PROFESSIONAL WRITING

THE COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE WRITING GUIDE

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Student Text 22-2

July 2023

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PROFESSIONAL WRITING:
THE COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE WRITING GUIDE

STUDENT TEXT 22-2

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Disclaimer

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

—LTC Dana Gingrich, US Army
75th Ranger Regiment Executive Officer, CGSC Class of 2019.

We are pleased to introduce *Professional Writing: The Command and General Staff College Writing Guide.* This guide aims to help Command and General Staff College (CGSC) students improve their writing skills. However, this guide is not just for CGSC students—it will help anyone who wants to write well.

We designed this guide for professionals who already know how to write but want to improve. This is not a syntax, grammar, spelling, or punctuation handbook. We assume the reader understands the basics of standard written English.

The central idea of this guide is that writing is a process, not a product.[1] We avoid distinguishing academic writing from professional writing. Although the products are different, the process is the same. Once writers understand the process, they can use it to produce whatever product circumstances demand.[2] The process-focused writing skills in this guide will be valuable to CGSC students long after they leave Fort Leavenworth.

Finally, a word of encouragement to the reader. You can write! You will struggle, but all writers do. Everyone writes terrible first drafts. *Everyone.* Do not be disappointed when your writing is not "born perfect."[3] Writing never is. Instead, rewrite. Use the process. This guide can help.

Writing is hard, and it always will be. But we hope this guide makes it easier—if only a little.

PROJECT AUTHORS

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[1] Murray, *The Essential Don Murray,* 3-6.
[2] Murray, 3-6.
[3] Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, 83.

WRITING PROCESS QUICK GUIDE

	Writing Activity	Standards
Plan	✓ Analyze the task. ✓ Make a writing plan.	• Write to achieve the purpose.
Research	✓ Gather strong evidence. ✓ Avoid bias. ✓ Take organized notes. ✓ Keep track of sources.	• Coherently advance a thesis. • Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning. • Cite all sources, and format citations correctly.
Draft	✓ Write an introduction, main body, and conclusion. ✓ Organize the main body logically. ✓ State claims clearly. Support them with evidence and reasoning. ✓ Consider counterarguments. ✓ Integrate sources using quotes, paraphrases, and summaries.	• Write to achieve the purpose. • Coherently advance a thesis. • Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning. • Write a clear introduction, main body, and conclusion. • State the thesis early in the introduction. • Arrange paragraphs and sections in a logical order.
Revise	✓ Revise for substance and organization. ✓ Writing is thinking. Do more research and drafting if needed. ✓ Murder your darlings. ✓ Revise paragraphs. ✓ Use paragraph transitions.	• Coherently advance a thesis. • Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning. • Write a clear introduction, main body, and conclusion. • State the thesis early in the introduction. • Arrange paragraphs and sections in a logical order. • Organize paragraphs around one idea.
Edit	✓ Make writing clear. ✓ Prefer simple words and short sentences. ✓ Use concrete language. ✓ Prefer active voice. ✓ Write cohesive sentences. ✓ Omit needless words. ✓ Avoid hedging and throat clearing. ✓ Avoid nominalizations. ✓ Maintain a professional tone.	• Prefer clear, concise sentences. • Prefer active voice. • Prefer simple words and omit unnecessary words. • Maintain a professional tone—formal but conversational and confident. • Use conventional punctuation, spelling, and grammar. • Cite all sources, and format citations correctly.
Publish	Before publishing or turning in, confirm: ✓ The essay achieves its purpose. ✓ The introduction and conclusion agree. ✓ The essay meets all administrative requirements (e.g., word count). ✓ Name or ID number is on the paper. ✓ The document is correctly formatted. ✓ The filetype is correct (some professors may ask for a PDF). ✓ All sources are cited. ✓ Citations are complete and accurate.	• Write to achieve the purpose. • Cite all sources, and format citations correctly. • Format documents correctly.

CHAPTER 1
PROFESSIONAL WRITING

Writing is hard work. A clear sentence is no accident. Very few sentences come out right the first time, or even the third time. Remember this in moments of despair. If you find that writing is hard, it's because it is hard.[4]
—William Zinsser

This guide aims to help Command and General Staff College (CGSC) students succeed by writing well. Strong writing skills enable CGSC students to succeed academically, but more importantly, they empower CGSC graduates to succeed professionally. Commanders expect field grade leaders and general staff officers to write with purpose, credibility, and clarity. This guide helps students develop the writing skills needed to meet commanders' expectations.

Writing at the CGSC is *professional* writing—purposeful, credible, and clear. Purposeful writing meets the reader's needs. Credible writing is objective and evidence-based. Clear writing is easy to read and understand. Students who write with purpose, credibility, and clarity can meet the academic demands of the CGSC and the professional demands of military leadership.

Myths about Writing

People often have misconceptions about writing that keep them from developing their writing skills.[5] Perhaps the most common—and harmful—is that the ability to write well is a rare gift or unique talent. The truth, however, is that writing is a skill, not a gift. Anyone willing to work at it can learn to write well.

Other writing myths include:[6]

Myth: Writing is easy for good writers but hard for weak writers.
Fact: Writing is hard for everyone. Good writers work hard at writing well. Their first drafts are just as terrible as everyone else's and require many rewrites. Ernest Hemingway, for example, rewrote the last page of *A Farewell to Arms* 47 times.[7]

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

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[4] Zinsser, *On Writing Well,* 9.
[5] Irvin, "What is 'Academic' Writing?" 4-5; Saint Louis University Writing Services, "10 Myths."
[6] Irvin, 4-5; Saint Louis University Writing Services.
[7] Bracken, "A Farewell to Arms."

Myth: Good writers have everything figured out before they start writing.
Fact: Writers rarely know exactly what they will write until they write it. Writing is a form of thinking that reveals the strengths and weaknesses of arguments. Writers think and learn as they write and rewrite, and their essays evolve as they learn. At the end of the writing process, the final product is often very different from what the writer envisioned at the start.

Myth: Good writers use big words to sound smart. Simple words sound dumb.
Fact: The best writers use simple, clear, and concise language. Good writing is easy to read and understand. Fancy language muddies writing and can often hide weak ideas.

CGSC Writing Standards

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

Substance is the intellectual content of the writing.

> Good writing is about telling the truth.[8]
>
> —Anne Lamott

- Write to achieve the purpose.
- Coherently advance a thesis.
- Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning.

Organization is the ordering of essay elements and ideas.

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

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

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

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

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

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[8] Lamott, *Bird by Bird*, 3.

The CGSC writing standards are interdependent and equally important. Some students may be tempted to work hard on substance while neglecting the other standards. This approach is a mistake. Strong substance presented in an unorganized, confusing, error-ridden product is unacceptable in professional settings. Writers must meet all four standards to achieve the overall goals of purpose, credibility, and clarity.

The Writing Process

The secret to writing is *rewriting*.

Good writing is effortless to read. But effortless reading comes from painstaking rewriting—the revising and editing writers do after the first draft. Drafting—turning ideas into words, sentences, and paragraphs—is just one step of the writing process.

> The essence of writing is rewriting. Very few writers say on their first try exactly what they want to say.[9]
>
> —William Zinsser

The writing process comprises six activities: planning, research, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Figure 1).

- *Planning* involves understanding the writing task and making a plan to achieve it.
- *Research* is collecting, organizing, and analyzing the facts the writer will use as evidence.
- *Drafting* is turning ideas and research into words, sentences, and paragraphs.
- *Revision* is rewriting the draft to improve substance, organization, coherence, and cohesion.
- *Editing* involves rewriting a revision to make it clear, simple, and concise.
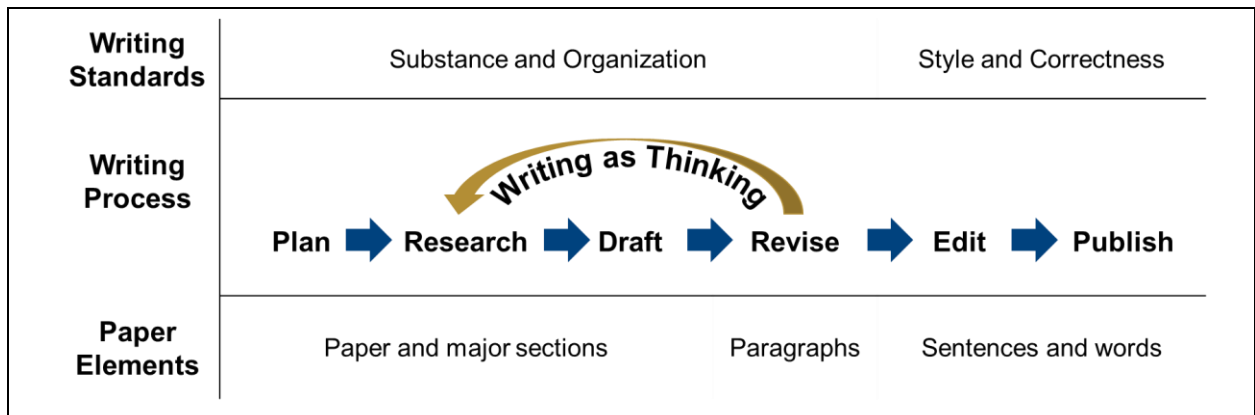- *Publishing* includes proofreading the final draft and submitting the final product.

Figure 1. The writing process

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[9] Zinsser, *Writing to Learn*, 15.

The writing process is nonlinear. Writers go back and forth between activities as they write and rewrite.[10] Although frustrating at times, this laborious back-and-forth is necessary to transform disjointed drafts into effortless essays.

Tools, Not Rules

This text is a guide, not a rulebook. Writing cannot be reduced to unbreakable rules. What works well in one sentence, paragraph, or paper may not work well in the next one. For example, Chapter 5 of this guide advises writers to "murder your darlings"—a hyperbolic statement that describes the difficulty of discarding writing that does not advance the thesis. Yet, Chapter 6 advises writers to avoid hyperbole. The authors of this guide chose to keep "murder your darlings" because it is memorable and communicates a key idea.

Another example is this guide's treatment of passive voice. The style standards urge writers to prefer active voice. Yet, Chapter 6 discusses using passive voice for cohesive sentences.

These examples reinforce the idea that writing, rather than rules, is a series of choices among alternatives. Each alternative will be more or less effective depending on the reader and the subject. This guide offers tools to help writers make effective choices.

However, no guide can anticipate every circumstance. Writers, like carpenters or mechanics, must learn to use a variety of tools, then choose the best tools for each job. This guide can help, but it can only inform the writer's choices. It cannot dictate them.

★ QUICK TIP ★

Quick tips are helpful ways to accomplish writing tasks. The quick tips in this guide draw on experienced writers' best practices and appear in shaded boxes like this one.

