading	Students think about what they have read, making connection to themselves, the world around them and whatever work / assignment they might now have to complete.	Reflecting and Connecting

This reading strategy is based on active reading: reading that requires the learner to think about the information while they read. Reading in this way is far more effective than just reading a passage, wondering what was actually said, and then having to read it again.

Being a Critical Reader

A critical reader knows how to separate fact from opinion. We encounter facts and opinions in combination in most of what we read. For example, in a newspaper there are factual news stories about a car accident in one section and then a movie review in another. Still other articles might give both the facts about the latest Vancouver Canucks game and an opinion about how the team played that night.

So to start, where would students expect to find more factual information?

- Textbook or diary?
- Web blog, or automobile owner's manual?

Some writing, such as a science textbook, may lend itself to being more factual; and other writing, like a friend's diary, may be more opinionated.

What about the Internet? Are all websites reliable? Do they contain information that can be trusted?

When is it important for students to know the difference between fact and opinion?

- If they are looking for information for a research report on the Internet, they need to know that if the information they read on a given website is fact or opinion.
- If they are reading an article in a magazine about a new health supplement—something that is sure to make people stronger and fitter in a matter of days—they want to know if the claims were based on fact or opinion before they spent any money on the product.
- And what about a column in a newspaper or online? Should they let someone else's opinions on events shape their own, or should they first find out the facts, listen to a variety of others' opinions and then make up their own mind?

In many courses students will be asked to read articles and case studies that will require the ability to differentiate between fact and opinion.

How to tell the difference between factual information and opinion?

1. First, consider the author's purpose in writing. Does the writer wish to relay information about the subject, or does the writer wish to relay feelings about the subject?
2. They should consider the writer's motivation. Does the writer want to help the student form their own opinion, or does the writer seem indifferent to the student's opinion?

Considering these questions should help students determine whether what they are reading is fact or opinion.

For example, students might like to study this advertisement and consider the following questions.

Scientific Breakthrough!

Super-Gro will make your garden grow twice as fast as the leading brands of fertilizer!

Growth rates of plants recorded in our laboratory!

Super-Gro fertilizer

Leading brand of fertilizer

Super-Gro will double the size of your plants while cutting the growth time in half... and it's completely safe!

Extensive testing on lab mice resulted in half of the animals surviving moderate exposure.

Super-Gro

What our clients have to say:

"I can't believe how quickly my plants have grown!"

"My garden is the envy of the whole neighbourhood!"

The learner can test these claims by asking themselves a series of questions.

1. Is the person making the claim an expert in that particular area of science?
Answer: *No, he/she is a salesperson, not a scientist.*
2. Does the product work the way it is supposed to work?
Answer: *No, images by themselves do not make good science.*
3. How does the reader know the product works safely?
Answer: *If half the rats died after moderate exposure, humans shouldn't go near the stuff!*
4. Did the evidence being presented come from scientific experiments that support the product or from personal testimonials?
Answer: *Personal testimonials*

With some careful thought and consideration, learners can become more critical readers. Being able to read critically is also a very useful consumer skill, as it leads to better information by which to make purchasing decisions and avoid unhealthy trends. And, when conducting research, learners will be able to make sure they are getting the facts they need.

Learners should remember to not trust everything they read without first deciding if it's fact or opinion.

Reading Instructions

In any course, students will be asked to complete a variety of assignments that will require them to pay close attention to instructions. Whether the assignment is to write a paragraph, compose an essay or to prepare a collage, the more closely students follow instructions, the better able they will be to demonstrate what they know.

Here are some tips to help students follow instructions more carefully.

Encourage students to:

- read the instructions slowly and carefully.
- pay close attention to key words and action items to make sure they understand the task.
- read with a highlighter so that they have a visual indicator of important instruction elements. (See the example in Figure 1 on the next page.)
- gather all materials they will need to complete the task. For the example in Figure 1, students would need:
 - a copy of Joan O’Conner’s article, “The Happy Parent”
 - a copy of the citation conventions for the course
- make sure to read the instructions for all parts carefully if the task has more than one step or part to it.
- review any assessment criteria, such as rubrics, before they start to be sure their work meets the assignment expectations. Rubrics are handy devices for summarizing what is needed for a good mark. Students should continually check the rubric (or assignment criteria) as they complete the assignment to help themselves keep on track.

Example:

The assessment criteria for this task assigns marks for direct quotations from the article “The Happy Parent.” You will need to include them to get full marks.

The successful student would check to see how many direct quotes are expected.

- take a look at the Communication Skills section of this package. The rubrics show what good online communication looks like.
- be sure to leave enough time to complete the task.

Figure 1

Write a five-paragraph essay describing whether you agree or disagree with Joan O’Conner’s conclusions in her article, “The Happy Parent.”

Your essay should be typed or written legibly and double-spaced.

Be sure to use proper citation conventions when quoting from the article. Your essay will be assessed on the Essay Writing Assessment Rubric.

Key words in these instructions are:

- **five-paragraph essay.** This tells the student the type of assignment and its length.
- **describing whether you agree or disagree.** This tells the student what action to take in the assignment.
- **article’s conclusions.** This is the focus of the student’s opinions.

If students are unfamiliar with any words in the instructions, they should look them up in a dictionary before proceeding. For example, if the student doesn’t know what “citation” means, they should look it up to understand what is being asked of them. If they are still unsure of the expectations of the assignment, they should contact their teacher for clarification.

Writing Skills

Writing a Summary

Knowing how to write a good summary allows students to take a larger amount of information and condense it while highlighting major points.

Using their own words to write a summary is an excellent way for students to remember information. Also, writing a summary will let students know if there are any gaps in their understanding of the information they have read.

To write a summary, students:

- find the topic sentence that states the main idea in each paragraph. Students should ask themselves, “What is the most important thing to be learned in this paragraph?”
- get rid of any unimportant or repeated information.
- read carefully the opening and closing paragraphs and headings or subheadings to find key points.
- organize their summary the way the reading passage is organized. They should ask themselves, “What does it begin with?”, “What is in the middle?” and “How does it end?”
- make sure to write in their own words. They shouldn’t copy what they’ve read but rather transform it into their own words to increase their understanding.

Students should not let their opinion become part of the summary. Even if they feel a certain way about what they have read, students should stick to the facts, even if those facts are about someone else’s opinion.

Students may find the “Writing a Summary” document on the following page useful in their studies.

Writing a Summary

Writing a summary requires you to identify the most important information from a passage and restate it in your own words. Summarizing can be done at selected points during your reading or at the end of reading. Writing a summary is useful in understanding if there are any gaps in your grasp of the information.

WRITING SKILLS
Writing a Summary

Use the following chart to make notes during your reading. As you add information to each column, delete unimportant or repetitive material.

Title:			
Main Topic	Beginning	Middle	End
Summary			
Main topic:			
Beginning:			
Middle:			
End:			

After you have filled in the columns, write a sentence to summarize each column. Include everything that is important and organize your sentences in order.

When should students use a summary?

- When taking research notes
- When studying for a test
- When prewriting for an assignment

Below are two different summaries of an original passage. The first one sticks closely to the original text while the second one transforms the passage using new words. Students should note the differences between the examples and how the second example illustrates a deeper understanding of the original passage.

Original Passage

A researcher studying families asked children what they would remember most from their childhoods. The answers were surprising. It wasn't the big gifts, Hawaiian vacations, or fancy celebrations that they would remember, but the simple family routines and rituals such as bedtime stories and family meals. These routines are the threads of life that bind a family together.

Example Summary 1

(Needs Improvement)

When a researcher asked children what they would remember most from their childhoods, it wasn't the big gifts or Hawaiian vacation, but family routines. The simple family routines like meals and bedtime stories were what bonded the family together.

(This summary is too close to the original text. Very little was written in the writer's own words. Details such as big gifts and Hawaiian vacations aren't necessary for understanding.)

Example Summary 2

(Better)

Family routines are what many children will remember most about their childhoods. Rather than big events, simple routines create the fondest memories for children and bring families closer.

(Although shorter, this summary is much better. It is written in the student's own words and still covers the main idea of the original passage.)

The Writing Process

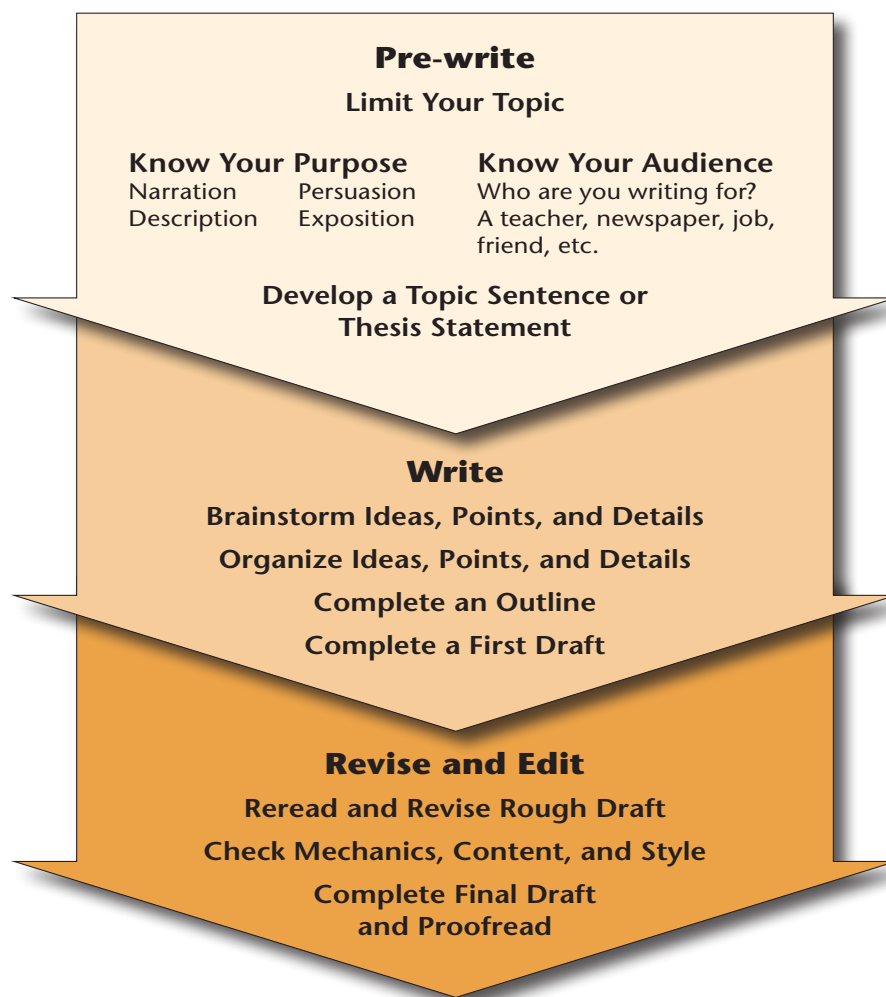
Whether students are writing a single paragraph, a multi-paragraph composition or essay, or creating an oral presentation, an understanding of the writing process will help them to produce and publish their very best work.

Students should break the writing process into three basic steps:

1. Pre-write
2. Write
3. Revise/Edit

The following chart shows an overview of this process.

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF GOOD WRITING



Pre-Write

Limit Your Topic

In order to limit the topic, students must first understand the purpose of their writing. It is important to understand the scope and directions of the project.

Sometimes the teacher will provide students with a limited topic:

Write a paragraph describing the process of applying for a job.

When students are provided with a limited topic, they:

- Read carefully
- Underline key words
- Look up any unfamiliar words

In this example, underlining key words helps to verify that students are being asked to write a descriptive paragraph on the process of applying for a job.

At other times, students will write to a broad topic:

Write a three to five paragraph narrative composition on “A Day To Remember”.

“A Day To Remember” is a broad topic. Students have lived many days. Their job here is to narrow the topic to on day that they can realistically write about in a multi-paragraph composition. To help limit the topic, students might choose a day they remember vividly so they can describe it well. They might consider a day that other people would find interesting to read about or learn from. However, students must remember that they only have three to five paragraphs to address the topic.

Know Your Purpose

Students must make sure they understand the purpose of their communications: what it is they want to say and why.

- Are they trying to explain a process, like how to tie a shoelace or are they describing sensory information and communicating feelings to the reader? (description)
- Are they trying to tell a story, like their most embarrassing experience? (narration)
- Are they trying to explain a complex topic, like the difference between the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament? (exposition)
- Are they trying to persuade someone of an opinion, like convincing the reader that the graduated licensing program should be abolished? (persuasion)

Understanding the purpose will help students select the appropriate type of prose: descriptive, narrative, expository or persuasive.

Know Your Audience

Students also need to know the audience to whom they are writing. Writing for the student’s English teacher will be different from writing to their friend. Knowing the audience will help students determine:

- the appropriate style of language to use: formal or informal.
- how much information to provide. If the audience is unfamiliar with the topic, the writer may have to provide more background information.
- what type of examples to use. If the student is writing a multi-paragraph composition for their English teacher, they must make sure that the examples they use, such as song titles or movie characters, are ones the teacher will know.
- what topics would make for interesting content.

Develop a topic Sentence of Thesis Statement

Once students are clear as to their purpose and audience, they can formulate their topic sentence or thesis statement. A topic sentence introduces a paragraph, whereas a thesis statement introduces a multi-paragraph composition. Both topic sentences and thesis statements provide the reader with a clear sense of purpose and direction for the writing to follow. They act like a compass and keep the writing pointed at the destination. See “Paragraph Structure” or “Multi-Paragraph Composition Structure” to learn more about these topics.

Write

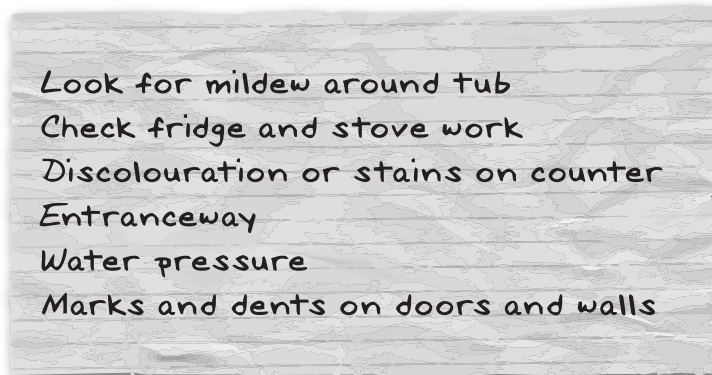
Brainstorm Ideas, Points, and Details

The first step in writing a paragraph or a multi-paragraph composition is to generate content including the writer’s ideas, main points and details. Here are some ways writers can generate ideas.