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[10] Irvin, "What is 'Academic' Writing?" 4.

CHAPTER 2
PLAN

Writing is thinking on paper.[11]
—William Zinsser

Writing standards to focus on when planning:

Substance
- Write to achieve the purpose.

Writing Standards	Substance and Organization		Style and Correctness
Writing Process	Writing as Thinking		
	Plan ▶ Research ▶ Draft ▶ Revise	▶ Edit ▶ Publish	
Paper Elements	Paper and major sections	Paragraphs	Sentences and words

Figure 2. Planning and the writing process

Most professional writing begins with a directed purpose. For example, a professor assigns an essay, or a commander requires an information paper. Before putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard), the writer must understand the purpose of the writing task and develop a plan to achieve it.

Notably, scholarly works (theses, monographs, and academic articles) require the author to establish the essay's purpose using a compelling research question. However, posing a good research question is beyond the scope of this guide. Students writing scholarly research should consult a research methods text that discusses how to craft a research question.[12]

Analyze the Task

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

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[11] Zinsser, *Writing to Learn,* 11.
[12] For scholarly writing, consider Booth et al., *The Craft of Research*.

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

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

This prompt gives three tasks: analyze the crossing of the Suez Canal, use current Army doctrine as the analysis framework, and keep the essay to 750 words or less. The writer must meet all three requirements. If not, they have failed to meet the most important writing standard: *write to achieve the purpose.*

It is essential to understand the task and write to achieve it. Given the task above, for example, a writer could easily get caught up in the history of the 1973 war and write a historical explanation instead of a doctrinal one. Such an essay, no matter how carefully researched and skillfully written, fails to achieve its purpose.

Make a Writing Plan

After analyzing the task, make a plan to accomplish it. The time required to complete the writing task depends on its length and difficulty. Short essays (less than ~750 words) require about 7–10 days.[13] Table 1 shows an example writing plan for a short essay:

Table 1. Short essay writing plan

Day	Goal
Monday	Analyze the task and begin research
Tuesday	Research
Wednesday	Draft
Thursday	Revise; Additional research and drafting
Friday	Rest
Saturday	Revise
Sunday	Rest
Monday	Edit
Tuesday	Extra day
Wednesday	Publish (submit)

Longer (more than ~750 words) essays take several weeks and require several rounds of rewriting.[14] Thus, it is important to start the writing process well before the due date. Table 2 shows an example writing plan for a long essay.

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

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

Table 2. Long essay writing plan

Week	Goal
Week 1	Analyze the prompt and begin research
Week 2	Research
Week 3	Draft
Week 4	Revise; Additional research and drafting
Week 5	Revise
Week 6	Edit
Week 7	Extra week
Week 8	Publish (submit)

All writing plans should include time for the writing to rest between drafts, revisions, and edits. These breaks allow the writer to return to the essay with fresh eyes and notice problems they would otherwise miss. It is also a good idea, as shown in the plans above, to include an extra day (or week) to allow for unexpected events.

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CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH

Don't raise your voice. Improve your argument.[15]
— Desmond Tutu

Writing standards to focus on while researching:

Substance
- Coherently advance a thesis.
- Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning.

Correctness
- Cite all sources, and format citations correctly.
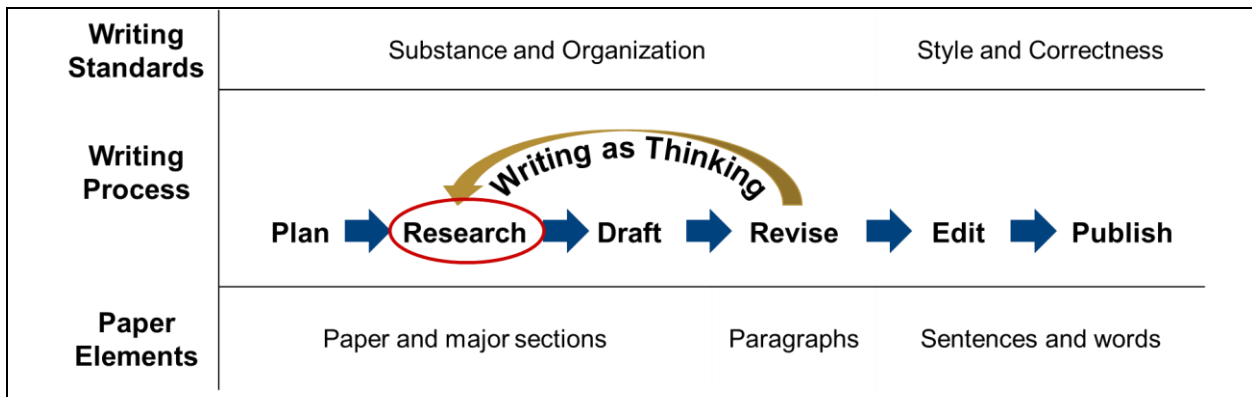
Figure 3. Research and the writing process

Once writers understand the task and have a plan to achieve it, they are ready to begin *research*—the process of collecting, organizing, and analyzing the facts the writer will use as evidence in the essay.

Keeping Track of Sources

Before starting research, writers must have a plan to keep track of the citation information for the sources they examine.

Writers cite other authors' material for three reasons.[16] First, academic ethics and copyright laws require authors to identify and give credit to other authors. Second, citations help the reader understand the evidence for claims and view it for themselves. Third, citations make writing

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[15] Tutu, *The Second Nelson Mandela Lecture Address.*
[16] University of Mississippi, "Why Do We Cite Borrowed Information?"

stronger by showing that the writer has reviewed the research on their topic and used it to support their arguments.

The CGSC's preferred citation style is Chicago shortened footnotes and bibliography.[17] Access the *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS) online through the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL). Appendix B describes the basics of Chicago style and how to cite sources CMS does not cover (e.g., military doctrine).

Writers use research notes to record source content and citation information. There are many ways to take research notes. Use any method that works as long as it records the source information necessary to build a complete citation and separates source information (quotations, paraphrases, and summaries) from the researcher's analysis.

Table 3 shows an example two-column research note system with the citation information at the top, the source information in the left column, and the researcher's analysis in the right column:

Table 3. Example two-column research notes format

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

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[17] University of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style,* 14.19, 14.29.

Citation Software

Many writers use citation software (e.g., [Zotero](), [EndNote](), [Mendeley]()) to store source information and create citations. Citation software saves time by producing footnotes and bibliographies with a few clicks. Most citation applications have web browser plugins that allow users to save citation data with one click. Citation software is also flexible. It readily converts documents from one citation system to another. And once a source is saved, the writer can easily reuse it in multiple projects.

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

Arguments

Writers gather evidence to support *arguments*—claims supported by evidence and reasoning. Arguments are, of course, central to argumentative essays. But they are also important in most types of professional military writing.

One example is the running estimates Army staff officers build during planning.[18] Staff officers gather evidence such as facts and assumptions about friendly forces, enemy forces, the civilian population, and the environment. They analyze this information and recommend courses of action to the commander. These recommendations are claims that staff officers must support with evidence from the running estimate.

Other examples of professional writing that includes arguments are point papers, white papers, decision papers, and even award recommendations. In fact, field grade officers rarely write without making claims. Commanders need to know the facts, but also what the facts mean, and the conclusions and recommendations the facts support. In short, supporting claims with evidence and reasoning is not just for argumentative writing. Instead, it is a critical staff officer skill.

Claims, Evidence, and Reasoning

An argument consists of three parts: a *claim, evidence,* and *reasoning*.[19]

A *claim* is an assertion or conclusion.[20] A strong claim is:[21]

- *Clear and specific.* The reader can understand the claim's intent and scope. Vague claims are difficult to understand; broad claims are difficult to support.

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[18] Dept. of the Army, *Commander and Staff,* p.2-3.
[19] McNeill and Krajcik, "Inquiry and Scientific Explanations," 123-24.
[20] McNeill and Krajcik, 123.
[21] University of Mississippi, "Claims, Reasons, and Evidence."

- *Relevant*. The claim is important to the paper's topic and thesis.
- *Supportable*. A writer can provide sufficient evidence to support the claim. Broad claims are difficult to support because they require substantial evidence; specific claims are easier to support because they require less evidence.

Evidence is the facts and information that support claims.[22] Evidence is essential to make writing credible. Writing that makes claims without evidence is opinion or fiction. Strong evidence is:

- *Relevant.* The evidence is clearly related to the claim.
- *Sufficient.* There is enough evidence to convince the reader that the claim is true.
- *Credible*. The source of the evidence is trustworthy, and the writer has the citation to prove it.
- *Unbiased*. The evidence does not unfairly lead the reader to accept or reject the claim.

Finally, *reasoning* is the logic and analysis that connects the evidence to the claim.[23] Sound reasoning is:

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

Sources of Evidence

Effective arguments need strong evidence from trustworthy, objective sources. Scholarly works, which are written and peer-reviewed by experts, make the strongest evidence (Table 4). Some non-scholarly material, although weaker than scholarly work, is nevertheless credible. Avoid noncredible media and publications that lack expert authorship. Tools for finding credible evidence include the Combined Arms Research Library, JSTOR, and Google Scholar.

Table 4. Sources of evidence.

Strong ⟵	Strength of Evidence	⟶ Weak
Scholarly	Credible	Not credible
• Articles from reputable academic journals • Books from academic presses • Expert talks and presentations • Research reports supported with scholarly sources	• Non-scholarly (e.g., trade) journals • Military doctrine • Credible media • US government publications • Encyclopedias • Books from non-academic presses	• Entertainment, sports, partisan, and tabloid media. • Self-published books • Wikipedia • Editorials and non-expert opinions • Predatory (pay-to-publish) journals
Adapted from: University of Arizona Global Campus, "What Is a Scholarly Source?"		

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[22] McNeill and Krajcik, "Inquiry and Scientific Explanations," 123.
[23] Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "Claim-Evidence-Reasoning."

Avoiding Bias

Bias is any deviation from the truth, intentional or unintentional, that leads to false conclusions.[24] Writing becomes biased when the author relies on biased evidence or presents otherwise unbiased evidence in biased ways. Common biases include:

- *Confirmation bias* occurs when an author collects or interprets evidence in a way that confirms the author's desired conclusion. Confirmation bias includes gathering confirming evidence while avoiding disconfirming evidence. It can also involve interpreting confirming evidence as more credible than disconfirming evidence.[25]
- *Distorting the facts* means using exaggerated or imprecise language to make information seem more or less extreme than it is.[26] Here is an example: "Everyone knows Douglas MacArthur was a terrible leader." *Everyone* is an exaggeration, and *terrible* is imprecise.
- *Misrepresenting sources* means paraphrasing or summarizing information incompletely or misleadingly. Misrepresenting a source often occurs when an author quotes a source out of context in a way that distorts the original author's intent.[27]
- *Inflammatory bias* means using language to elicit an emotional response.[28] For example, labeling the irregular soldiers of the American Revolution as "patriots" or "terrorists" could elicit emotions that lead the reader to biased conclusions.

Strategies to avoid bias include:[29]

- *Rely on scholarly and credible sources*.
- *Take careful notes* of the evidence in sources. Be sure to separate the source information from the researcher's analysis.
- *Keep an open mind*. Having a preliminary guess (hypothesis) about claims and conclusions is normal. But do not commit to a position before doing at least some research.

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[24] Simundic, "Bias in Research," 12.; University of Mississippi, "Bias and Research."; Labaree, "Evaluating Sources."
[25] University of Mississippi, "Glossary of Biases."
[26] Labree, "Evaluating Sources."
[27] Labree.
[28] Labree.
[29] University of Mississippi, "Strategies for Making a Successful Argument."

- *Read broadly*. Study the range of views on a topic. Avoid gathering evidence only from sources that agree with a preliminary hypothesis.
- *Focus on facts not opinions*. It is normal to have opinions about a topic. However, as a scholar and professional, it is vital to remain objective and present the evidence fairly. Do not allow personal opinions to influence professional conclusions.
- *Be willing to change your position*. During research, writers sometimes discover the evidence for their initial position is weak. If so, they must be objective enough to modify or reject weakly supported claims.

★ QUICK TIP ★
Read strategically

Reading strategically is a technique for efficient research.[30] Graduate students and military professionals may not always have time to read everything from beginning to end. Reading strategically helps readers save time without compromising the depth and quality of research.

- *Understand the purpose.* Why are you reading? What is the critical information to get from the reading?
- *Start with the abstract, introduction and conclusion*. These sections clarify the reading's main ideas and which parts are most relevant.
- *Scan the headings, figures, and tables.* Get a sense of how the reading is organized and which parts to read in detail.
- *Read only what is necessary to achieve the purpose.* Sometimes reading every word is necessary, but not always.

Outlines

An outline helps the writer visualize an essay's organization and flow. As writers research a topic, it can be useful to organize the research in an essay outline. Writers can then use the outline as a guide when drafting. Below is a template for an essay outline.

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[30] University of Nebraska, "Reading Strategically."

Essay Outline Template

Essay question or prompt.

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

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CHAPTER 4
DRAFT

When you first start writing…you're scared to death that if you don't get that sentence right that minute it's never going to show up again. And it isn't. But it doesn't matter—another one will, and it'll probably be better. And I don't mind writing badly for a couple of days because I know I can fix it-and fix it again and again and again, and it will be better.[31]
—Toni Morrison

Writing standards to focus on while drafting:

Substance
- Write to achieve the purpose.
- Coherently advance a thesis.
- Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning.

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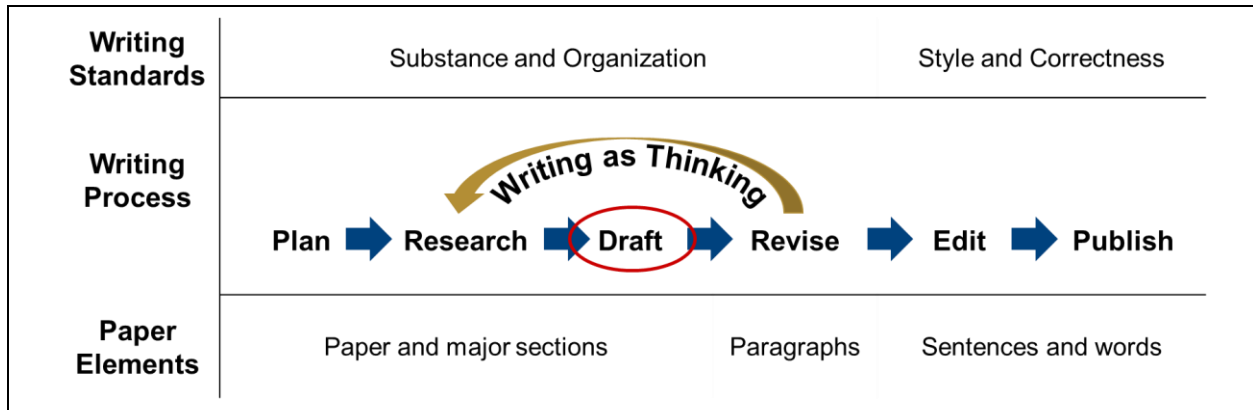- Arrange sections and paragraphs in a logical order.

Figure 4. Drafting and the writing process

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

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[31] Morrison, *What Moves at the Margin,* 79

Fast drafting is tough. Writers find it difficult to resist the urge to revise and edit as they draft. However, remember that everyone's drafts are ugly. Trying to make drafts less ugly by rewriting along the way only slows the process.

Formatting

Begin drafting with a correctly formatted document (font, margins, spacing, etc.). Correct formatting is essential in professional writing—especially when organizations establish standardized formats. Correct formatting makes a positive first impression with the reader, and standardized formats help senior leaders take in large amounts of information efficiently. Senior leaders can become distracted (and irritable!) when products deviate from standardized formats. Appendix A discusses formats for staff products and academic papers.

Essay Structure

A basic essay has three parts: the introduction, main body, and conclusion (Figure 5).
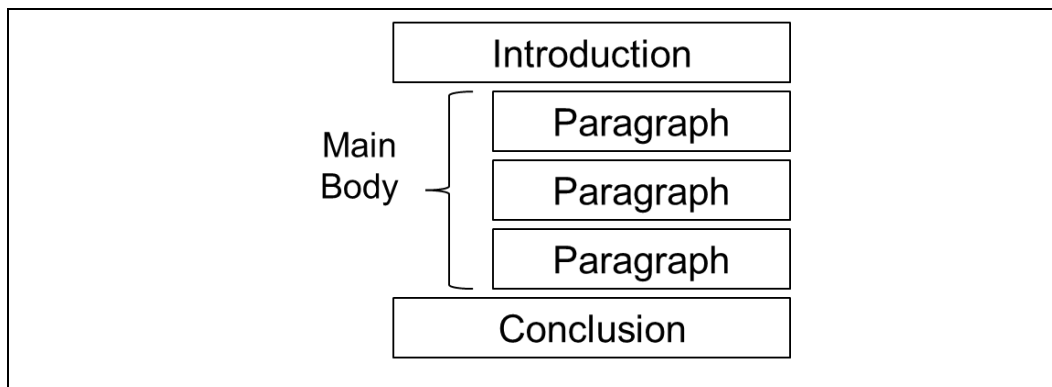
Figure 5. Basic essay structure

Introduction

The introduction tells the reader what to expect—what the essay is about and how it will proceed. A good introduction:

- States the topic or purpose
- States the thesis
- Signposts (briefly lists) the major points the author will cover

When writing for publication, authors often begin the introduction with a "hook" to get the reader's attention. For example, the author might explain why their topic is important or discuss the interesting puzzle their essay solves.

For most professional writing, however, a hook is unnecessary. The writer already has the reader's attention because the commander or professor that assigned the writing is surely interested in the finished product. Thus, the writer can keep the introduction short—topic, thesis, and signposts.

Thesis statement

A *thesis statement* explains the essay's main idea.[32] It should be short—typically one or two sentences—and clear. The thesis statement's structure depends on the essay's purpose.

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

> The Russian invasion of Ukraine demonstrates that intangible factors still matter in war. The Russians' poor performance is a result of low morale, poor discipline, and inadequate leadership.

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

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

An expository essay thesis statement states the essay topic and key points.

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

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

Main Body

The main body presents the essay's substance in a series of paragraphs. The paragraphs should appear in a logical order and support the thesis. The order (organization) of main body paragraphs is critical because it shows the reader how each paragraph is related to the others and the essay's overall purpose.

Logical frameworks that help writers organize the main body include:[33]

- *Chronological*. Present events in the order they occurred.
    - First… Second… Third…
    - At first… Next… Finally…

- *Causal*. Discuss causes then effects.
    - X occurred…X caused Y… X also caused Z.

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[32] University of Arizona, "Writing a Thesis Statement."
[33] Royal, *The Little Red Writing Book*, 29-33.

- *Sequential*. Discuss ideas in a logical order.
  - Tactical… Operational… Strategic…
  - Enlisted… NCOs… Officers…

- *Comparative*. Compare two or more items using common criteria.
  - Compare US and Chinese armies regarding people, technology, and doctrine.

- *Compare and Contrast*. Discuss similarities (compare) and differences (contrast).
  - The US Army and Marine Corps are similar in A, B, and C, but different in X, Y, and Z.

- *Evaluative*. Discuss positives and negatives, strengths and weaknesses, etc.
  - He did A and B well but failed at C and D.
  - A and B are advantages while C and D are disadvantages.

- *Problem and Solution*. Discuss the problem, then how to solve it.
  - The problem is A. The problem occurred because of B and C. However, we can solve the problem with X, Y, and Z.

- *Categorical*. The order does not matter.
  - Here are brief overviews of the US Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force.

Conclusion

The conclusion tells the reader what they should take away from the essay by restating the thesis and major points. When writing for publication, the conclusion may include additional elements such as reiterating the topic's significance, making recommendations, or suggesting future research. For most professional writing, however, these elements are beyond the scope of the writing task. A short conclusion that restates the thesis and main points is enough.

Organizing Arguments

Writers use the essay's introduction, main body, and conclusion to organize arguments. First, the writer states their main claim as a thesis statement in the introduction. Next, they present evidence and reasoning in the main body. Finally, the writer uses the conclusion to restate the main claim.