The following examples are based on this topic:

“Prior to signing a rental agreement, the three most important areas of your apartment to inspect are the kitchen, bathroom, and living room.”

- **Brainstorm a list of all possible ideas**



- **Create a cluster diagram**

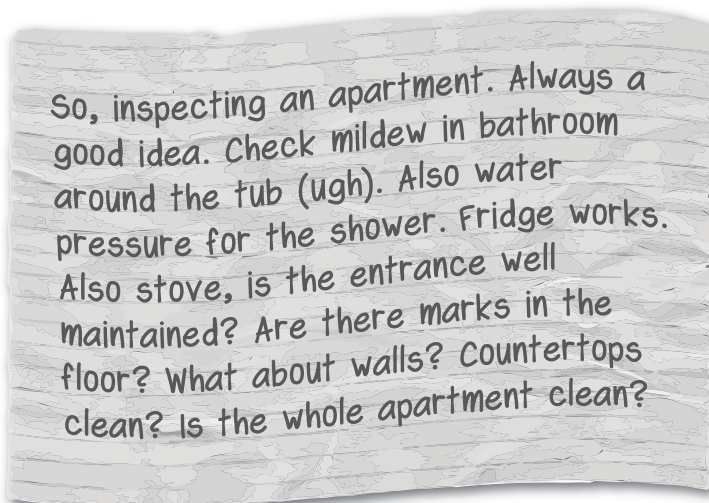
The topic is written in the middle of a page and then circled. The writer then thinks of words associated with the topic and writes them down on the page. The goal is to write as many words as come to mind. The writer then draws lines between the words to show the connections between them.



- **Free write**

The writer writes down whatever comes to mind about the topic. Ideas don't have to be written in complete sentences—they're just put down before they're forgotten!

There is no one right way to generate ideas. Students should find a strategy that works the best for them!



- **Do the research!**

As students brainstorm and gather ideas, they may find they need to do some research. For some writing projects, students may not have all the information they need at hand to complete them. The next section in this book, "Researching Skills" provides some advice about using sources of information and different research strategies.

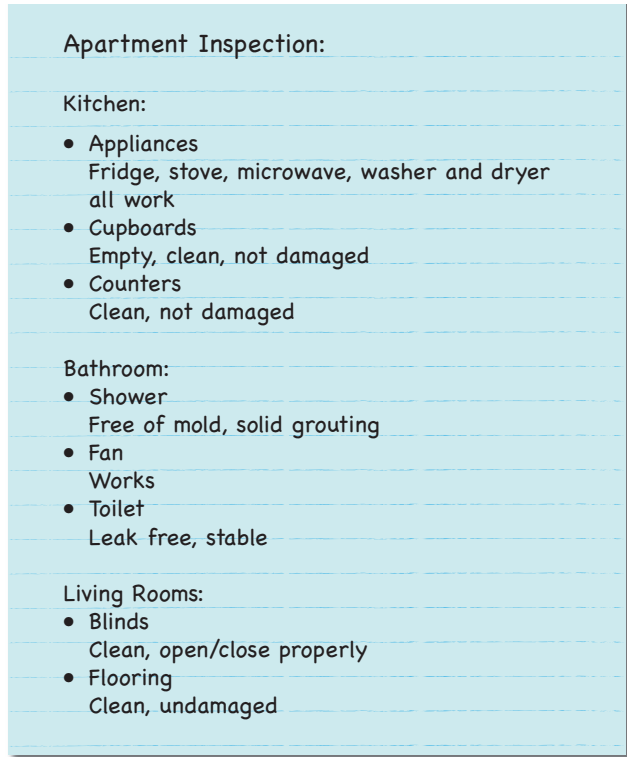
Organize Ideas, Points, and Details

Once students have generated their ideas, points and details, their next step is to group the information into logical categories. How they group their ideas will depend upon what their end goal is. For this example, the student is writing a five-paragraph composition on conducting an apartment inspection.

• **Write Lists**

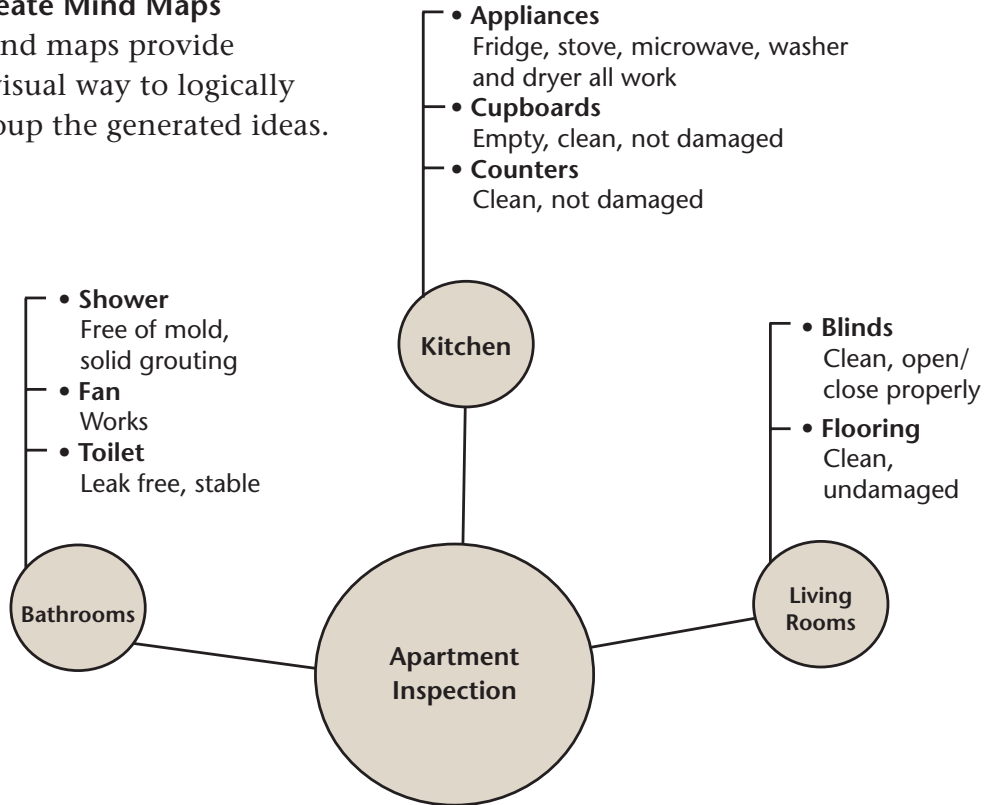
Structured lists provide a simple, linear way to group information from the generated ideas.

Using bullets or sub-points helps organize the ideas.



• **Create Mind Maps**

Mind maps provide a visual way to logically group the generated ideas.



- **Complete an Outline**

The next step in the writing process is to create an outline for the paragraph or multi-paragraph composition based on the ideas as organized by the student. The student should plan the order in which they want to present their ideas.

Sequentially – order by sequence or steps

Chronologically – order by time

Spatially – order through space

Logically – general statements followed by causes or examples

The methods for creating an outline for a paragraph and a multi-paragraph composition or essay are slightly different because each has a different structure. Some guidelines for organizing writing follow.

A. Paragraph Structure

A paragraph is a collection of sentences that develop one idea.

A **topic sentence** introduces a paragraph and is typically the first sentence in the paragraph. The topic sentence should be limited enough in scope so that it can be adequately developed in six to eight sentences.

Poor Examples:

There are many things that cause cancer.

This topic sentence is poor because it is vague. “Many things” is not specific. The topic is also too broad to discuss in six to eight sentences. In fact, a book could be written on this topic.

The plague was deadly.

This topic sentence is poor because it is too limited. This is a statement of fact, so it requires no further support.

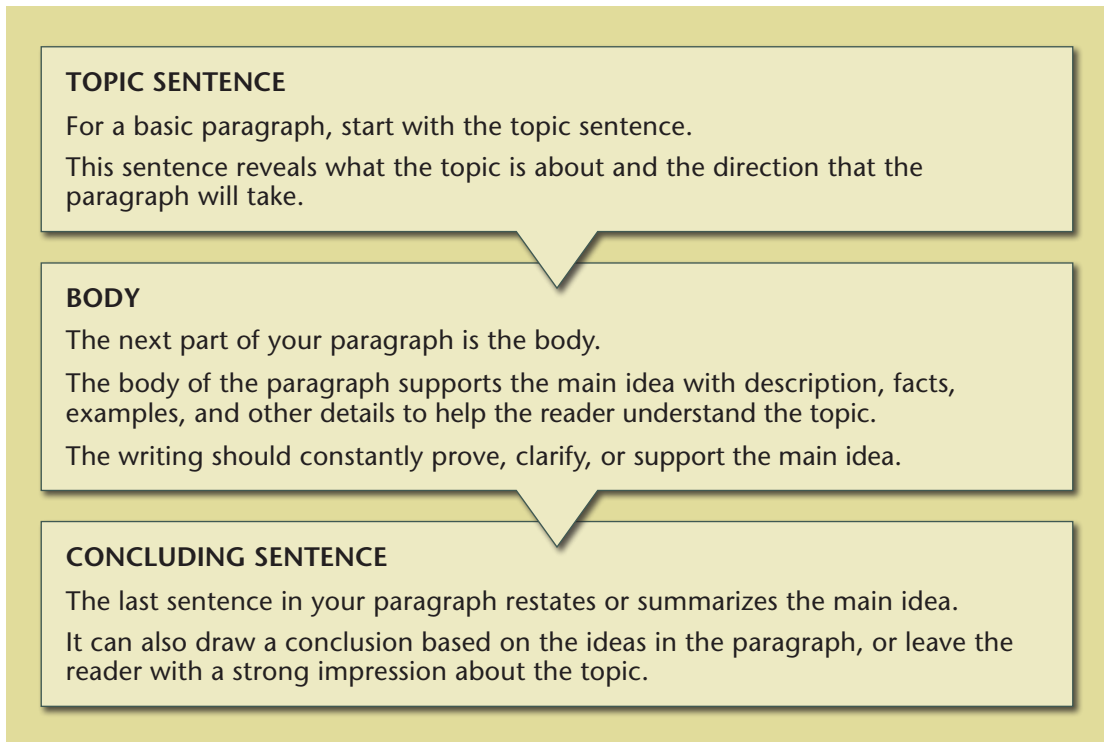
Good Examples:

Friday is the best day of the week to go out for dinner.

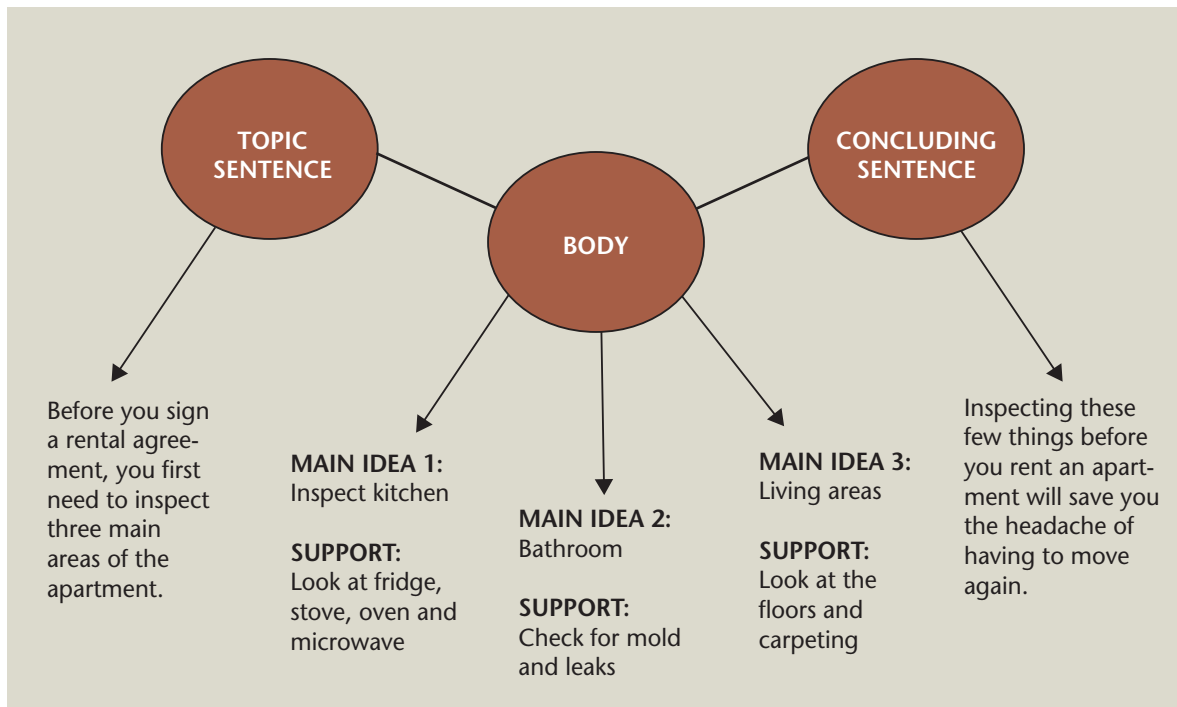
Before you sign a rental agreement, you first need to inspect three main areas of the apartment.

WRITING SKILLS
A. Paragraph Structure

Writing a paragraph is hard work, but it can be easier if students follow this paragraph structure to organize the ideas from their outline.