Essay structure varies based on the number and complexity of the arguments it presents. The figures below show how a writer might organize different essays. Figure 6 shows a simple essay with one claim supported by three pieces of evidence.
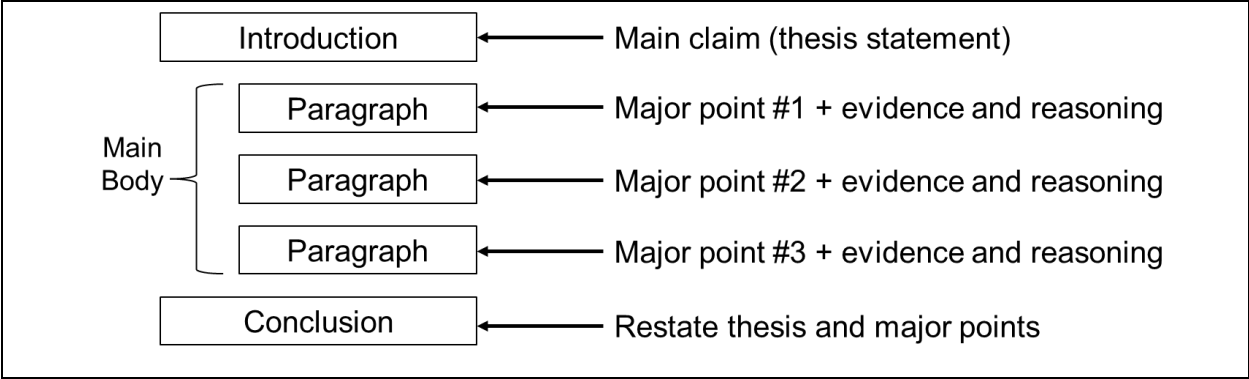
Figure 6. Argument organization in a short essay

Figure 7 shows a longer essay with one main claim and several supporting claims. The writer has divided the essay into three major sections aligned with each supporting claim. Each major section resembles a short essay with a section introduction, main body, and conclusion.
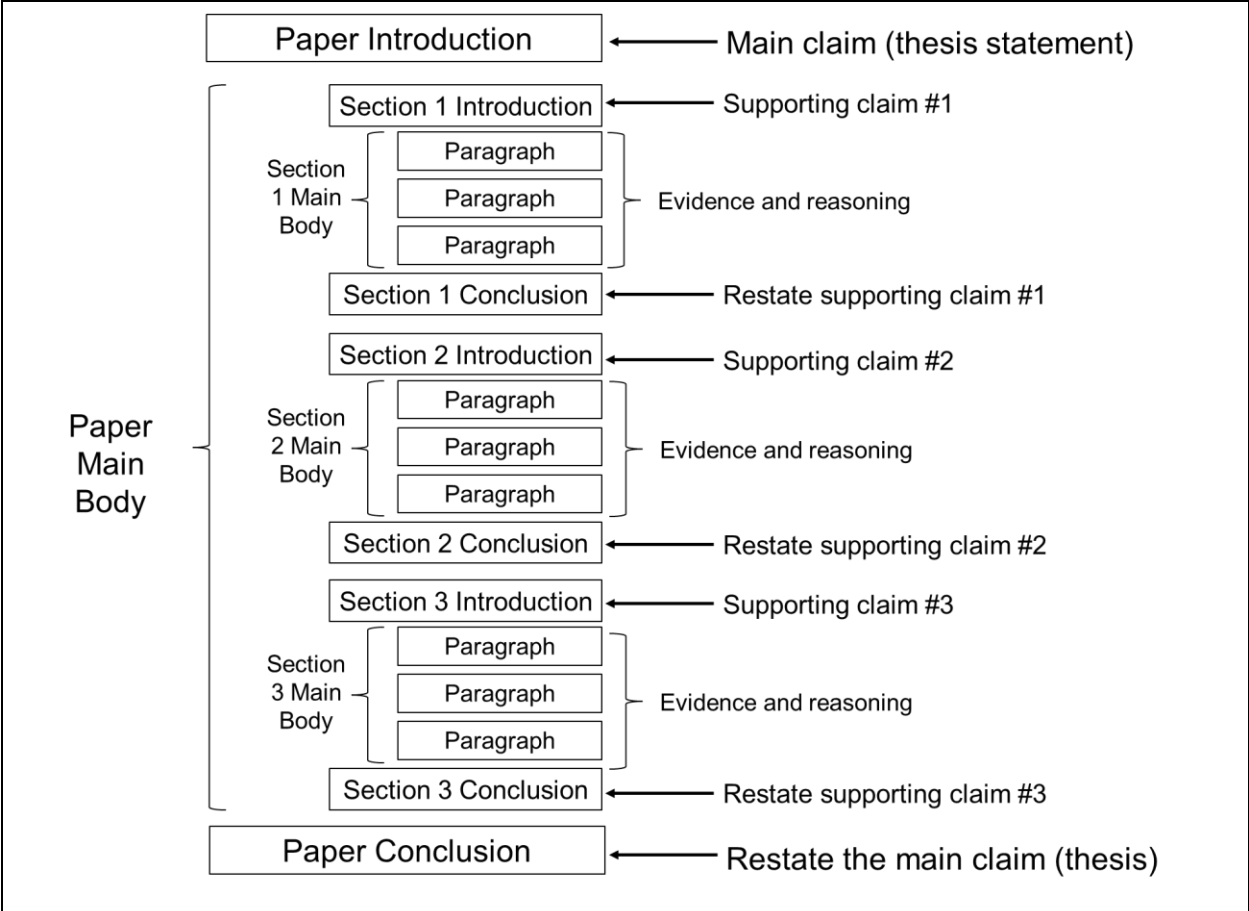

Figure 7. Argument organization in a long essay

Counterarguments

A counterargument is a belief that refutes a claim.[34] If credible counterarguments to a claim exist, readers will be skeptical of the claim. In these cases, writers must strengthen their arguments by anticipating, acknowledging, and confronting credible counterarguments.

Confronting counterarguments occurs in two stages: the turn against, and the turn back. [35]

First, the writer *turns against* their own argument by acknowledging and explaining the counterargument. Examples include:

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

Next, the writer *turns back* to their argument by showing that the original claim is still valid. [36] Strategies for turning back include refuting, acknowledging, and conceding.

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

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

Integrating Sources

Writers integrate sources in essays by quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing.[37]

Quoting replicates a source text word-for-word.[38] Quote sparingly. Quotations make writing lengthy. Using many quotations can signal weak writing by suggesting that the writer does not understand the sources well enough to paraphrase or summarize them. Avoid quotations unless a paraphrase or summary will distort the original meaning. Here is a quotation from *The Gettysburg Campaign* by Reardon and Vossler (p. 40):

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[34] University of Mississippi, "Counterargument."
[35] Harvard College Writing Center. "Counterargument."
[36] Harvard College Writing Center. "Counterargument."
[37] Nash, "Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing."
[38] Appendix B discusses inline and block quotation formatting.

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

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

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

Summarizing reduces the source text to the key points. Summaries shorten the original substantially by focusing only on the main ideas and omitting small details. Here is a summary of the quotation above:

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

★ QUICK TIP ★
Use citation placeholders while drafting.

When drafting, write as rapidly as possible without stopping to revise or edit. Still, it is important to mark where citations go but in a way that does not slow down drafting. One way to do this is by using in-text citation placeholders. Instead of stopping to create a full, properly formatted citation, simply insert a placeholder in parenthesis and continue drafting.

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

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CHAPTER 5
REVISE

When a draft is completed, the job of writing can begin.[39]
—Don Murray

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

Substance
- Coherently advance a thesis.

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

Writing standards to focus on when revising *paragraphs*:

Substance
- Support the thesis with strong evidence and sound reasoning.

Organization
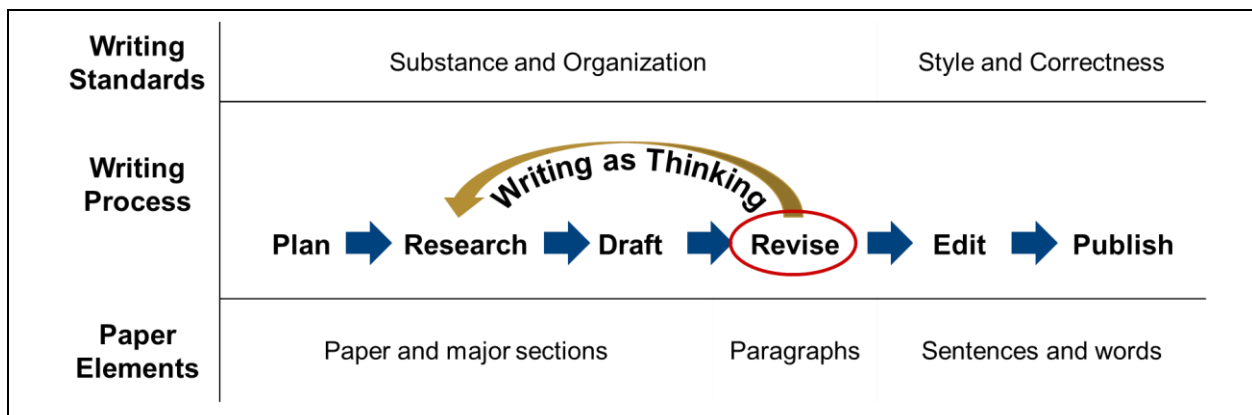- Organize paragraphs around one idea.

Figure 8. Revising and the writing process

Revising means "re-seeing" writing to ensure it says what the writer intends.[40] Revision occurs in two stages. Paper-level revision improves the essay's substance and organization; paragraph-level revision improves paragraphs.

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[39] Murray, *The Maker's Eye,* 611.
[40] Jones, Revision and Editing.

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

Writing as Thinking

Writing helps the writer think by revealing weak arguments. When writers revise drafts, they discover passages that seemed strong when they drafted them, but now look weak. These discoveries prompt writers to do additional research and drafting.

> Good writers…sometimes discover in the act of writing that what looked persuasive when floating vaguely in the mind looks foolish when moored to the page.[41]
>
> —Deirdre McCloskey

Going back can be frustrating. But experienced writers know that iterating through research, drafting, and revising is part of the writing process. Each revision refines, strengthens, and sharpens arguments.

Coherence and Cohesion

An important part of rewriting is making writing coherent and cohesive. *Coherence* is a macro concept that describes how well the parts of the essay work as a whole to advance the thesis.[42] Writers build coherence by stating the thesis clearly at the beginning and supporting it with a well-organized main body.

Cohesion is a micro concept that describes how well the elements of an essay "hold together."[43] Cohesive writing pulls the reader along by helping them understand how each new sentence and paragraph is related to the previous one(s). Writers improve cohesion using paragraph transitions, signal words, and logical sentence structures.

Paper Revision

During paper revision, focus on revising the paper as a whole. The writer's goal is to confirm they have clearly stated the thesis and supported it with a logically organized main body.[44]

Questions to ask during paper revision include:

- Does the paper achieve its purpose? Does it answer the question(s) or complete the required task(s)?
- Does the introduction discuss the topic, state the thesis, and signpost the major points?
- Is the thesis statement clear? Does it appear early in the essay?
- Does the main body support the thesis? Does each major section and paragraph build support for the main idea?

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[41] McCloskey, *Economical Writing,* 7
[42] Regent University Writing Lab, "Coherence and Cohesion," 1-2
[43] Regent University Writing Lab, 2-3
[44] Jones, "Revision and Editing."