Here is another example of a paragraph outline:



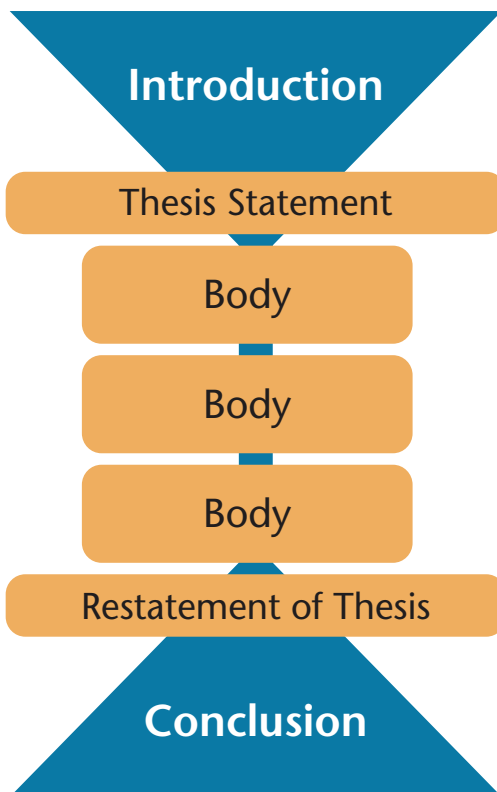
Paragraph Composed from this Outline:

Apartment Inspection

Before you sign an apartment rental agreement, you first need to inspect three main areas of the apartment. First, you need to turn on the kitchen appliances such as the stove, oven and microwave, to see if they are in good working order. Next, check the bathroom. Take a look at the toilet to see if it is firmly secured to the floor and if there are any leaks. Also look in the bath or shower and make sure it is free of mould. In the living areas, inspect the floors. If there are bare floors, check to see they are clean and undamaged; if the floor is carpeted make sure it is clean—especially if you or your roommates suffer from allergies. Inspecting these few things before you rent an apartment will save you the headache of having to move again.

B. Multi-paragraph Composition (Essay) Structure

A multi-paragraph composition is a piece of writing longer than one paragraph on a specific topic. It can be expository, descriptive, persuasive, narrative or a combination of these four types. It is sometimes referred to as an essay. It typically develops an idea in greater depth than a paragraph.



Introduction: The introductory paragraph sets the tone and the direction for the composition. The paragraph starts with a general statement or question that captures the reader's attention. The paragraph concludes with a specific thesis statement.

Body: The body of a composition can consist of any number of paragraphs that support the thesis statement. Typically compositions contain one to three body paragraphs. Each body paragraph has its own topic sentence with supporting evidence or commentary.

Conclusion: The concluding paragraph brings the composition to a close. It often begins with a restatement of the thesis in different words. The paragraph ends with a more general statement or a call to action.

Students should remember to give their composition a catchy title that grabs the reader's attention!

Thesis Statement

A thesis statement introduces the focus of the entire multi-paragraph composition and is typically the last sentence of the introductory paragraph. Just like a topic sentence, it informs the reader of the composition's main idea. The thesis statement should be limited enough in scope so that it can be adequately supported in three to five paragraphs.

Students should make sure their thesis statement expresses their attitude toward the topic or indicates what the development of the topic will be.

Topic:
High School Graduation

Thesis:
A high school graduate will have an easier time continuing with post-secondary education, finding employment, and earning a decent living.

Topic:
Apartment Inspections

Thesis:
When looking at an apartment to rent, it's important to thoroughly inspect three areas: the kitchen, the bathroom, and the living area.

The student who was writing about conducting an apartment inspection would first go to the prewriting to develop thesis statement. Then the student would think about the structure of the composition. In this case it would be organized spatially, according to the rooms. Then the student would create an outline of the key points for the composition: first an introductory paragraph ending in that thesis statement, and then draw on their organized ideas, points and details to draft the outline for the body. Finally the student would compose a concluding sentence that restated the thesis and perhaps called the audience to action.

Introductory Paragraph and Thesis Statement

Opening: Have you ever been excited to move into a new place only to be disappointed once you started to notice the little things wrong with it?

Thesis Statement: Prior to signing a rental agreement, the three most important areas of your apartment to inspect are the kitchen, bathrooms, and living rooms.

Body Paragraph 1

Topic sentence: There are a few particular areas to pay close attention to when you look at a potential kitchen.

- appliances
- cupboards
- counters

Body Paragraph 2

Topic sentence: Pay close attention to three areas of the bathroom, and you won't be caught with hard to fix problems.

- shower
- toilet
- fan

Body Paragraph 3

Topic sentence: While there are fewer things to look for in the living areas, future costs can be avoided if you pay attention to two areas during your inspection.

- flooring
- blinds/window covering

Concluding Paragraph

Thesis restatement: A careful look at the three most important areas of an apartment can save you from renting a place that will cause you grief in the future.

Concluding remark: So go out and find yourself a great place—but remember to check the details first!

Complete a First Draft

In the final step of the writing phase of the process, students create a first draft of their composition. The goal of the first draft is to connect ideas together into a unified piece, whether it is a single paragraph, a multi-paragraph composition or another form of composition.

Before they write, students should review their outline to be sure the ideas are fresh in their minds. It's a good idea to keep that outline close at hand and refer to it as they write. This will help to keep the writing project focused.

In the first draft, students focus on getting the ideas on paper. They shouldn't get hung up on spelling, punctuation, grammar or perfecting every word or sentence. That is the purpose of the next phase of the process.

Example: Multi-Paragraph Composition Composed From an Outline

Three Keys to Being Happy With Your New Apartment

Have you ever been excited to move into a new place only to be disappointed once you started to notice the little things wrong with it? Maybe you didn't notice the way the floor creaked while you were talking to the property manager who showed you the place. Maybe you rushed through so quickly you forgot to actually look inside the shower stall. It's easy to picture yourself in a new place and maybe even focus on the things you like about it so much that you don't see future problems. It helps to focus on key areas while doing a walk-through inspection. Prior to signing a rental agreement, the three most important areas of your apartment to inspect are the kitchen, bathrooms, and living areas.

There are a few particular areas to pay close attention to when you look at a potential kitchen. Open the fridge door, and check for any leaking inside. Don't be afraid to open the doors to look inside at the stove and microwave. If there is a washer and dryer, be sure to inspect those, too. Turn on the appliances to make sure they work.

Pay close attention to three areas of the bathroom, and you won't be caught with hard to fix problems later. Is the shower free of mould? It's hard to get rid of mould once it's there. Is the grouting solid, or is it chipping away? Try running the water. Take a look at the toilet, and give it a flush. You don't want to be stuck with a leaky toilet, or one that isn't fixed solidly to the floor! Finally, some people forget about the fan. But a working fan is very important in the bathroom, especially if the bathroom does not have a window. If the fan doesn't work, you will end up having a problem with mould. Turn it on and make sure it works.

While there are fewer things to look for in the living areas, future costs can be avoided if you pay attention to two areas during your inspection. Is the floor clean and undamaged? If it is a wood floor and there are worn spots, you could get a sliver if you walk in bare feet! Or it could end up putting holes in your socks. Does the floor creak loudly? This may not bother you, but if you are going to live with anyone who is a light sleeper, think about what might happen if you get up for a glass of water in the middle of the night! Replacing damaged flooring is expensive. If the apartment is carpeted, make sure it's clean, especially if you are anyone you live with suffer from allergies. Also, you want to make sure the window coverings are clean and functioning. Sometimes people forget to check that if they walk through an apartment during the day, and then they have a bad surprise the first night they move in.

A careful look at the three most important areas of an apartment will save you from renting a place that will cause you grief in the future. If you remember to pay close attention to these details in your potential kitchen, bathroom, and living areas, you won't be stuck exposing yourself to harmful air pollutants like mould, or exposing yourself because you can't close your blinds! So go out and find yourself a great place—but remember to check the details first.

Once their first draft is complete, students should walk away from it for a while. This will give the student a fresh perspective when they reach the next phase of the writing process: Revise and Edit.

Revise and Edit

The first draft should be reread and revised. The finished composition should be smooth. In order to polish their writing, students need to evaluate their work and make revisions.

Revising writing is more than just correcting spelling and grammar errors. It is a four-step process that makes the writer's words and sentences stick together.

1. Cut

As students reread their composition, they might see a sentence that doesn't seem to end or one that is repetitive. Another sentence might be padded with unnecessary words.

Here's what can be done to avoid wordiness:

- Repeat a word or phrase only for emphasis or clarity.
- Express the idea in as few words as possible.
- Remove any words from a sentence that don't relate to the main idea.
- Remove any sentences that don't relate to the main idea of the multi-paragraph composition.

2. Use appropriate language.

Students should reread their composition carefully to make sure they have avoided:

- inappropriate language (colloquialisms or slang: e.g. neat, cool, lousy, goon, moocher, etc.).
- jargon – words that are specific to a particular group or profession that others may not understand, e.g. bites, RAM, IRP, stet.
- gender-biased language (sexism).

3. Expand

As they read through a paragraph, students might realize that something is missing. If they think they need to add information to clarify an idea, they should:

- define words and phrases if their meanings are unclear, or substitute better words.
- give readers all the information they need to understand what is meant.
- add additional ideas to support their thesis statement.

4. Use transitions

Students should:

- use words or phrases that help link their ideas together in a logical way.
- use transitions to introduce ideas, conclude ideas, and move between ideas.

WRITING SKILLS
B. Multi-paragraph Composition (Essay) Structure

This list of the most common transitional words and phrases is arranged by category:

Addition	Comparison	Explanation	Purpose	Time
also	another way	for example	for the purpose of	after a short time
as well as	by way of	for instance	for the sake of	after that
at the same time	comparison	incidentally	for this purpose	afterwards
besides	equally	indeed	for this reason	as soon as
equally important	further	in fact	so that	at last
finally	in a similar way	in other words	to this end	at length
further	in like manner	in particular	with this in mind	before
furthermore	let us compare	namely	Subtraction	eventually
in addition (to)	likewise	specifically	except	finally
lastly	moreover one way	that is	save	first, second, third, etc.
moreover	similarly		but	first of all
next		Place	other than	for a start
plus	Contrast	beside	exclusive of	immediately
too	although	beyond		in 1999, in 2004, etc.
	at the same time	here on the other side	Summary	in the end
Cause and Effect	but	opposite	from what has been said	in the future
accordingly	however	there	in brief	in the past
as a result	in contrast		in conclusion	later
because	in spite of	Process	in short	meanwhile
consequently	instead	by and large	in summary	next
due to	nevertheless	finally	on the whole	now
result from	on the contrary	first		prior to
result in	on the other hand	first of all		soon
since	otherwise t	for a start		subsequently
therefore	hough	furthermore		the final
thus	unlike	in conclusion		then
	whereas	last		ultimately
	yet	moreover		
		next		
		second		
		then		
		to begin with		
		to sum up		
		what is more		

WRITING SKILLS
B. Multi-paragraph Composition (Essay) Structure

Check Mechanics, Content, and Style

In order to polish their composition, students need to take a detail-oriented look at the mechanics, content, and style of the piece to make sure the writing is correct and consistent.

An effective strategy for polishing compositions is to have a friend, family, member or teacher read the work to give suggestions for improvement.

Students then carefully review their work to correct sentence structure, punctuation and usage.

Using a checklist is a helpful strategy for editing work. There are many editing checklists available in grammar books or on the Internet. Students should look for one that works well for them.

Here is one sample of a checklist:

Criteria The writing...	Self-Assessment: Have I done this?	Teacher
Presents each idea in paragraph format		
Presents ideas in a logical order		
Supports ideas with facts, evidence, and/or descriptive details		
Provides an effective opening and conclusion		
Uses proper sentence format including capitalization and periods		
Uses a variety of sentence types		
Shows agreement in the use of verbs and pronouns		
Uses verb tenses properly		
Uses punctuation correctly, including commas, quotation marks, periods, question marks, and exclamation marks		
Uses correct word forms		
Is completed in typed format or in legible handwriting?		

Complete Final Draft and Proofread

Once students have completed revising and editing their writing, they are now ready to complete the final draft. They should reread the instructions of their assignment to ensure that they are submitting the composition as instructed.

For example:

- Does the composition include their name, the date, and the title?
- Is it singled spaced or double spaced as requested?
- Is it typed, printed, or handwritten in blue or black ink?

Students then give their composition one final read to ensure it is error free before submitting it.

Reflective Writing

There are many different types of writing students may be asked to complete. Along with research writing (like doing a report or an essay) and response writing (used when answering questions or doing quizzes), students should also be comfortable with reflective writing.

Reflective writing is not only found in diaries. It is also found in:

- Journals and blogs
- Presentations
- Persuasive writing
- Formal debates
- Narrative writing
- Creative nonfiction
- Personal essays

Students might be surprised to find that reflective writing is at home in an essay or formal debate. In a formal debate, participants must present facts that can be substantiated or else the opponents can easily refute them. However, it may be that the debater feels passionate about one side of the argument and believes that expressing their opinion might sway the audience. Reflective writing has a place in this situation.

Often, people writing in a journal, diary, or blog use reflective writing to:

- relate events from their personal lives.
- express opinions.
- share feelings about a topic.

People use learning journals to:

- connect to their learning.
- cement learning or remember what they have learned.
- express feelings on their performance in a course.
- make connections between current and past learning.
- express that they wonder about for the future.

This is an example of reflective writing for a social studies lesson on parliamentary procedure:

“It’s odd watching the politicians argue with each other during *Question Period*. I don’t think young kids should see that, because it might encourage them to not respect the government. I was really interested in how even though the opposition kept addressing questions to the Premier, he never actually answered, it was always one of the other ministers. It sort of made me think of those American courtroom dramas where the witness is pleading the 5th.”

The example references the lesson on parliamentary procedure, shares something the writer learned or discovered, and makes a connection to another topic.

The criteria for logs or journals may differ from course to course, but the essence is the same: How does this learning affect the learner? Has the learner’s opinion changed? If so, how?

Research Skills

Conducting Research for a Report

If the student assignment is about something the student has experienced, like their first job, they won't need to research anything. But when they are asked to write about a topic that they don't have all the information about, they'll need to conduct research. Creating a research report is a skill that involves three steps:

1. Find a Focus

Students should first narrow the topic to something they are specifically interested in.



If a student wanted to gather information on everything about birds, they would have far too much information for a single research project.

They could narrow it a little, e.g. birds on Vancouver Island. However, they would still likely find too much information for a single report. The topic still needs to be focused.

Choosing to focus on the eagles found on Vancouver Island gives the student a report topic specific enough to lead into gathering a manageable amount of information.

To make the research task easier, students can refine a research topic by asking themselves a series of critical or essential questions:

- Which of the topics that I've read about so far have interested me?
- Do I have any personal connection to any of the topics—family, friends, my leisure time activities, and so on that would make the topic more interesting to research?
- Have I studied any of these topics before?
- Do I already know of some resources I can access for any of the topics?