- Is the main body logically structured? Do the major sections and paragraphs appear in a logical order?
- Is everything in the main body relevant to the thesis (see *murder your darlings* below)?
- Does the conclusion restate the thesis and the main points? Do the introduction and conclusion agree?

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

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

Murder Your Darlings

Paper-level revision often reveals passages that do not advance the thesis. Remove them, or as experienced writers say, "murder your darlings."[46] As this dramatic metaphor implies, removing unnecessary passages is often painful. Writing is hard work; throwing away some of that work can feel like killing something loved. Nevertheless, removing excess is essential to produce clear, concise writing.

> "When you write a story, you're telling yourself the story," he said. "When you rewrite, your main job is taking out all the things that are *not* the story."[45]
>
> —Stephen King

★ QUICK TIP ★
When time is short, write a draft and a half.

Although planning time for rewriting is always best, busy professionals must occasionally write on short notice. Still, sending a raw first draft is always a bad idea. Instead, write a draft and a half.[47] Write a draft, then revise once. Focus only on removing clutter. Delete unneeded passages (murder your darlings). Summarize, paraphrase, or cut long quotations. Omit unnecessary words. A single revision to remove clutter is less effective than a full revision and edit but better than a raw first draft.

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[45] King, *On Writing,* 57
[46] Quiller-Couch, *On Style*
[47] Clark, *Writing Tools,* 51.

Paragraph Revision

The second stage of revision focuses on building effective paragraphs. A paragraph is a *unit of thought.* Each paragraph coherently develops *one* idea using a series of related sentences, and it clearly states that idea early—usually in the first sentence.

There are no rules for paragraph length. Writers may come across paragraph "rules" that suggest, for example, that a paragraph should be 6-8 sentences long, or 1 inch deep on the page. But these and similar "rules" are bad advice. A paragraph is a unit of thought. Make it as long as it needs to be to communicate the thought (but no longer).

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

The MEAL Model

MEAL is a model for organizing paragraphs.[49] MEAL stands for main idea, evidence and analysis, and linkage.

> The paragraph should be a more or less complete discussion of one topic.[48]
>
> —Deirdre McCloskey

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

Main Idea

Each paragraph discusses one idea. The topic sentence states that idea. The first sentence of the paragraph is usually the topic sentence.

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

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

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[48]McCloskey, *Economical Writing,* 44

[49] MEAL is only one of many paragraph models. See University of New Castle, <u>Writing Strong Paragraphs</u>.

Good writers overcome this natural tendency by stating the conclusion—the main idea—first. During revision, find the main idea of each paragraph and move it to the topic sentence. Below is an example of a buried main idea (left) versus a strong topic sentence (right).

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

Evidence and Analysis

The middle sentences of a paragraph present and analyze evidence.

Evidence is the information gathered during research that supports the thesis. Evidence includes paraphrases, summaries, and examples of sources. Evidence can also be quotations, but as discussed earlier, use them sparingly.

Analysis is an explanation of how the evidence supports the main idea. Without analysis, an argument is incomplete. In professional writing, evidence never "speaks for itself." Instead, the author must explicitly describe how the evidence supports the main idea.

Linkage

The last sentence links the paragraph back to the main idea of the paragraph, section, or paper. The last sentence sometimes links to the next paragraph when developing a complex passage. What the last sentence links to depends on the paragraph's role in the essay. In all cases, however, the last sentence should help the reader understand why the paragraph they have just read is relevant and how it fits into the overall scheme of the section or essay.[50]

To understand the MEAL model, consider an example essay that begins with this introduction:

> This essay analyzes Robert E. Lee's tactical performance at the Battle of Gettysburg. It argues that Lee lost the battle because of three tactical blunders. First, he used his cavalry ineffectively before the battle. Second, he did not seize key terrain when he had the opportunity. Finally, he ordered a futile attack against the Federal center.

---

[50] Duke University, "Paragraphing: The MEAL Plan."

The introduction signposts Lee's poor use of cavalry as the first major point that supports the thesis. The author presents this major point in the first main body paragraph:

> On June 23rd, Lee allowed his cavalry commander J.E.B. Stuart to take his best cavalry units, leave the army's main body, and ride around the Federal army.[1] Lee did not trust the remaining cavalry units and did not use them to scout ahead of the army. On July 1st, two of Lee's corps stumbled into Federal cavalry northwest of Gettysburg.[2] Neither the corps commanders nor Lee knew how much of the Federal army they were fighting or whether the terrain was favorable for a battle.
>
> ─────────
>
> [1] Arthur and Ballard, *Gettysburg Staff Ride*, 4–5.
> [2] Sears, *Gettysburg,* 197–202.

The paragraph above is ineffective because it omits three of the four MEAL elements. The first sentence does not state the main idea. The middle sentences provide evidence, but the author does not analyze it. And the last sentence does not link the paragraph to anything.

Here is an example of the same paragraph using the MEAL model. The blue text is new.

Main idea Lee's first blunder was misusing his cavalry before the battle. On June 23rd, Lee allowed his cavalry commander J.E.B. Stuart to take his best cavalry units, leave the army's main body, and ride around the Federal army.[1] Lee did not trust the remaining cavalry units and did not use them to scout ahead of the army. Consequently, Lee had little intelligence about Federal movements and

Analysis local terrain. On July 1st, two of Lee's corps stumbled into Federal cavalry northwest of Gettysburg.[2] Neither the corps commanders nor Lee knew how much of the Federal army they were fighting or whether the terrain was favorable for a battle. Without effective cavalry, Lee was drawn into battle with

Linkage to an information disadvantage.
thesis ─────────

[1] Arthur and Ballard, *Gettysburg Staff Ride*, 4–5.
[2] Sears, *Gettysburg*, 197–202.

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

The figure below shows how the argument above aligns with the essay structure discussed earlier.
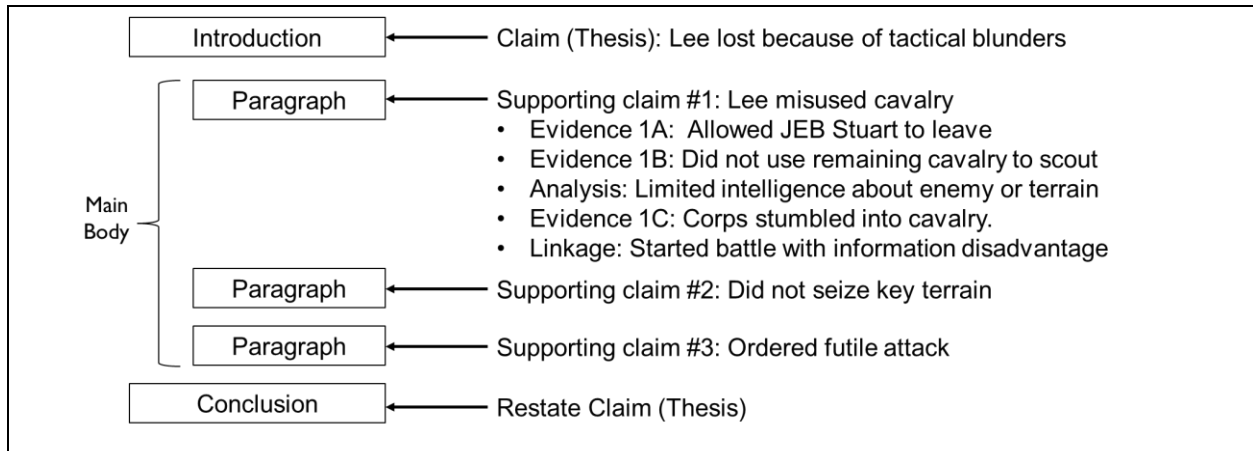
Figure 9. Argument organized within essay structure

Paragraph Transitions

Paragraph transitions signal a change from one paragraph to the next. Transitions help the reader understand how two paragraphs (ideas) are related. Importantly, a logical main body structure simplifies the task of creating paragraph transitions (Chapter 4 discusses logical main body structures). When paragraphs appear in a logical order, signaling the logic with transitions is straightforward.

Signal Words

Signal words make simple but effective paragraph transitions.

Table 5. Signal words

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

Below is an example of signal word transitions. Using *first* to open the first paragraph makes *second* a natural transition to the second one.

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

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

Transition Phrases

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

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

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

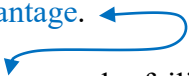## Transition Sentences

Using an entire sentence as a transition is workable but rarely necessary. Signal words and transition phrases are as effective but more concise. In the example below, the first sentence of the second paragraph works as a transition. However, it is wordy and pushes the main idea of the second paragraph into the second sentence.

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

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

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

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

After intense fighting throughout the morning…

The last sentence of the first paragraph, although intended as a transition, merely confuses the reader. It disrupts the conclusion of the first paragraph by introducing a new, unexpected idea (failing to seize key terrain). It also robs the next paragraph of its topic sentence. Avoid this mistake.

CHAPTER 6
EDIT

Clutter is the disease of American writing.[51]
—William Zinsser

Writing standards to focus on when editing:

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

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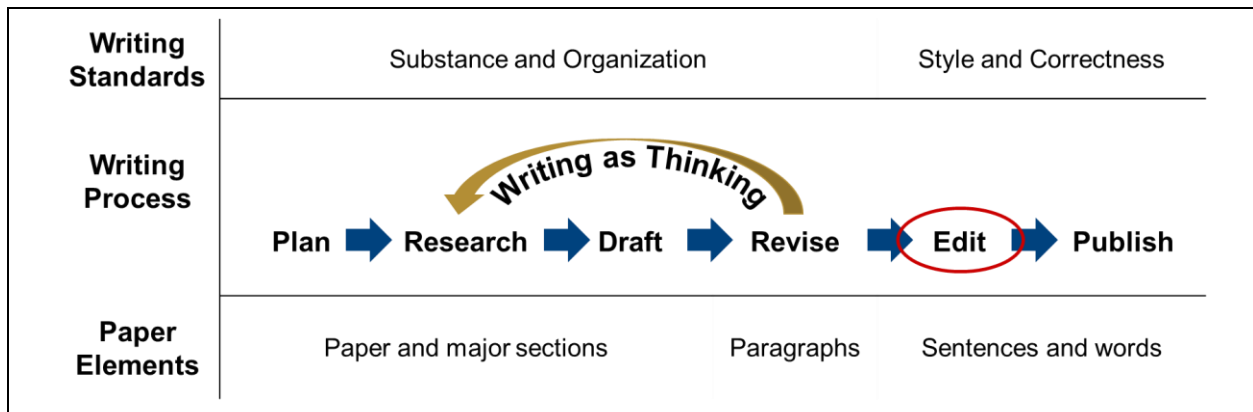- Cite all sources, and format citations correctly.