Here are some other ideas for ways to help the student focus their research:

Find a Focus

Getting Clear

- List what you know about the topic and any questions you have.
- Ask your teacher for more information on what's expected.
- Talk about your project with friends and family members.
- Read a couple of articles on your topic. For example, try an encyclopedia or magazine article, or a chapter in a textbook.

Brainstorm

Brainstorm as many aspects of your question or ideas as you can. Then look for themes that may have emerged.

Idea Map

Use an idea map to help generate ideas and direction.

5 W's

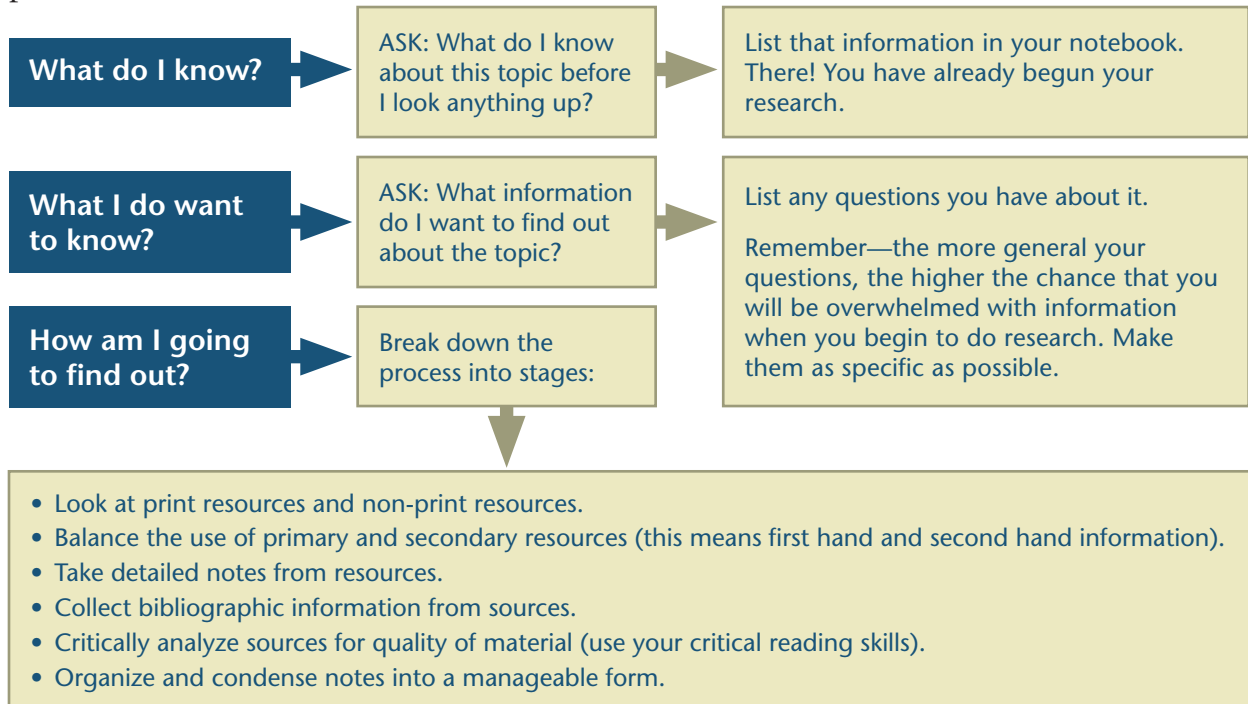
Use the 5 W's to narrow down your question.



Whatever they decide, students should be sure to clearly identify the scope of their research before they get too far into the research process.

2. Gather Information

Asking themselves some questions will help students get started on the research process.



Here are some tips students should bear in mind while gathering information.

The Internet

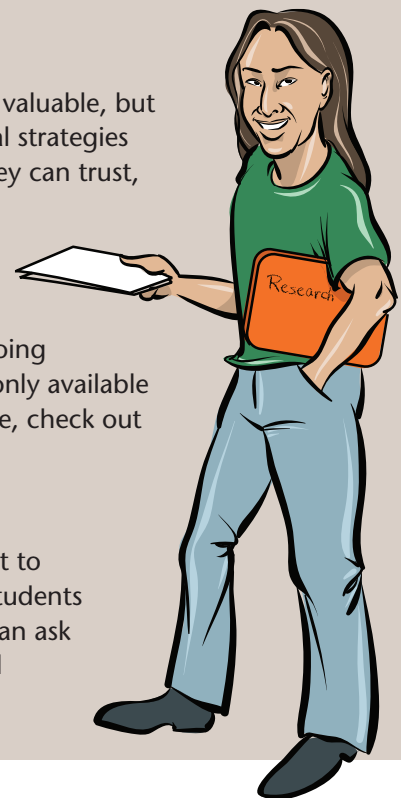
The Internet offers a massive collection of information that can be valuable, but because it's so large and uncontrolled, students need to use special strategies to use it effectively. To learn how to effectively find information they can trust, have student refer to Using the Internet.

Other Sources

Because the Internet is easy to access, students may be tempted to use it as their only source of information on the topic. But, in doing so, they could be overlooking some important knowledge that is only available in print or on an audiovisual resource. For ideas on what else to see, check out Where and What to Find.

Evaluating Information

Not all information is created equally. Students must be careful not to think that "just because it's published it must be true." How can students tell if information is reliable? There are some easy questions they can ask themselves. Students should review the section on building critical reading skills in the Foundational Skills Package.



Here is a list of places students can find information, and the kinds of information they can look for while conducting their research.

Where and What to Find

Kinds of Information	Types of Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• books• articles• research reports• government information• statistics• maps• pictures, photos, images• audio material• video material• expert opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• books• magazines• newspapers• encyclopedias• dictionaries• biographical dictionaries• directories• handbooks and manuals• almanacs• atlases and gazetteers• audio/visual, including cassettes, CDs, videos, DVDs, slides• microfilm and microfiche• computer resources, including software, CD-ROMs, the internet• interviews
Location of Information <ul style="list-style-type: none">• personal collections• school library• public library• college or university library• provided by teacher• internet• television• other	

Other sources of information for student research include:

Libraries

The local public library, or school library is a great place to start. They will have some or all of the following:

- useful books students can borrow for free
- databases of articles
- encyclopedias and other reference material on CD or online

Students should look up the library collections online, or phone the librarian if they'd like to find out more about possible resources before going to the library by themselves.

Students should also remember their textbooks can be a great source of reliable information!

Interviews

Talking to other people can offer students ideas and perspectives that they may not have considered. Students could ask people what they think about the topic, and the people say something that might be used in the composition, students should take note of their words as well as the date and place of the interview. It is important to get the spelling of the person's name correct.

If students know people who have lived the experience of one of the issues related to the topic, they might want to conduct an interview.

Here's How!

Students should:

- ask the person if they could speak with them about their experiences.
- ask a few questions to direct the interview.
- show the person the composition topic, and listen.
- jot down notes or use a recorder to help keep a record of their comments.
- thank the person for sharing their story at the end of the interview.
- offer the person a copy of the composition when it is complete.

Have students cite the interview in their list of resources used in the research.

3. Use of Information

Making Notes

Students probably have some favourite ways for making notes on information such as writing or diagramming on notepaper, using a word processor or recipe cards, or using a recording device, or digital camera. Review the prewriting section.

Tracking Sources

There's nothing worse than having a great piece of information and forgetting where the student found it. This will mean that they can't use it because they are not able to cite its source. Students will need a system for tracking where they found their information right from the beginning. The best approach is to create a citation right away. Students can do this by writing it out, creating an electronic file or by using The Citation Machine.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the copying of original words, images, or ideas of others and using them as one's own. It is an offence because people legally own their work. One of the most common – and often unintentional – ways students plagiarize is to cut and past information into their project and not document it with a citation. It's easy for teachers to catch plagiarism, so students should be careful to avoid plagiarizing. Instead, students should put useful ideas into their own words and cite the source. Or, if there is a particularly useful bit of information, students can quote it exactly and cite it. This way, both the student and the original author are winners!

Searching the Internet Effectively

The following skill is useful not only for searching the Web with a search engine, but also for searching databases of other digital reference material such as Encarta available at local libraries.

Finding and Sorting Information Online using Boolean Searches

Boolean Search: a way to combine multiple terms when searching the Internet

The + sign directs the search engine to search for both terms.
(The word AND may also be used.)

TERM + TERM

(Example: eagles + habitat)

Quotation marks direct the search engine to search for a group of words in a specific order

TERM + "PHRASE"

(Example: eagles + "Vancouver Island")

The – sign directs the search engine to disregard sites with a term or phrase.
(The word NOT may also be used.)

TERM + "PHRASE" – "PHRASE"

(Example: eagles + "Vancouver Island" – "Bed and Breakfast")

The word OR directs the search engine to find sites that include either of the terms.

TERM OR TERM

(Example: eagles OR raptors)

The advantage of Boolean searching is obvious. Students get the information they need faster and more easily. The more specific students are with their search terms, the more efficiently they will find the information they are after. And, by really thinking through their search terms from a vague beginning to a detailed search, students will find that they have a better sense of the topic they are researching.

Students should also remember that most search engines have an “advanced search” option that allows them to compose a search with many terms. This feature offers students more guidance than composing their own Boolean searches.

However, it is important that students remember to evaluate the information they find, either in print or online, by using the critical reading skills. Is the information fact or opinion?

Evaluating Sources of Information

Before students choose a source for their projects, they need to ask these questions:

- Who?** → Who wrote it?
What are the author’s qualifications, if any?
Did the author include contact information?

- What?** → What information has been found?
Why did the author create it?
Who is the target audience?
Is the author being objective or biased?
Is there any obvious conflict of interest?
Is there evidence that the information is merely advertising?

- When?** → When was this source published?
Is the information current?

- Where?** → Where was this information found?
Is it a reputable source?
If the source is a web site, whose site is it?
What organization sponsors the web site?

Students should remember that the Internet should be used as a source of valuable and reliable information. But, searching for that information is kind of like searching for gold. They have to go through tons of rock to get to it!

Citing Sources

MLA Style Guide

A Note about MLA and APA Styles:

This Writer's Style Guide mainly uses Modern Languages Association (MLA) style. It is the preferred style in many North American colleges and universities, particularly for English courses.

American Psychological Association (APA) style is an alternative style that many colleges and universities require for courses in social sciences. APA style will not be addressed here.

The MLA and APA styles do not normally use footnotes or endnotes to indicate sources of information. Those kinds of documentation were once more widely used, and students should be aware that some history and other courses might still require them. Once students have learned to apply MLA style consistently, they will find that they can soon learn alternative styles if the need arises.

Formatting A Piece of Writing

Word process on "letter-size" white sheets of paper, which are 8.5 by 11 inches, or approximately 21 by 28 cm. If students are expressly permitted to use handwriting, they must write legibly, in pen, on standard-size lined sheets. Whether word-processing or writing, students should use only one side of each sheet.

Students who are writing by hand should underline words that would call for italic type in standard usage (e.g. titles of books).

Page Identification

Pages should be numbered consecutively in the upper right-hand corner of each page. Numbering starts with the number 1 for the first page of content, which is usually the first page after the title page.

On the same line as the page number, any other information that the assignment directions require is added. If students are using a word processor, all of this information belongs in the header.

Margins

Margins should be at least 2.5 cm, or at least 1 inch.

If students are typing or word processing their work, it should be double-spaced. If writing by hand, students should skip every second line. The first word of each paragraph should be indented at least 1 cm or 5 spaces. A little extra space above each paragraph may also be allowed.

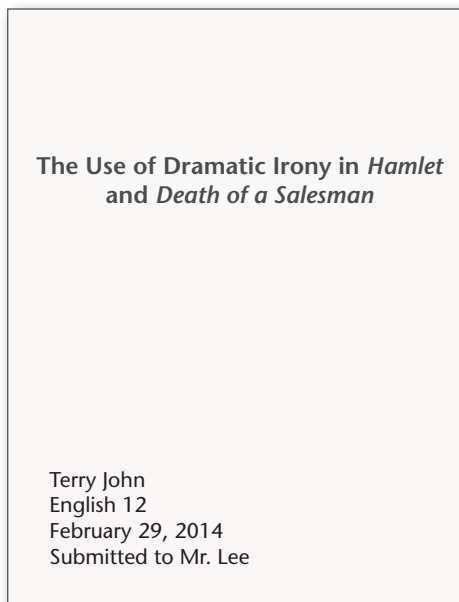
Setting Up a Title Page

Students should use a separate sheet of paper for the title page of a research paper. The title of the piece of writing is centered and placed halfway between the left and right margins. In the title, the first letter of the first word and the first letters of all major words are capitalized. Words not capitalized include articles, coordinating conjunctions, and prepositions.

Within the title, students should italicize the title of any separately published book or play and use quotation marks around the title of any article, short story, or poem.

The student's name, the course name, the date, the teacher's name, and any other information that the assignment directions require are placed at the bottom of the page.

Example of a title page →



Following Style Conventions

Quotations

Guidelines for students:

- Use the exact wording, capitalization, punctuation and spelling of the original.
- Use ellipsis (three space periods . . . like this) to indicate words that have been omitted within a quotation. Precede the ellipsis points with a period when the omitted words are at the end of a sentence (like this)
- If it is necessary to indicate an error in a quotation, [sic] in square brackets is inserted after it (“sic” is Latin for “thus”). If an explanatory remark is needed in a quotation, it too is inserted in square brackets to show that it is not part of the quotation.
- Place quoted material within double quotation marks (“ ”). Single quotation marks are only used when they are needed to replace the double quotation marks appearing in the quoted passage.
- Use block quotation style for poetry of at least two lines, or for other quotations of at least four lines. The block quotation is not enclosed in quotation marks, but is indented at least 1 cm or 5 spaces. The block quotation is single-spaced. The statement introducing the block quotation often ends with a colon. Here is an example:

Hinchcliffe explains why she believes Thorstein Veblen had serious misgivings about the relevance of social Darwinism to history: “Veblen describes his own evidence as ‘less than convincing’ in several chapters.” (341)

- Show the break between the lines of poetry with a slash (/) when they are quoted within a paragraph. The original capitalization at the beginning of the second line is retained (e.g. “Of man’s first disobedience and the fruit / Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste...”).
- Keep the original indentation and line breaks intact when using block quotation style. Here is an example of a stanza from George Herbert:

Man

My God, I heard this day,
That none doth build a stately habitation,
But that he means to dwell therein.

- Avoid using quotations to “pad” their writing to increase the length.
- Make sure sentences with quotations are grammatically correct and easy to read. The sentences should be checked as carefully as if there were no quotation marks.

Abbreviations

Students should keep abbreviations to a minimum. Prime Minister, Governor General, President, Vice President, the Reverend, Professor, military titles, days of the week and months of the year should not be abbreviated.

Dr., Jr., Sr., Mr., Ms., and Mrs. can be used.

Italics

Students should use italics for emphasis and for:

- the titles of books and periodicals.
- foreign language words and phrases (if not yet brought into English).
- names of newspapers, with the city italicized if it is part of the paper’s name (e.g. *The Globe and Mail* of Toronto / *The Victoria Daily Times*).

Students should not italicize the titles of articles, lectures and chapters. Quotation marks should be placed around them.

If students are writing by hand or do not have italic type available, they should underline instead of italicize.

Numbers

In general, numerals are used for numbers 10 and above. (12, 103 etc.) Numerals are used for scientific numbers (7g), years (1984, 2001), and parts of a book (pages 9-11). Words are used for numbers with two words: “seventy-five”. Words are also used for approximate numbers, as in “over two hundred people” and for a number that begins a sentence. Words are also used when they are more readable, e.g. a budget of \$2.5 billion, ten 5-point scales.

Punctuation

Periods and commas are always placed inside (before) closing quotation marks. All other punctuation marks are placed outside (after) the closing quotation marks unless the other punctuation mark is part of the quoted material (e.g. “Is this a metaphor for life?” he asked.).

When referring to decades, no apostrophe is used (e.g. 1880s not 1880’s).

Commas are not used before or after dashes.

Contractions (doesn’t, you’re) are not used in formal writing.

Spelling

Students should use a Canadian dictionary for spelling and usage. Where more than one spelling is given, the first spelling listed should be used. Students should be careful to be consistent in their spelling throughout the writing.

Identifying People

The first time a person is referred to, the person’s full name and title is used. After that, the surname is sufficient if there is no possibility of confusion.

Titles of Books and Articles

Students should be sure to always copy the title of a book from the title page, not the book cover, which may sometimes have an abbreviated form of the title.

The titles of books, periodicals, plays, long poems, films, TV programs, CDs, CD-ROMs, websites and works of art should all be italicized.

Titles of articles, essays, short stories, interviews and short poems should be written within quotation marks.

Citing Sources

Passing off other people's ideas as one's own is plagiarism. It is a major academic offence.

Students do not need to cite sources for matters of common knowledge. It is hard for some students to know what is "common knowledge," but it becomes easier with experience. Assigned readings are not common knowledge. These should be cited even though the instructor will know where the student obtained the information.

Students must document their sources in two ways:

- Parenthetical documentation within the body of their piece of writing
- Their "Works Cited" list at the end of the writing.

Parenthetical Documentation

If students use someone else's words or ideas, they must cite the source, including the page number if appropriate, in parentheses. Citations for electronic sources such as web sites should include the paragraph number.

Steinbeck's female characters are often strong people who "guide their husbands through their moments of instability" (Falkenberg 17).

Steinbeck often created strong female characters who were able to guide their husbands through moments of instability (Falkenberg 17).

If the author's name is mentioned in the writing, cite only the page or paragraph number.

Falkenberg notes that Steinbeck created strong female characters who were able to guide their husbands through moments of instability (17).

If the entire work is being acknowledged, students can simply include the name of the work and its author in the text. An example is: "Ray Carver earned his reputation as a 'dirty realist' with *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, a collection of tales of woe from the dark side of the American dream."

When students cite lines from a play, the citation must include the act, scene and line numbers rather than the page.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, we are told that "The play's the thing" (2.2.633).

List of Works cited

At the end of their piece of writing, students list all the source materials that they have cited. This is done in a “Works Cited” list arranged in alphabetical order.

The following are guidelines when making the list.

- Centre the heading “Works Cited” near the top of the page. A double space is left after the heading before beginning the first entry.
- Begin the entry flush with the left-hand margin. If the entry runs to a second line, that line is indented by at least one centimeter or five spaces.
- Use the punctuation shown in the “Examples of Works Cited (MLA Style) part of this guide.
- Replace the author’s name with three hyphens and a period if the author’s name would be repeated in the list of works cited. This shows that more than one source of information written by the same author has been used in the research.
- Write n.p. if no place of publication or publisher is given; n.d. if no date is given; and n. page. if no page is given.
- Use this general order of information to cite books:
 - the names of the author(s), editor(s) or institution(s) responsible for writing the book
 - the full title of the book
 - the series title (if any) and the volume or number in the series
 - the total number of volumes of a multi-volume work
 - edition, if not the first edition
 - city of publication
 - publisher’s name
 - date of publication

E.g.

Tazo, Ezra B., and Leah E. Doherty. *The Comprehensive Handbook of English*. 2nd ed. Toronto: UBC Press, 2006.

- Use this general order of information in citations for articles:
 - author and/or editor
 - article title
 - periodical name
 - volume number (sometimes issue number)
 - date
 - page on which the article appears

E.g. MacDonalD, Tony. "Shakespeare's theatre."
Understanding Literature 27 (June 2006): 21-24

- Use this general order of information in citations for **electronic sources**:
Works on the Internet are cited in much the same way as printed works. The challenge with Internet resources is that there is no standardized publication information. Students should aim to include:

- author and/or editor
- title of webpage/article
- title of website
- version number
- date of version or posting
- publishing information
- date of access
- URL

E.g. Bird, P. "Holden Caulfield's Humour." *Modern Literature* 2.1. 2006. Canadian Literary Association. Mar. 2006
<<http://www.modernliturature.com/ed21/holden.htm>>.

Sometimes student assignment directions may require them to include a bibliography. MLA style generally avoids the term "bibliography" because it literally means a "description of books" and therefore appears to exclude non-print materials. In practice, however, the expectation is likely to be what MLA style calls a "List of works consulted." When "bibliography" is used in that sense, students should include not only the books they cited in their paper but also other relevant works that they consulted.

Examples of Works Cited (MLA Style)

Books

Books by a single author

Jones, Ray. *Talking about Statistics*. New York: Harper Collins, 1983.
-- --. *America's Funniest Statistics*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.

Book with two or more authors or editors

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<<http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/>>.

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Visual Presentation Skills

Using Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers are visual tools or diagrams that can help students organize information and make connections or see patterns. These tools can be adapted to suit the student's purpose and style.

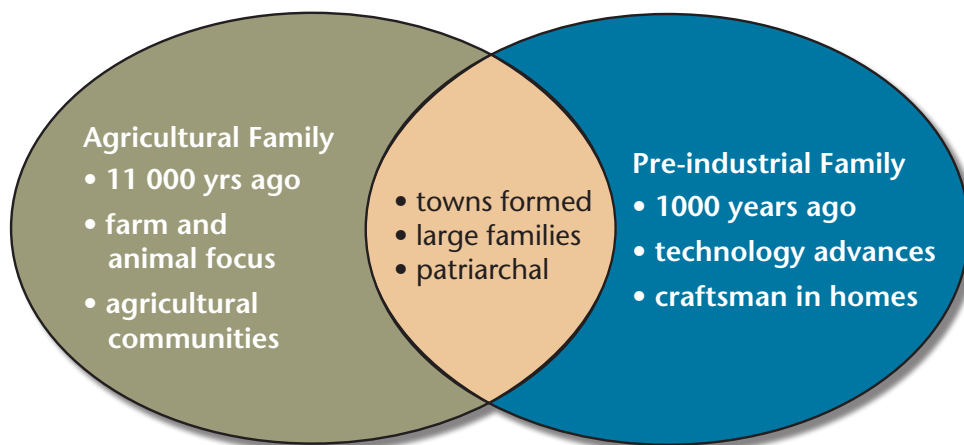
Concept mapping will help them analyze a problem or situation and provide more information to make a decision or to represent information visually. Concept mapping is one type of graphic organizer. Other common graphic organizers include:

- Venn diagrams
- Compare and contrast charts
- Classification charts
- Idea maps

For example, a student might use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast two types of family groupings. This is an example of knowing the purpose and choosing the tool.

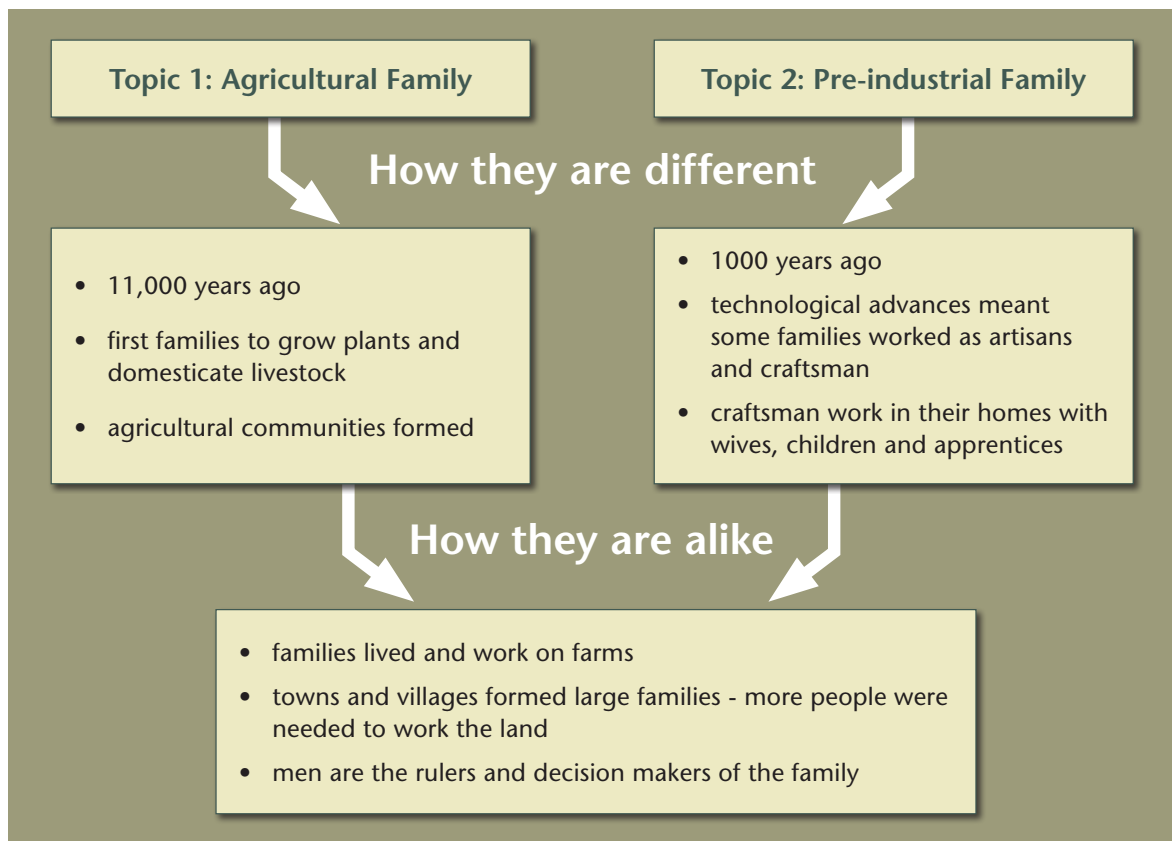
Venn Diagram

A Venn diagram is a graphic organizer used to show how concepts are similar and how they are different. Venn diagrams work best when short words or phrases can capture the concepts. Similarities are indicated where the two circles overlap. Differences are then displayed in the non-overlapping sections.



Compare and Contrast Chart

A compare and contrast chart is similar to a Venn diagram, but is typically displayed in table format. These charts are more useful than Venn diagrams when comparing and contrasting more detailed information.



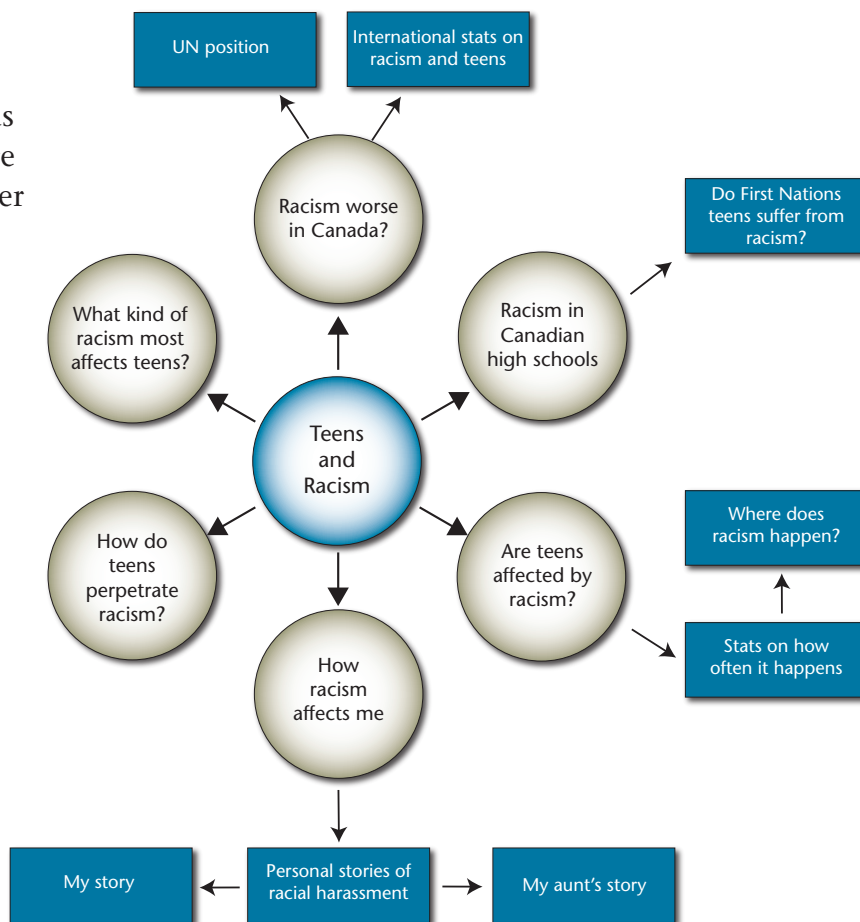
Classification Chart

A classification chart is used to organize information under relevant or related categories. The top of the chart indicates the broad category. Examples or definitions fall in the columns beneath.