Figure 10. Editing and the writing process

Editing focuses on small changes to phrases, sentences, and words. The goal of editing is clear writing that communicates meaning without ambiguity. Clear writing tends to be simple and concise—simple words arranged in short, direct sentences that get to the point.

---

[51] Zinsser, *On Writing Well,* 6.

Editing for Style

Style is the way a writer expresses ideas. Effective style is clear, simple, and concise, and as a result, effortless to read. In contrast, poor style is confusing, complicated, and wordy. The reader must work to understand the writing.

Style results from the writer's choice of words, sentence structure, phrasing, and tone. The Army writing style urges writers to choose short words, use active voice, and write short sentences.[52] The professional writing style described in this chapter builds on the Army writing style. It prefers clear, concise sentences, active voice, simple words, and a professional tone—formal but conversational and confident.

The example below shows how style choices affect length, complexity, and clarity. The original passage uses an academic style. The rewritten passage, which draws on the professional style described in this guide, conveys the same meaning as the original but is shorter, simpler, and clearer.

Academic style	Professional style
This perspective is intended to serve as a primer that outlines in general terms how the Russian military would conduct combat operations in the event of a high-intensity conflict with a capable peer or near-peer adversary. The discussion here blends how Russian theorists and leaders have written about modern warfare with demonstrated Russian capabilities and history. Russia has shown the ability to tailor its combat operations to specific operational and strategic requirements. The Russian military does not have one standard way of conducting operations; rather, Russia likely has developed a series of contingencies for strategic planning, based on several variables like correlation of forces, military potential of opposing forces, strategic geopolitical context, escalation potential, and others.	How would the Russian military fight a high-intensity war against a capable enemy? Examining Russian history, current capabilities, and recent writing on modern warfare suggests that the Russians do not have a standard way of fighting. Instead, they tailor their approach to strategic and operational requirements. As a result, the Russians have developed multiple contingencies based on potential enemies, strategic context, escalation potential, and other key factors.

Source of original: Boston and Massicot, "The Russian Way of Warfare," 1.

Below is another example of contrasting writing styles. The original passage—a news report written in 1910—uses a baroque style that prefers elaborate, figurative language. The rewritten passage uses a professional style.

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[52] Dept. of the Army, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence*, 7.

Baroque style	Professional style
The sky-gazers looked on in astonishment as the great artificial bird bore down the heavens. . . Wonderment, surprise, absorption were written on every visage . . . a machine of travel that combined the speed of the locomotive with the comfort of the automobile, and in addition, speed through an element until now navigated only by the feathered kind. It was, in truth, the poetry of motion, and its appeal to the imagination was evident in every upturned face.	The amazed crowd watched the airplane descend. This machine would allow people to travel in speed and comfort. But more astonishing, it would let them fly—something most people had only imagined.

Source of original: Mowbray, *Airships,* 379

Clarity

Clarity is the most important stylistic goal of professional writing. Clear writing is easy for the reader to understand. Clarity comes from using concrete language, preferring active voice, and writing cohesive sentences.

> The first duty in writing a sentence is to make it clear.[53]
>
> —Dierdre McCloskey

Concrete language refers to words, phrases, and sentences that help the reader imagine what the writing is about. In contrast, vague or abstract language makes it hard for readers to imagine the ideas the writer is trying to communicate.

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

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

Finding the enemy will be like finding a needle in a haystack.

The phrase "a needle in a haystack" makes the reader imagine rummaging through a stack of hay instead of thinking about finding the enemy. Instead of clichés, use concrete language.

---

[53] McCloskey, *Economical Writing*, 56

Cliché	Concrete
Finding the enemy will be like finding a needle in a haystack.	Finding the enemy will be difficult.
This essay takes a deep dive into the Army's command and control doctrine.	This essay analyzes the Army's command and control doctrine.
She thinks outside the box.	She thinks creatively.
We need a ballpark figure.	We need an estimate.

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

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

Prefer active voice means writing sentences that focus on actors, not actions. Passive voice, in contrast, focuses on the action instead of the actor. Active voice is usually better than passive voice because it is more direct, clear, and concise.

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

Although writers usually prefer active voice, passive voice is sometimes useful for creating cohesion between sentences (more on this point below).

Writing cohesive sentences involves using words and phrases that make it easy for the reader to see how sentences are related. Recall that cohesion describes how well the elements of an essay are connected and "hold together." To create cohesion, writers present information from old to new, use signal words, use parallel construction, and use passive voice appropriately.

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

The strongest theoretical influence on American civil-military relations comes from Prussian theorist Carl von Clausewitz's theory of war.

Clausewitz argues that war comprises three elements: a state's government, military, and people.

Clausewitz's tripartite theory of war underpins the institutional approach to civil-military relations.

The institutional approach assumes that the interactive relationships between the government, the military, and the public have important implications for national security and domestic politics.

These implications include…

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

Using signal words also creates cohesion by showing how sentences are related to each other. Recall that signal words show a logical relationship between two elements.

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

Adapted from Lythgoe, "Controlling Chaos," 217.

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

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

Using passive voice appropriately is another way to write cohesive sentences. Recall that passive voice puts the action before the actor. Doing so allows the writer to structure the sentence with the action first. This structure is useful if the last element of the previous sentence (the "old" information) was an action.

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

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

Simplicity

Simplicity enhances clarity and concision. Simple writing uses plain language—simple words arranged in short, direct sentences. Simple language is persuasive because it is easy to understand. In contrast, complicated language can frustrate readers, and frustrated readers are hard to persuade.

> The secret of good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components.[54]
>
> —William Zinsser

Simplicity means avoiding complex words when simple words will do.

Instead of a complex word…	…use a simple one.
Assistance	Help
Numerous	Many
Initial	First
Sufficient	Enough
Attempt	Try
Utilize	Use
Expedite	Hurry
Erroneous	Wrong
Cognizant	Aware

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

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

Here is the same passage broken into three smaller sentences.

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

---

[54] *On Writing Well,* 6

Concision

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

> I believe the road to hell is paved with adverbs…[55]
>
> —Stephen King

Writers sometimes struggle to distinguish content from clutter. One way is by asking if a word or phrase is doing "useful work".[56] Write the sentence with and without the word or phrase in question. If removing it changes the sentence's meaning, it is doing useful work. Keep it. But if removing it does not change the meaning, it is not doing useful work. It is clutter. Cut it.

Writers make writing concise by omitting needless words, avoiding hedging and "throat clearing," and avoiding nominalizations.

"Omit needless words" speaks for itself.[57] Remove words that are not doing useful work.

> Walker's plan was ~~very~~ risky.   The attack was ~~extremely~~ slow.

Many everyday phrases include needless words. Omit them.

~~very~~ real	~~distinct~~ advantage	a ~~world of~~ difference
~~absolutely~~ nothing	close ~~proximity~~	a ~~palpable~~ sense
~~generally~~ tend	~~abundantly~~ clear	~~proven~~ track record
~~entirely~~ possible	~~abject~~ failure	in any way~~, shape, or~~
~~perfectly~~ normal	know ~~for a fact~~	~~form~~
~~general~~ consensus	know ~~full well~~	as a ~~general~~ rule of
~~freely~~ admit	~~fully~~ intend	~~thumb~~
		~~more~~ often ~~than not~~

Many "ly" adverbs are needless. Omit them.

> The troops fought ~~extremely~~ hard.
> Patton's troopers were ~~definitely~~ better than the enemy.
> Underestimating the Egyptians was ~~truly~~ a mistake.
> The fighting was ~~intensely~~ fierce.
> The regiment was ~~really~~ low on ammunition.
> Schwarzkopf was ~~totally~~ committed to battle.
> The defenders resisted ~~mightily~~.
> Dayan ~~quickly~~ resolved to counterattack.

---

[55] *On Writing,* 125.
[56] Zinsser, *On Writing Well,* 15.
[57] Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style,* 30.

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

Their response was deliberate ~~and measured~~.
The tanks ~~quickly and~~ easily bypassed the strong points.

Shorten wordy passages.

Instead of wordy passages…	…use simple, direct language.
Eisenhower took an opportunity to conduct a rapid assessment of the problem that he was facing.	Eisenhower assessed the problem.
Cota failed to demonstrate an ability as the commander to understand the operational environment he was operating in.	Cota did not understand the operational environment.

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

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

Nominalizations are verbs turned into nouns. Nominalizations clutter writing because they require a verb to make sentences work. In the passage below, for example, *exploitation*—a nominalization of the verb *exploit*—requires the verb *conduct*. Changing *exploitation* back to a verb makes the sentence more direct and concise.

Franks conducted an exploitation after his successful attack.
Franks exploited his successful attack.

---

[58] Creveld, *Command in War,* 230.

Below are more examples of nominalizations:

Instead of this nominalization…	…use this verb.
Conduct an attack	Attack
Conduct a defense	Defend
Make preparations	Prepare
Make a decision	Decide
Take action	Act
Give a response	Respond
Bring to an end	End
Hold a meeting	Meet
Make a recommendation	Recommend
Take into consideration	Consider
Have the ability	Can

Balancing Clarity with Simplicity and Concision

The most important goal when editing is *clarity*. Simplicity and concision should improve clarity, not diminish it. If simplicity or concision conflicts with clarity, choose clarity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Replacing *the problem* with *it* makes the second sentence more concise. However, the change confuses the meaning. What is Jones attacking? The first sentence is longer but clearer.

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

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

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

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

Tone

Tone refers to the writer's attitude toward the content and the reader.[59] Writers strike a professional tone by using language that is formal but conversational and confident.

Formal

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

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

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

Avoid slang:

Instead of slang…	…use concrete words.
Azimuth check	Review
Come up on the net	Talk
Beans and bullets	Supplies
Pop smoke	Leave
Green-suiter	Servicemember

---

[59] Ober, *Contemporary Business Communication*, 134.

Conversational

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

Confident

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

> Don't say you were a bit confused and sort of tired and a little depressed and somewhat annoyed. Be confused. Be tired. Be depressed. Be annoyed. Don't hedge your prose with little timidities. Good writing is lean and confident.[60]
>
> —William Zinsser

Confident writing demands boldness. Unnecessary hedging, throat clearing, and qualification clutter writing and erode the reader's trust.[61] Readers will not accept the arguments of a writer who seems unsure of themself. Write boldly and confidently.

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[60] Zinsser, *On Writing Well,* 70.
[61] Zinsser, 70.

CHAPTER 7
PUBLISH

Mechanics come last. It is important to the writer, once he has discovered what he has to say, that nothing get between him and his reader. He must break only those traditions of written communication which would obscure his meaning.[62]
—Don Murray

Writing standards to focus on before publishing:

Substance
- Write to achieve the purpose.