Addition of new family members	Physical care and maintenance	Socialization of children	Social control of children	Production, consumption/ distribution of goods and services	Nurturance and love
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adoption • foster care • having a baby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food • clothing • shelter • medical care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • values • beliefs • normal • culture • attitudes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • order • discipline • behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food • clothing • technology • building • cleaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • caring • helping • guiding • protecting

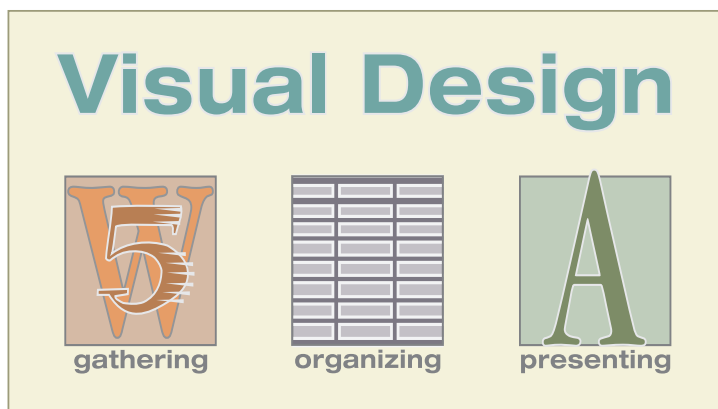
Idea Map

An idea map is a visual representation of how ideas or pieces of information are logically related to the other ideas or information.



Creating a Visual Design

Many student assignments will involve creating visual design pieces such as collages or posters. In creating an effective visual design piece, students will go through many of the same steps as for any writing project, but with an additional step. The difference is that how the student presents information is as important as the information itself.



Students must remember that whether they are using a computer to create their visual design pieces or they are creating them by hand, they will still apply the principles that follow.

Gathering Information: Visual Design Projects Need to Have a Sense of Purpose and Audience

To create a successful visual design, students need to find out **who** they are communicating to and **what** that audience needs to know. A good way to do so is to start with answers to the 5 Ws: Who? What? Where? When? Why?

- **Who** is the audience that the information is being communicated to. Students should consider things like their age, gender, and interests to provide the information they need in a way that will appeal to them.
- **What** details does the audience need to know and what should they do with the information? This includes providing relevant details, such as contacts and schedules, as well as reasons to attend an event or perhaps reasons to agree or disagree with something.
- **Where** does the event take place? Students should be careful to be specific. For example, the name of the location must include the street address and the room name or number.
- **When** does it happen? The date and time must be included.
- **Why** should the audience care? The information presented should offer a reason for people to care about the information being communicated.

Here's an example of a poster that answers these questions succinctly:

Dog owners, speak up for your best friend!

Public Forum: Off-leash Access to Parks

Attend this forum to support off-leash access, during specified times, at ten city parks.

FACTS:

- 77,500 people live in Victoria
- Over 25% of the population own dogs
- There are 52 city parks
- Only 1 park currently has off-leash access



Wednesday
February 23
7:30 pm

Victoria City Hall
Centennial Square
Meeting Room 204

Organizing: Visual Design Projects Must Include Significant and Relevant Details

Students need to think carefully about how they organize the presented information.



Learn How Workshop Hands-on Bike Tune-up

Saturday March 24
3 hour session with a break

Time	Topic	Tools
9 AM – 9:45	Truing wheels	Spoke wrench
9:45 – 10:15	Brake and derailleur adjustments	Allen keys, screw driver, crescent wrench
10:15 – 10:45	Cleaning chain and derailleurs	Rags
10:45 – 11:00	Break	
11:00 – 11:30	Chain and bearing lubrication	Rags
11:30 – noon	Safety check and adjusting bike to rider	Allen keys, screw driver, crescent wrench, tape measure

Bring your bike and basic tools; we'll supply the rest.

To register call 469-6121
or drop by the store.

The Bike Shop
1824 Water St
Kelowna, BC

- only provide significant details
- separate into relevant chunks
- use titles
- present in a logical order
- use tables and lists
- include a catchy headline
- provide a summary or what-to-do phrase

Effective visual designs:

- identify all the crucial information and throw out anything that is not important. Visual Design calls for messages that are clear and succinct.
- introduce their information with a catchy headline that sums up their product or idea in a few words.
- separate information into relevant chunks so it is easy to read.
 - Reference information that needs to be quickly found. Details such as times, dates, addresses and home numbers should be presented separately from the other information.
- use effective titles for key points so someone can scan the information and quickly find the details they need.
- order and group related information together.
- present information in an easy-to-read format such as lists and tables versus long sentences or paragraphs.
- include a short phrase at the end telling the audience what to do if the product is meant to persuade the audience to action.

Design: Consider all the Elements

Parts of the layout including the type, graphics, and white space, are referred to as design elements. These design elements all contribute to the composition as a whole.

Visual Design Products Need to Present Information in a Logical, Well-Balanced Layout

Composition or **layout** is the arrangement of all the design elements as a whole and:

Effective composition:

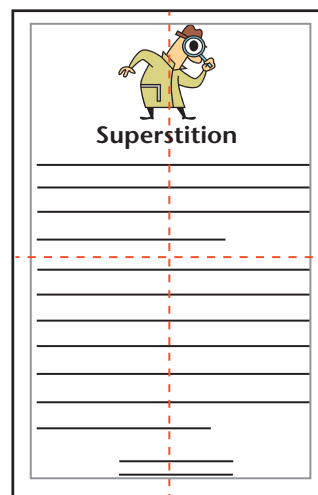
- includes a focal point; one central area of interest.
- arranges all elements to achieve a balanced, attractive layout.

Guidelines for students:

1. Determine the size and shape of the page.

Is the longest measurement vertical or horizontal? This will determine if the page is landscape (longest is horizontal) or portrait (longest is vertical). In specifying page sizes, the width is always given before the height.

- For example, a standard vertical page for a handout is 8 ½ by 11 inches. A vertical poster could be 11 by 17 inches, while a web page is horizontal and described as 800 by 600 pixels.
2. Sketch the design elements out on a piece of graph paper that is the same proportion as the finished page.
 - The first step is to draw a border or frame inside all the edges of the graph paper to define the area the elements must sit in.
 - The frame is usually the same distance from the edge of the paper on either side and along the top. The distance from the bottom of the paper is usually a bit larger.
 - The elements will be placed within this frame. Placing elements too close to an edge gives the layout a crowded feeling.
 3. Draw a vertical line down the center of the page. This helps determine balance when the elements are placed in the layout.
 - The elements could be placed on the centre vertical line to achieve an ordered, stable look.
 - The layout can be balanced by making sure that elements of equal visual weight are on either side of the vertical line.



Using Titles and Headlines Effectively

A **headline** is used to catch the audience's interest and clearly identify the creator's purpose. It's almost always placed at the top, in large, bold type. This is because we read left to right, top to bottom, so it's important to pull the eye to the top to begin.

Use Strong Visuals

Colour adds interest and attracts the eye. Contrast refers to the difference between light and dark. In working with colour, students should always make sure there is enough contrast between elements that are close to each other. This is especially true for small elements such as type. For example, if there is an image of a snowy landscape, the type over that image should be dark. Otherwise the reader will have trouble understanding the writing. Another example would be a black or very dark page. In this case white, or some other very light colour should be used.



Graphics add interest to a layout. They can also add context by showing a product, a point of view, or illustrating a concept. Large graphics, such as photographs and illustrations draw the eye, so they should be placed next to details important to the audience. Small graphics, such as geometric shapes, add balance and interest to a layout. Vertical and horizontal lines do this too and can also act as separators for blocks of information.

White space is the empty space where there is no text or graphics. It is important that white space be included so the information presented is easy to read. White space separates design elements, gives a place for the eye to rest and provides a clean, uncluttered, inviting look to a layout.

Composition

- establish a focal point
- design for page proportions
- draw a border that elements sit inside
- left and right sides of the page are balanced
- top and bottom of the page are balanced
- analyze visual designs that appeal to you

Typeface (headline)

Typeface refers to a family of type, all sharing the same design, for example, *Times*, *Palatino*, *Arial* and *Verdana*, are all different typefaces. The typeface you choose conveys a look or personality. Some evoke tradition and stability with their serifs. Typefaces without serifs (called *sans serif*) look more contemporary. Some script faces imitate handwriting to give a casual, personal look. Decorative typefaces are available, but use them sparingly, usually only in a headline to set the mood. The bulk of your information, referred to as body copy, must be presented in a typeface that is easy to read. And remember, never use more than two typefaces in a layout. (type)

Typeface refers to a family of type, all sharing the same design. For example, Times, Palatino, Arial, and Verdana are all different typefaces. (In word processing software, the term font is used.) The typeface conveys a look or personality. Decorative typefaces are available, but they should be used sparingly, usually only in a headline to set the mood.

- The bulk of the information, referred to as body copy, must be presented in a typeface that is easy to read.
- Layouts should include a maximum of two typefaces.
- The largest type should be the headline as it is the most important – usually 18-24 points in size and bolded on a standard page.
- The body copy is regular weight and 9-12 points.
- Using bold type calls the readers attention to the words.
- Italics also draw attention, but in a quieter way than the use of bold face type.

Text alignment is also a design element. Type can be aligned:

- along its left edge (flush left)
- on its right edge (flush right)
- on both its left and right edges (justified)
- centred

Flush left or justified are used for large areas of type. These two alignments are the easiest to read. **Centred** alignment is used for headlines, titles, and shorter groups of type. **Flush right** is used less often as it is the most difficult to read, but works well for shorter groups of type in some layouts where it helps to balance elements.

It is a good idea for students to try sketching different ideas for layouts before beginning work on their visual presentation. These thumbnails help students assess the impact and balance of the various options before they begin work.

For great composition, remember that:

- Headlines are at the top
- Information details are in the middle
- Graphics that illustrate details are arranged close to where that information is
- A persuasive of action phrase is included under the details
- Location and/or contact information is near the bottom

The Art Gallery Presents
Beautiful Bugs

P e p s i s f o r m o s a



Fig. 1

Artists' impressions of insects throughout the last 200 years are celebrated in this diverse exhibition. Drawings, paintings, and sculptures portray the insect in a variety of themes, ranging from the beautiful to the grotesque and from realism to expressionism. Attend the exhibition, from June 2 to 30, and gain a new perspective on this underappreciated animal.

*Visit The Art Gallery
from 10 am to 5 pm daily.*

The Art Gallery
137 88th Avenue
Fort Langley, BC

To improve their own sense of design, students should start by analyzing visual designs that appeal to them. They should think about the composition of the samples by asking themselves some questions:

- How is the focal point established?
- How is the white space balanced with the other elements?
- What typefaces are used and how are they aligned?
- How do the graphics and colours contribute to the effect?

Answering these questions will give students guidance as they plan their own designs.

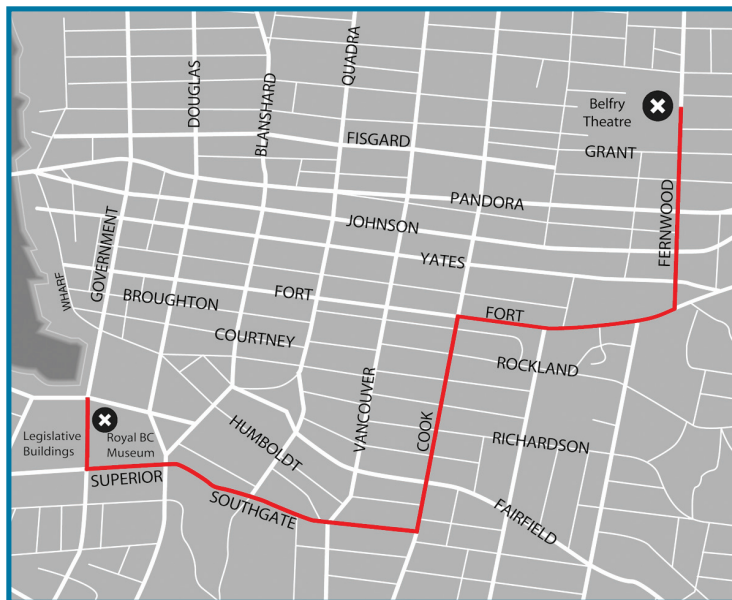
How to Read Visual Texts

Which is the more useful answer to the question, “How do I get from the BC Royal Museum to the Belfry Theatre?”

Answer A:

Start by going south on Government, then turn right onto Superior, which turns into Southgate, all the way to Cook Street. Go north on Cook Street until you reach Fort Street, where you'll turn right. Go up Fort Street and turn left onto Fernwood Road. Go approximately six blocks until you reach the Belfry Theatre.

Answer B:



Most people pick B, the map. In this case the map is more efficient at presenting the information than the written instructions.

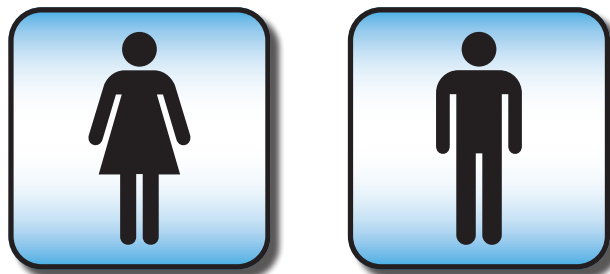
VISUAL PRESENTATION SKILLS

How to Read Visual Texts

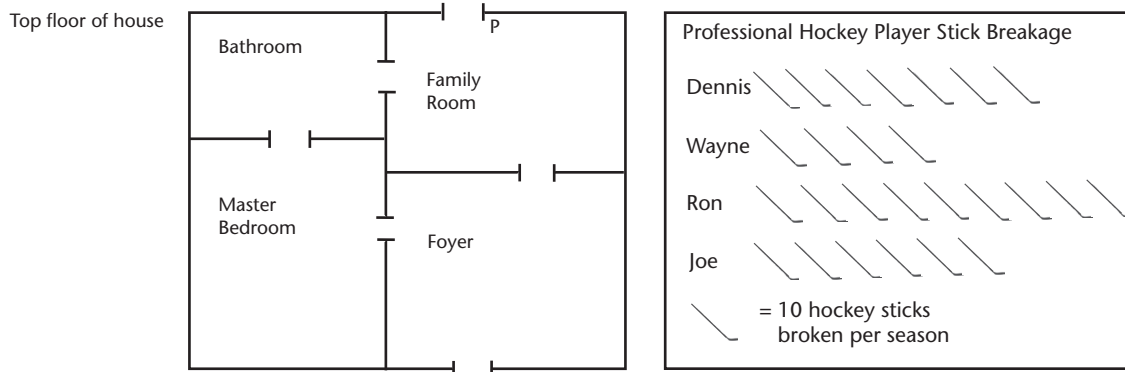
Different visual elements can provide the audience with a lot of information.

A visual text conveys information through an image. Some, like maps, are primarily image, supported by some words. Others like flowcharts, may hold blocks of sentences, but the arrangement of these blocks conveys a sequence, adding meaning that the sentences alone do not have. Some visual text conveys meaning using no words at all: for example, the male and female characters found on washroom doors.

Analysing examples is an important first step in learning how to create effective visual text. Students should consider examples similar to the ones shown below and apply these questions:



What is the visual's purpose – to instruct, persuade or create interest? (For example, the floor plan below instructs people that the bathroom can be accessed from both the master bedroom and family room.)



What type of information, numbers, shapes, concepts or sequence does this visual depict? (The Professional Hockey Player Stick Breakage chart above depicts how many hockey sticks each player has broken.)

What judgment, conclusion, or interpretation is being emphasized? (The Professional Hockey Player Stick Breakage chart indicates that Ron breaks the most sticks.)

It is important to read the written information in visual text such as titles, labels legends, and notes. In the hockey stick diagram, there is a title that tells you what the diagram represents: "Professional Hockey Player Stick Breakage". The legend at the bottom gives more important information ("one hockey stick equals 10 sticks broken in a season") so we know Joe broke 60 sticks, not 6.

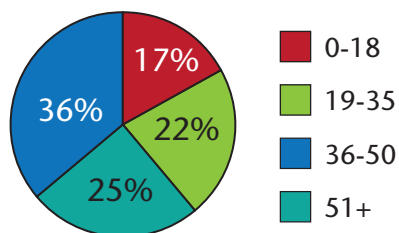
How to Read a Chart or Graph

Analysing how charts and graphs are read helps the student determine which would be used most effectively in their written and visual presentations.

1. Pie Chart

A pie chart is most useful for showing what percentage of the whole a particular item constitutes. For example, what percentage of the population is between the ages of 19 and 35? Consider the following pie chart:

Population by Age in Kamloops, BC



The title tells the reader that this pie chart is about the population of Kamloops, BC. The legend at the right tells the reader that there are four age ranges: 0–18 years old, 19–35 years old, 36–50 years old and 51 years old and older. Each colour corresponds to the matching colour in the pie chart to the left.

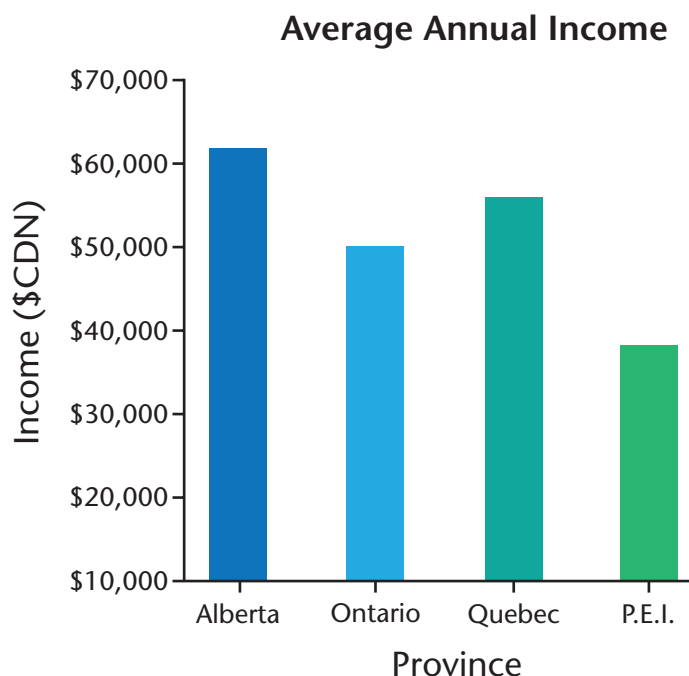
The legend indicates that light grey is for ages 0-18 and the light grey “slice” shows us that 17% of the people in Kamloops are in this range. We can also see that people who are between the ages of 36-50 make up the most numerous group.

It should be noted that the pie chart says nothing about the actual population of Kamloops. The reader cannot tell how many people actually live there. That is acceptable because a pie chart is usually used to show the proportions of a whole rather than the actual total numbers themselves.

2. Bar Graph

A bar graph is most useful for comparing the differing values of several items or categories. For example, the average annual income in several provinces as shown in this graph.

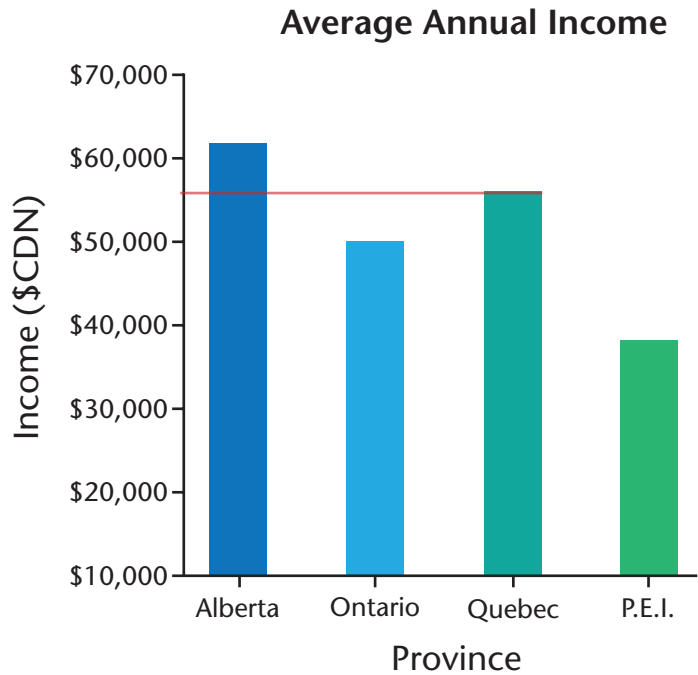
The title tells the reader that this bar graph is about average annual income and the scale along the bottom explains that there is data for four provinces. The vertical scale along the left tells the reader that the data is in Canadian dollars.



A quick glance at the bar graph tells the reader that Albertans have, on average, the highest annual income and that PEI has the lowest of the four provinces.

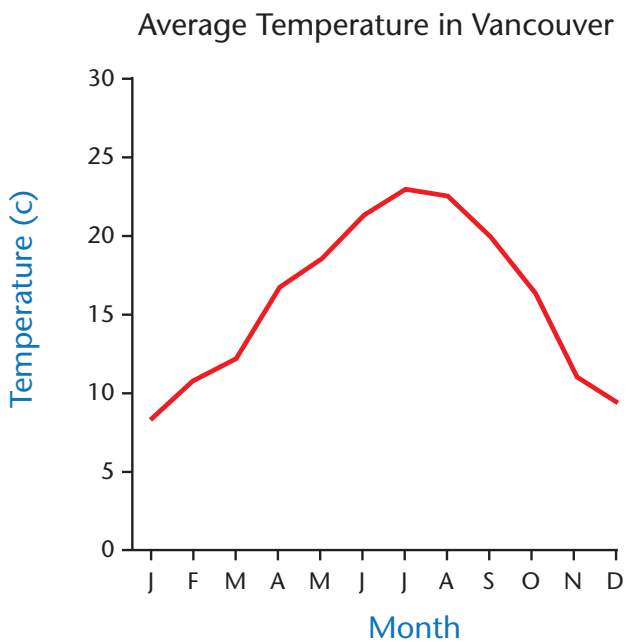
If the reader wants to determine the actual average income for Quebec, the best way is to draw a horizontal line from the top of the Quebec bar to the scale along the left side:

The point at which the line intersects the scale on the left tells the reader the average annual income, in this case about \$56 000. (Note that this value is an approximation. The line lies a little more than half way between \$50 000 and \$60 000, but the graph is not precise enough to show the exact value. That is acceptable because most graphs are intended to give a general overview.)



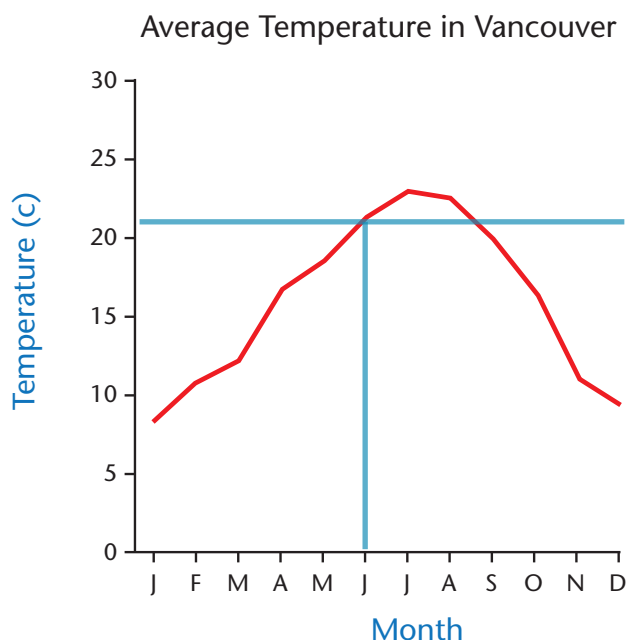
3. Line graph

A line graph is most useful for showing how a certain value changes. For example, the following graph shows the average monthly temperature.



The title tells the reader that this line graph is about the average temperature in Vancouver, BC. The scale along the bottom shows that the information is on a month-by-month basis. The scale along the left side tells the reader the temperature is measured in degrees Celsius.

But how does the reader read this graph more precisely? What if they want to know the average temperature in June? To do this, the reader first locates the month of June on the bottom scale and then draws a vertical line up until it intersects with the temperature line. From the point where the two lines intersect, the reader draws a horizontal line to the Temperature scale on the left.



Where the line intersects the scale on the left tells the reader the temperature, in this case about 21° C.

Even without determining exact temperatures, this line graph also shows the reader that the average temperature in Vancouver is highest in July and August and is coldest in December and January.

How to Create a Chart or Graph

1. Creating a pie chart.

To create a pie chart showing the different types of fruit sold in a produce stand, the student examines the data and sees that every week 500 oranges, 250 apples and 125 each of bananas and pears are sold.

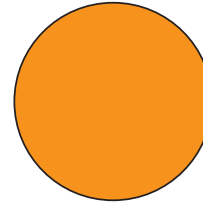
The first step is to total all the single pieces of fruit sold. 500 oranges + 250 apples + 125 bananas + 125 pears = 1000 pieces of fruit.

The next step is to calculate the percentage for each type of fruit. To do this the number of each fruit is divided by the total:

$$\begin{array}{l} 500/1000 = 50\% \text{ Oranges} \\ 250/1000 = 25\% \text{ Apples} \\ 125/1000 = 12.5\% \text{ Bananas} \\ 125/1000 = \underline{12.5\%} \text{ Pears} \\ \text{Total} \qquad \qquad 100\% \end{array}$$

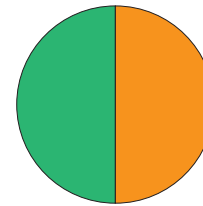
Fruit in a Produce Stand

These percentages are now used to determine how to “slice” the pie chart. First, a large circle representing 100% (all pieces of fruit) is drawn. This should be labeled “Fruit in a Produce Stand”.



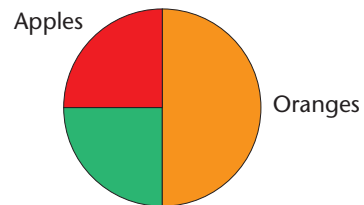
Fruit in a Produce Stand

The larger whole is then divided into the proportions of the types of fruit. The larger piece, 50% Oranges, is done first. A line is drawn dividing the pie in half and this portion is labeled “Oranges.”



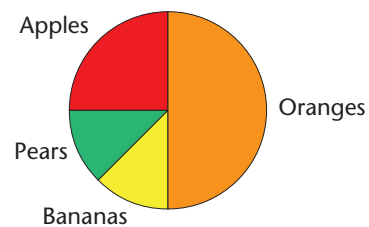
Fruit in a Produce Stand

The next biggest portion, 25% Apples is done next.



Fruit in a Produce Stand

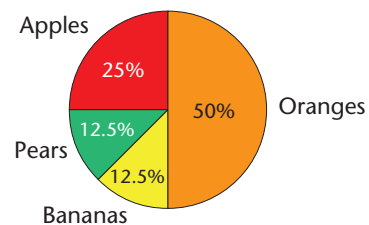
The process is repeated for 12.5% Bananas, and 12.5% Pears.



Fruit in a Produce Stand

To add clarity, the percentages can be added in the appropriate slices of the pie.

The use of colour adds even more clarity to the pie chart. In this example, it would be logical to choose colours that the reader might naturally associate with each fruit: orange for oranges, red for apples, yellow for bananas, and green for pears.



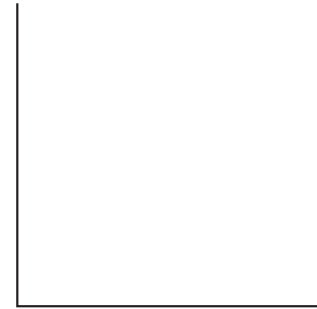
2. Creating a Bar Graph

The following is an example of how students can create a bar graph showing the average rainfall in four cities. The example uses the following information:

City	Rainfall
Toronto	750 mm
Vancouver	1100 mm
Halifax	1400 mm
Winnipeg	500 mm

The first step in a rough draft is drawing vertical and horizontal lines. The correct terms for these are “vertical axis” and “horizontal axis”. The graph is labeled “Average Annual Rainfall by City.”