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

Figure 11. Publishing and the writing process

The last activity of the writing process is publishing—making the writing available to the reader. In some cases, publishing includes making the writing available to an audience (submitting an article to a professional journal, for example). Often, however, publishing is simply submitting the writing to the commander (or professor) who assigned it.

Proofreading

Proofreading for errors is the final step before publishing or turning in written work. Techniques for effective proofreading include:

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[62] Murray, *The Essential Don Murray,* 6.

- Let the paper "rest" for a day or two after the final edit.
- Read the paper aloud to hear errors (some word processors have read-aloud tools).
- Read the paper one sentence at a time from end to beginning. This technique focuses the writer on one sentence at a time rather than the big ideas.
- Software aids like Grammarly, Hemingway Editor, The Writer's Diet and Microsoft Editor can be useful for proofreading. Still, these tools do not always recommend sound changes. Use good judgment; do not assume online tools are always correct.

Submitting

Things to check before publishing an essay:

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

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

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

Fonts

The Army and the CGSC prefer Arial (sans serif) and Times New Roman (serif). Serif fonts have lines or tapers (sometimes called feet and tails) at the ends of the letterform (Figure 12). In contrast, sans serif fonts feature a letterform with a uniform width and no serifs.
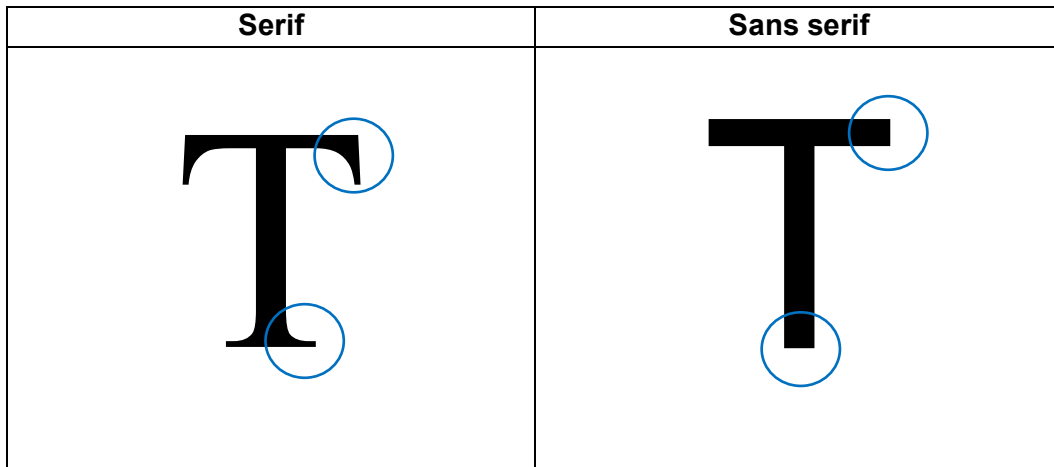
Serif	Sans serif

Figure 12. Serif and sans serif letterforms

Arial is a sans serif font used for most staff products (e.g., information papers and memoranda). Arial gives documents a clean, modern, professional appearance. It is suitable (and often required) for short documents and staff papers. Arial also works well in presentations. Simple lines and uniform width make Arial letters appear crisp and clear when displayed on a large screen.

Times New Roman is a serif font preferred for longer, text-laden products such as essays and white papers. Most readers find serif fonts like Times New Roman easier to read than sans serif

fonts.[63] However, Times New Roman is a poor choice for presentations because serifs often appear fuzzy on large screens.

Some products combine Arial and Times New Roman to take advantage of the contrast between them. Army doctrine and this guide are examples. However, staff officers rarely need to mix fonts except when writing doctrine, training, or administrative publications.[64] Avoid mixing fonts in routine staff products and academic papers.

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

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

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

Staff Products

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

Table 6. Staff product references

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

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[63] Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Manual*, 330-331; Dept. of the Army, *Design and Production,* 23.
[64] See DA PAM 25–36 Design and Production of Instructional Publications

Academic Papers

For academic papers or assignments without a specified format, use these guidelines:

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

Level 1: Centered, Bold, Title Case

Indented text starts a new paragraph…

Level 2: Left-aligned, Bold, Title Case

Indented text starts a new paragraph…

Level 3: Left-aligned, Italics, Title Case

Indented text starts a new paragraph…

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

The next few pages show an example of a correctly formatted academic essay

Essay Title:

Subtitle

DODIN: 123456789

Course Number: Course Title

August 6, 2022

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

First, format the essay correctly. Set the page margins at one inch. Use 12-point Times New Roman font. Indent the first line of each paragraph .5 inches and double-space the lines. Do not put an extra line between paragraphs. For longer essays, use section headings for organization and clarity. A properly formatted essay makes a positive first impression.

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

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

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

---

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

Bibliography

Lythgoe, Trent J., Allan S. Boyce, Sean N. Kalic, Richard A. McConnell, Mary L. Noll, and
    Bruce J. Reider. *Professional Writing: The Command and General Staff College Writing
    Guide*. Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2023.

University of Chicago. *The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th Edition*. The Chicago Manual of Style
    Online, 2017. https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org.
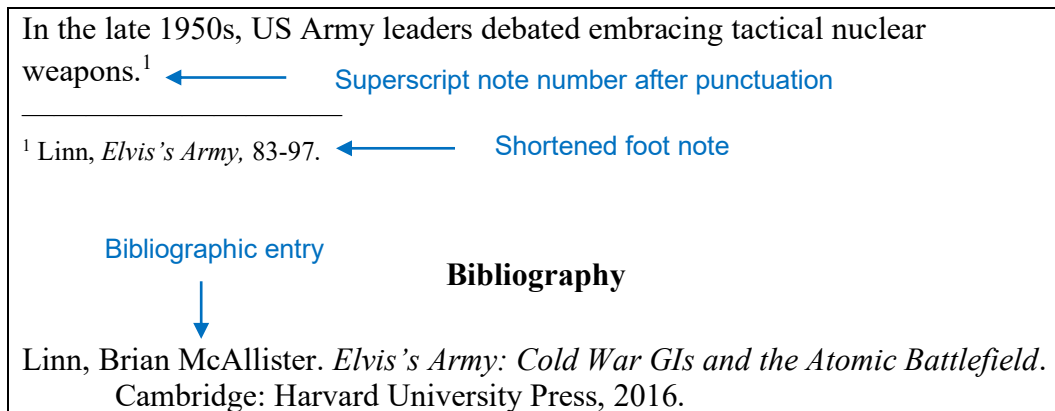
APPENDIX B
CITATION SUPPLEMENT

The CGSC's preferred citation style is Chicago shortened footnotes and bibliography as described in the *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS) section 14. This appendix is not a comprehensive citation guide and does not replace CMS. Instead, it provides a quick reference for common citation tasks. It also describes how to cite unusual military and CGSC sources.

The CMS shortened notes style requires authors to provide a bibliography with all works cited. Authors use shortened foot notes throughout the document—including the first note. Since authors provide full source information in the bibliography, they do not have to duplicate that information in long notes.

When building citations, the author's main goal is to provide the reader enough information to find the cited source.[67] The shortened notes and bibliography system is flexible, and authors can modify its conventions as necessary for unique situations as long as the modifications are logical, defensible, and consistent throughout the text.

Citation Basics

A citation consists of a superscript note, shortened foot note, and bibliography entry.

> In the late 1950s, US Army leaders debated embracing tactical nuclear weapons.[1]   ← Superscript note number after punctuation
>
> _____
>
> [1] Linn, *Elvis's Army,* 83-97.   ← Shortened foot note
>
>
> Bibliographic entry
>
> **Bibliography**
>
> ↓
>
> Linn, Brian McAllister. *Elvis's Army: Cold War GIs and the Atomic Battlefield.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.

Shortened Footnotes

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

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

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[67] University of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style,* 14.1, 14.4.

- When citing an entire source, page numbers are not required. When citing only a portion of a source, include page numbers or other directing information.

> Huntington argues that professionalism is the key to maximizing military effectiveness while minimizing the threat to the state.[1] However, Feaver counters that Huntington's theory of professionalism fails to explain observed patterns of civil-military relations.[2]
>
> ───────────────
> [1] Huntington, *The Soldier and the State.*
> [2] Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique."

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

> ───────────────
> [1] Linn, *Elvis's Army,* 83-97.
> [2] Linn, 108-109.

Note Number Placement

Paraphrases and Summaries

Place a note at the end of the first sentence that paraphrases or summarizes the source. When referring to one source for multiple sentences, do not place notes after each sentence. Instead, make it clear that subsequent sentences refer to the same source.

When citing multiple sources in the same sentence, place a single note at the end of the sentence. In the foot note, enter a shortened note for each source in the order they appear in the sentence. Separate the notes with a semicolon.

Here is an example:

> Mental agility is critical for Army commanders in large-scale combat. The high tempo and
> Author claim
> lethality of large-scale combat create rapid change.[1] Yet, despite its importance, Army
> Summary of Lundy and Creed cited in note 1.   Author's second claim.
> doctrine does not examine mental agility in depth. Army doctrine contends that leaders
>
> develop mental agility through study and experience.[2] However, it describes neither how
> Summary of two Army doctrine publications—both cited in note 2.
> mental agility works nor the kinds of studies and experiences needed to develop it.
> This sentence makes it clear that it refers to the source cited in note 2.
>
> ───────────────
> [1] Lundy and Creed, "The Return of FM 3-0," 15.
> [2] Dept of the Army, *Army Leadership*, p. 4–1; Dept of the Army, *Offense and Defense*, p. 1–4.
> Source: Lythgoe, "Mental Agility in Combat," 3.

Quotations

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

Students of warfare have long puzzled over how to develop coup d'œil. Napoleon

Bonaparte argues that study and experience are the keys. "Commanders-in-chief are to be
Inline quotation

guided by their own experience or genius…generalship is acquired only by experience and the

study of the campaigns of all great captains…".[1] Army doctrine offers a similar

recommendation:

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

That modern doctrine offers little more than Napoleon emphasizes both the enduring

significance of coup d'œil and how little progress has been made in unlocking the puzzle of its

underlying principles and processes.

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[1] Colegrove, *Distant Voices*, 19.
[2] Dept of the Army, *Offense and Defense*, p. 1-4.
Source: Lythgoe, "Cognition and Coup d'œil," 100.

Bibliography Entries

Bibliography entries consist of the author(s), title of work, and facts of publication separated by periods.[68] List the entries alphabetically by author last name. For works with multiple authors, invert (last name first) only the first author. Capitalized titles of works headline-style. Italicize the titles of larger works (e.g., books and journals); use quotation marks for smaller works (e.g., articles and chapters); do not use quotation marks for websites, blogs, or social media.

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[68] University of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style,* 14.20-23.