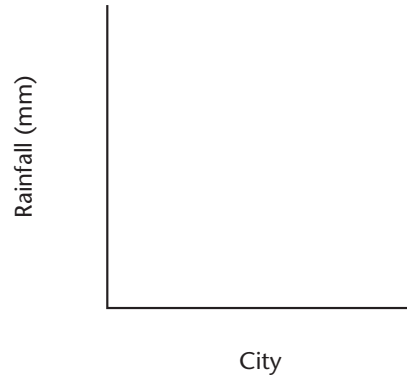
Average Annual Rainfall by City



The next step is to label each axis. In this case the vertical axis is labeled “Rainfall” and the horizontal axis is labeled “City”.

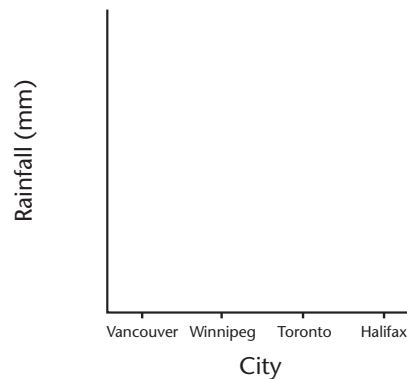
Note that the vertical axis also includes (mm) to make it clear to the reader that the graph shows the rainfall measured in millimeters.

Average Annual Rainfall by City



Next, the cities are added along the horizontal axis. In this case, it is not important how they are spaced or the order in which they are arranged. However, since the graph should be as easy as possible to read, they are spaced evenly and logically from Vancouver in the west to Halifax in the east. (People are used to seeing west on the left side of maps and east on the right.)

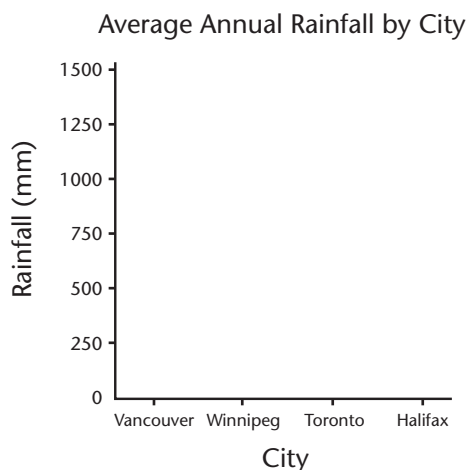
Average Annual Rainfall by City



The next step is the most important. The scale must be determined for the vertical axis.

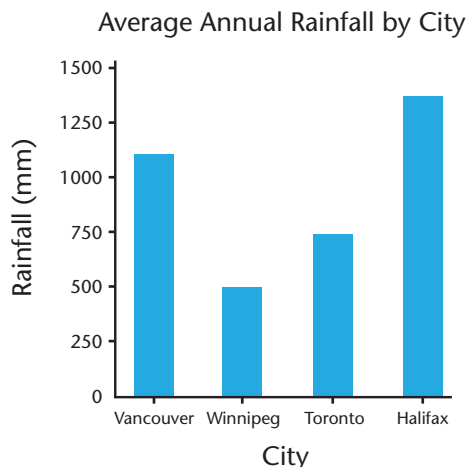
- Determine the greatest value in the data. (Halifax at 1400 mm)
- Set a maximum value a bit higher. Choose a number that is easily divisible. (1500 mm)
- Determine the least value in the data. (Winnipeg at 500 mm)
- Set a minimum value that is lower. In this case, 0 mm is an appropriate choice.

Once the minimum and maximum values have been determined, the vertical axis is marked in even “gradations”. Choosing the number of gradations is important: too many make the graph crowded and hard to read; too few make the graph vague and ineffective. In this case, gradations of 250 mm seem appropriate. The vertical axis should be divided equally into seven portions. The bottom of the scale is labeled 0 mm and the gradations are marked 250 mm, 500 mm, 750 mm, 1000 mm, 1250 mm and 1500 mm.



It is important to use a ruler or graph paper to ensure that each gradation is the same size going up the axis.

The remaining steps are easy. Vancouver has an annual rainfall of 1100 mm. Using a ruler, draw a bar from the horizontal axis to a little less than half way between 1000 mm and 1250 mm. Repeat the process for all the cities, arranging the bottoms of the bars evenly across the horizontal axis.



As in the example of the pie chart shown above, colour helps communicate meaning. In this case, blue would be a good choice for drawing the bars since it is the colour most easily associated with rainfall.

Communication Skills

Communicating with Teachers

When communicating with their teachers or other people from their school, it is important for students to consider their tone and word choice carefully. This is true whether they are communicating by phone, by email, face-to-face, or through an assignment.

Students should:

- be clear and logical
- use appropriate tone
- follow proper sentence and paragraph structure
- consider their audience

When communicating in a school environment, communication typically will be semi-formal, like the level of language used in the workplace. For example, slang may not be appropriate word choice when communicating with teachers.

Poorly written:

Hey, Mr. M. How come the textbook says the last Census was in 1997.
I don't get it maybe I'm just a dumbass.

Later,

Jill

Problem 1: This email contains run-on sentences making the content difficult to understand. This student has not proofread her note before posting it.

Problem 2: This learner may be trying to use humour to deflect criticism, but the effect is one of casual disregard. Students don't have to apologize for not understanding, but they do have to be their own advocate.

Problem 3: The language and tone is too informal for school communication. Students might say "Later" to a friend, but a more formal salutation would be more appropriate to this environment.

Well Written:

Hi Mr. Marker,

I was wondering if you could clarify this for me. There is conflicting information between what I was reading on page 32 of the textbook, and what is written at this website: www.censusRus.com. The two sources seem to be drawing different conclusions from the same information. I wonder if I am misreading something and I am hoping you can help clarify.

Thanks from Jill

This revised email is more appropriate: the email is friendly, easy to follow, and the language is appropriate for student/teacher communication. Notice the learner quotes a source of course information and an outside link – showing that she tried her best to answer her own question. She clearly points out the discrepancy and asks politely for clarification.

Students should:

- be clear and logical
- use appropriate tone
- follow proper sentence and paragraph structure
- consider their audience

Communicating in Online Discussion Boards

As part of an educational community of learners, all participants, including local administrators, teachers and students must agree to a set of guidelines and standards for online behavior. These guidelines are designed to protect participants as well as to ensure that the online environment is used strictly for education purposes.

Items within the Acceptable Use Policy fall into the following categories:

Account Integrity

Students, as users, are responsible for their own accounts, including discussion notes, file transfers, or any other data they transmit. They should not let anyone else know their ID or password.

Account Integrity Guidelines

Students should:

- change their password when they first log in.
- change their password frequently.
- use symbols, numbers and characters within their password.
- pick a password others will find difficult to decode (i.e. not their nickname, middle name, birthdate, pet's name etc.)
- use at least six characters in their password.
- never leave a note of their password near their computer.

Students who are unsure of their user account guidelines should check with their school.

Note: It is recommended that students save an electronic version of all assignments that they submit using the course drop box. They should save a marked PDF file to the same file. This ensures that they have their work at all times and will provide a useful backup in case of any discrepancies. Students should check with their school for procedures about how to submit assignments.

Netiquette

Netiquette refers to behaviour online, and is very important in public and educational systems.

Every participant using the delivery system must be treated with respect. The online discussions are open to all members of the student's class, and messages students post to those discussions reflect the student's personality and behaviour.

Behaviour Guidelines

Students should:

- avoid humour and sarcasm. They do not read well in this online medium and can be offensive to others.
- be aware that messages can seem unintentionally blunt or terse. Using closing salutations (such as "cheers" or "bye for now") help to make messages friendlier.
- remember that participants include many people of different genders, cultures, ages, ability, religions, and experiences. Students must be sensitive to the feelings of others in this diverse delivery environment.
- be warned that swearing, offensive language, and harassment of another person will not be tolerated.

How to Respond to Discussion

The following rubrics give examples of the expectations for online discussion posts, depending on the function of the type of post.

Introducing Themselves

Most courses will ask students to make an introductory post.

Guidelines for students:

- Include their name
- Include their experience or prior knowledge
- Ask questions they have about the course
- Check that their post is complete and error free
- Follow their instructor's lead

4 Exceeds Expectations	3 Meets Expectations	2 Approaching Expectations	1 Unsatisfactory
<p>“Hi! My name is Jill Hill, and I am really excited about taking this course. I have never taken an online course before, but I enjoy emailing, texting, and other electronic communications. Does anyone want to have instant messenger study-chats? I live in Vancouver, by the way!”</p> <p>Although the courses have secure logins and passwords, students should remember that it's still not a good idea to post phone numbers or addresses in a course discussion.</p>	<p>“Hi! S’up, peeps! It’s Jill in the house! Let’s rock this course! If you want to study together some time, hit me up on email!”</p> <p>It has a fun tone, but no real content. It does introduce the learner, and makes the offer of further interaction.</p>	<p>“Hi. I’m Jill. Hope we lern [sic] lots! Is this course like last term’s?”</p> <p>Even in informal discussions, misspellings and abbreviations are a distraction and might leave a bad impression. Most Internet browsers will check spelling to make errors easy to correct.</p>	<p>“I’m Jill. I don’t know anything about this course”</p> <p>Jill does provide her name but no context, no other information, and her tone doesn’t really encourage any interaction.</p>

Comment on the Lesson

The student’s goal in commenting directly on a lesson should be to:

- include direct links and quotes to course material.
- respond as directed by the instructor.
- extend the information by offering outside links, ideas, readings or images.

4 Exceeds Expectations	3 Meets Expectations	2 Approaching Expectations	1 Unsatisfactory
<p>“I thought the article about dog parks (‘My Pointer’s Dog Park pointers’) was interesting, and it made me feel differently about keeping pets in the city. One thing I wondered about was if vets saw a greater or lesser level of illness in dogs that visited open dog parks. I found this site, maybe some of you are interested: www.dogzinthepark.ca.”</p> <p>This is a thorough post. The learner clearly has read the article and reflected on the information. The learner even provides a link for others to visit.</p>	<p>“I would use a dog park if I had a dog and no yard. The only thing is people don’t clean up after their mutts and that would be gross.”</p> <p>This learner did not reference the article, and does not actually make it clear what the post is about. She does make a comment about dog parks though!</p>	<p>“Dogs rule, cats drool. No one should have dogs if they don’t have a yard. Especially big dogs.”</p> <p>There is only a vague reference here to the lesson and article topic.</p>	<p>“I don’t know about dogs. Maybe they don’t like being outside.”</p> <p>This post does not even seem to reference the lesson, even though it is on a similar topic.</p>

Ask a Question of Another Learner

Students should make sure they:

- show that they have read the other posts thoroughly.
- show a connection to the information.
- elicit further and deeper discussion.
- avoid yes/no questions.
- are respectful of the other learners' contributions.
- refrain from pointing out errors.
- disagree without arguing.

4 Exceeds Expectations	3 Meets Expectations	2 Approaching Expectations	1 Unsatisfactory
<p>“Hi Bill-- Jill here-- I read your post about Family Traditions. When I was a kid, my parents used to make elaborate Easter Egg hunts for us, like in the article by Silverstein we read. When you came to this country, did you find some of our traditions odd? Do you think you will do some of your family traditions with your kids?”</p> <p>Even if the tone of a discussion group is informal, students always need to be clear. Notice how the learner addresses the classmate, references the topic, connects to self-experience, then asks a question that requires thought, reflection, and extension.</p>	<p>“Hey Bill-- cool comments and links about Family Traditions-- thanks! Have you ever tried to teach someone else about your P_____ (what was the name?) tradition? Was it easy to explain to a stranger?”</p> <p>This learner does address a learner’s post specifically, didn’t to go back to Bill’s post to check on the proper terminology. It shows lack of respect for both the classmate and the learning process.</p>	<p>“I was wondering if your parents did the same stuff when they were kids?”</p> <p>Students must remember to reference the original information. As a stand-alone post, would this question make sense? It only takes a second to copy and paste a quote.</p>	<p>“Thanks for the information about your tradition. Did you like writing the post?”</p> <p>Nice tone, but not a very deep question. Doesn’t show if the learner did anything more than just skim over the post.</p>

Reply to a Question

Students should:

- reply appropriately.
- reference the question.
- provide a full answer.
- offer extended thoughts to further the discussion.

4 Exceeds Expectations	3 Meets Expectations	2 Approaching Expectations	1 Unsatisfactory
<p>“Thanks for the question Margaret! You wanted to know if [Direct quote of the question]. Well, I discovered that..... [answers fully]. Margaret, I noticed you wrote about...[makes a connection]....and I think our topics are quite similar. I have a short video on the topic I could post if you’d like to know more.”</p> <p>The learner reacts positively to the question, rather than defensively. She quotes the original question, indicating that she has read it. She ends adding more to the topic.</p>	<p>“Thanks for the question about my post. It reminded me of [offers some information on topic]...I don’t know if that answers your question.”</p> <p>The tone is appropriate here, but the learner answers the question only generally, not specifically. There is no extension of learning.</p>	<p>“In answer to your question, I found... [gives brief information, does not address question fully].”</p> <p>The tone is indifferent. Only a brief, general response is provided.</p>	<p>“I don’t understand the question”</p> <p>If learners truly don’t understand the question, they should begin by replying with a quote from the question, or reword it in a way that the learner does understand, and answer that question. Or, the learner should email their instructor offline BEFORE their response is due and ask for clarification. If they must reply with an “I don’t understand,” learners must be very careful with their tone, and offer an apology for stopping the flow of discussion.</p>

Express an Opinion

Students should:

- express an opinion if they have been asked to do so.
- make sure to give clear and logical reasons to back up the opinion.
- quote facts and sources from within and outside the course.
- choose their words carefully to express an opinion without being offensive.

4 Exceeds Expectations	3 Meets Expectations	2 Approaching Expectations	1 Unsatisfactory
<p>“I support same-sex marriages because the commitment between two legal and competent adults is not the business of the government.”</p> <p>The learner uses facts from the course, as well as outside sources to back up the opinion. The learner chose words that express the opinion without being inflammatory.</p>	<p>“I think it’s appalling that people are against same-sex marriage. It makes me sick that people aren’t allowed to live their lives if they are not hurting others.”</p> <p>This learner makes an impassioned statement, but doesn’t back it up with facts, just opinions. Some of the language is more charged than it needs to be.</p>	<p>“I think laws against same-sex marriage are morally right!”</p> <p>This learner expresses an opinion, but doesn’t back it up with facts or feelings.</p>	<p>“I think it’s stupid we are studying same-sex marriage. I’m never getting married.”</p> <p>This learner offers an opinion that is off-topic.</p>