Citing Common Sources

Below are examples of shortened notes and bibliographic entries for common sources. Refer to the CMS for additional details.

Book

Hastings, *The Korean War*, 201.

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

Chapter of an Edited Book

McMaster, "Adaptive Leadership," 215.

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

Print Journal Article

O'Connell, "A Simplified Framework," 185

O'Connell, Patricia K. "A Simplified Framework for 21st Century Leader Development." *The Leadership Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (April 2014): 183-203.

Online Journal Article

Bazin, "Clausewitz's Military Genius"

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

Report

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

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

Website

Moore and Galloway, "Lz Xray Day 1."

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

Citing Uncommon Sources

This section discusses unusual CGSC and military sources that CMS does not address.

Course Readings

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

Unpublished Reading

If a course reading is not published outside the course, use the convention below:

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

> Bradbeer, "Ridgeway Takes Command," 15.
> Bradbeer, Thomas. "Ridgway Takes Command." In *L400: The Art of Command*. Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2022.

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

> Dept. of Command and Leadership, "The 2nd Armored Brigade," 5.
> Department of Command and Leadership. "The 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team." In *L400: The Art of Command*. Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2022.

Published Reading

If a course reading is published outside the course, cite the original publisher. If the CGSC lesson uses a reformatted version, cite either one. However, since the page numbers in the original work differ from the reformatted work, choose one and be consistent.

> McMaster, "Adaptive Leadership," 215.
> McMaster, H. R. "Adaptive Leadership: Harold G. 'Hal' Moore." In *The Art of Command: Military Leadership from George Washington to Colin Powell*, edited by Harry S. Laver and Jeffery J. Matthews, 209–30. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008.

> McMaster, "Adaptive Leadership," 6.
> McMaster, H. R. "Adaptive Leadership: Harold G. 'Hal' Moore." In *L400: The Art of Command*. Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2022.

Reprinted Material in a Course Readings Book

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

> Clausewitz, "What is War?" 55.

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

Class Lectures

Use caution when citing class lectures and slides. If the lecture material references course readings or other sources, cite them directly or use a secondary citation.

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

Smith, "L403: Adaptive Leadership," 23.
Smith, John. "L403: Adaptive Leadership." *L400: Art of Command*. Class lecture at the US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, January 5, 2022.

Computer-Based Instruction

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

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

Dept. of Distance Education, "L403: Adaptive Leadership," 23.
Department of Distance Education. "L403: Adaptive Leadership." *L400: Art of Command* (CBI). US Army Command and General Staff College. Accessed January 5, 2022. https://www.cbi-url.mil.

Federal Statues

Name of Statute (optional), Title U.S.C. § section number (year published).

Title 10 U.S.C. § 101
Armed Forces, Title 10 U.S.C. § 101 (2018).

- Do not italicize the name or title of the statute.
- US code is codified every six years (the latest is 2018). Refer to the version consulted.
- The "§" symbol means "section" and "§§" is the plural form.
- See The Indigo Book C.R.16 for additional information.

Guest Speakers, Panels, and Similar Events

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

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

Military Publications

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

- List the service department (e.g., Department of the Navy) for the author and the publisher. For joint publications, list Joint Chiefs of Staff.
- List Washington DC as the publisher location.
- List the publication title followed by the publication number in. Abbreviate the publication type (e.g., APD rather than Army Doctrine Publication).
- Some military publications have unusual page numbers that readers might confuse with a page range. For example, page 1-4 refers to chapter 1 page four, not pages 1 through 4. To avoid confusion, use the abbreviation p. for one page, or pp. and the word "through" for a page range.
    - One page: Dept. of the Army, *Army Leadership,* p.1-4.
    - Page range: Dept. of the Army, *Army Leadership,* pp.1-4 through 1-5.

Dept. of the Army, *Army Leadership,* pp.1-4 through 1-5.
Department of the Army. *Army Leadership and the Profession (ADP 6-22).* Washington
   DC: Department of the Army, 2019.
   https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN20039-ADP_6-22-001-
   WEB- 0.pdf.

Dept. of the Army, Preparing and Managing Correspondence, 4.
Department of the Army. *Preparing and Managing Correspondence (AR 25-50).*
   Washington DC: Department of the Army, 2020.
   https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN32225-AR_25-50-003-
   WEB-6.pdf

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

Secondary Citations

Writers use secondary citations when they find a source another author has cited, but the writer cannot access the original source. To create the secondary citation, cite the original work followed by "Quoted in" and the secondary source (if not a direct quote, use "Cited in"). Include bibliography entries for both sources.

Here is an example:

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

_____

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

Bibliography

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

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

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

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

General Conventions

Acronyms

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

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

However, use periods for personal names.

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

Familiar acronyms do not need to be spelled out first.

> US; UN; NASA; NATO

Do not follow the acronym with word(s) the acronym stands for.

> The staff executed the MDMP ~~process~~.
> The class covered the ALRM ~~model~~.

Capitalization

Chicago style advocates sparse capitalization, sometimes called "down style."[69] Capitalize only proper nouns, and in some cases, terms derived from or associated with proper nouns.

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

> Capitalize the word "Soldier" when it refers to a US Army Soldier.
> Capitalize the word "Family" when it refers to US Army Family or Family members.
> Capitalize the word "Civilian" when it refers to Army Civilians and is used in conjunction with Soldier and/or Family.

Non-English Names

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

> Carl von Clausewitz; Clausewitz;
> Charles de Gaulle; de Gaulle

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[69] University of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style,* 8.1.

Numbers

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

> The staff developed three courses of action.
> There were 16 brigades in Iraq.
> The unit began with only 9 people, but in 6 months, it had over 100.

Spell out large rounded numbers.

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

Use all numerals if it makes writing clearer (discussing quantitative data, for example).

> Only 5% of Soldiers took the survey.

Do not start a sentence with numerals.

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

Point of View and Pronouns

When authors refer to themselves, they should use the first person, Self-reference in the third person is a dated practice and sounds unnatural.[70]

> In this essay, the author argues…   In this essay, I argue…
> The researcher analyzed three cases.   I analyzed three cases.

Avoid using the second person in academic writing.

> You need good leadership.   Armies need good leadership.

Second person is appropriate when writing to a specific person (e.g., staff correspondence). Third person is awkward and excessively formal.[71]

> I recommend the colonel attend.   I recommend you attend.

Gender-Neutral Language

Do not use *he* to refer to a person of unspecified gender. Instead, use the gender-neutral language *CMS* recommends.[72] Alternatively, use *they* and related words (them, their, theirs, etc.) to refer to a single person where gender is unspecified or unimportant.[73]

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[70] University of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, FAQ
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Usage/faq0158.html
[71] See also Dept. of the Army, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence*, para 1-39.
[72] University of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 5.255
[73] University of Chicago, 5.48, 5.526. See also FAQ https://www-chicagomanualofstyle-org.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/book/ed17/part2/ch05/psec048.html.

Prepositions and Conjunctions

Contrary to popular belief, writers may start sentences with conjunctions (e.g., and, but, or) and end sentences with prepositions (e.g., of, on, with).[74]

Verb Tense

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

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

Military Words and Phrases[75]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> cavalry operations; 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry

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

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

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

> the commander; the division commander; Commander Smith, USN

commander in chief Lowercase, not hyphenated.

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

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

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[74] University of Chicago, 5.180, 5.203.
[75] Adapted from Dept. of the Army, "WWW.ARMY.MIL Style Guide."

Department of Defense DOD (all caps) is acceptable on the first reference.

doctrine Lowercase
     Army doctrine; joint doctrine

doctrine terms and concepts Lowercase.
     the operations process; multi-domain operations (MDO); the military decision-making process (MDMP); intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB)

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

government Capitalize government bodies, departments, bureaus, and offices, but not the adjectives derived from them.
     the US Congress; Congress; congressional record
     the UN Security Council; the council meeting
     the Department of the Army; the department office
     the Army Staff; the staff meeting
Lowercase for generic governmental terms.
     the Biden administration; the administration
     the federal government; the US government

joint Lowercase unless used as a proper noun as part of a unit.
     the joint force; joint doctrine; Joint Task Force Smith; the joint task force

military services Capitalize US military services (departs from Chicago style).
     the US Army; the Army
     the United States Navy; the Navy
     the Marine Corps; the Corps
     the US Air Force; the Air Force

nation Lowercase.
     service to the nation; US national interests

paratrooper Lowercase.

Pentagon Capitalize when referring to the headquarters of the DOD.

president Lower case except when used before the president's name.
     President Biden; the president; see also **commander in chief**

ranks Lower case except when they appear where the first name would normally be.
     Major General Garcia; the general; the commanding general
     Command Sergeant Major Ash; the command sergeant major
     Sergeant Peters; the platoon sergeant
     Private Smith; the private
     officers; warrant officers; non-commissioned officers; junior enlisted

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

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

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

> a Special Forces officer; a mission for special operations forces

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

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

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

> 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division; the battalion; the battalion area
> 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division; the brigade; brigade headquarters
> XVIII Airborne Corps; the corps; the corps command post
> First Army; the field army; the army headquarters
> Sixth Fleet; fleet headquarters
> 1st Air Force; the air force commander

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

> the American Revolution; the revolution
> The Korean War; the war

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

> the Syrian civil war; the Russia-Ukraine war

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Name	Assignment

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

Substance	
Organization	
Style	
Correctness	

Rubric

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

APPENDIX E
RESOURCES

* [An Introduction to Writing Across the Curriculum](). Colorado State University.

* *[The Craft of Research]().* Booth et al.

* [The Craft of Writing Effectively](). Larry McEnerney.

[Economical Writing: Thirty-Five Rules for Clear and Persuasive Prose](). Dierdre Nansen McCloskey

* *[The Essential Don Murray: Lessons from America's Greatest Writing Teacher]().* Donald Morison Murray.

[Federal Plain Language Guidelines]().

[Harvard Library Writing Guide.]() Harvard University.

[Harvard Writing Guides](). Harvard University.

* [In-Class Writing Exercises](). University of North Carolina.

[The Little Red Writing Book](). Brandon Royal

[On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction](). William Zinsser.

[On Writing: A Memoir Of The Craft](). Stephen King

[OneLook Dictionary and Thesaurus]().

[Purdue Online Writing Lab](). Purdue University.

[The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century.]() Steven Pinker.

[Writing & Research in the Disciplines](). University of Mississippi

[Write Tight: Say Exactly What You Mean with Precision and Power](). William Brohaugh.

[Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing.]()

[Writing Strong Paragraphs.]() University of Newcastle.

* *[Writing to Learn]().* William Zinsser.

[Writing Tools: 55 Essential Strategies for Every Writer](). Roy Peter Clark.

* Recommended for faculty.

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