

# Writing Terms

**Rhetoric** is the art, practice, and study of human communication. The art of written communication results from the effective application of rhetorical strategies.

**Critical Reading** is actively reading and engaging with a text. Critical reading requires the reader to ask questions, to identify context clues and point of view, and to write annotations to understand the purpose, meaning, and tone of a text. Critical reading prepares the reader to analyze, interpret, and evaluate texts.

**Annotation** is marking a text to engage the reader and the text. Typically, this includes writing observations, questions and other notes in the margins and marking significant passages within the text to help the reader understand the text.

**Interpretation** is an explanation of the meaning of a text or other work. Interpretation requires some form of analysis.

**Analysis** breaks a complex topic or text (usually singular) into smaller parts to gain a clearer understanding of it. Then, the smaller parts are rearranged to create a new whole or meaning. The re-organization of the parts is determined by the purpose of the analysis.

**Evaluation** assesses the merit of a text or other work using criteria governed by a specific set of standards.

**Narration** is a strategy to relate a series of events that are linked in an orderly progression of time. However, narrative time is not always chronological time.

**Causal Analysis** is a strategy to analyze and explain the relationship between causes and effects. Causes and effects often occur in a logical sequence, called a causal chain. As a result, causal analysis frequently explains why one link of the causal chain is connected to another link.

**Comparison/Contrast** are strategies to explain the similarities and/or differences between two or more subjects. Effective comparison/contrast explains similarities and/or differences in a parallel form.

**Division** is a strategy that separates a complex subject into sub-units. The subject is usually singular. The division of the subject is based on the writer's intention. The complex subject is clarified when the audience understands its sub-units and the relationship between the sub-units.

**Classification** is a strategy that groups multiple subjects into categories. These categories follow a principle of classification that distinguishes each group. The complex subjects are clarified when the audience understands the similarities and differences between the groups and the principles of classification that determined the groups.

**Argument** is a strategy that attempts to convince or persuade the audience to accept the validity of the writer's thesis.

**Quotation** uses the exact words from a source. Quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks or block indentation for longer quotes. Quotations must be clearly attributed to the original author.

**Paraphrase** is a restatement of the ideas in a text using your own words. Paraphrases are about the same length as the text and must be clearly attributed to the original author.

**Summary** is a restatement of the main ideas in a text. Summaries are shorter than the original text and follow the organizational pattern of the text. Summaries must be clearly attributed to the original author.

**Thesis Statement** is a statement of the main idea of a piece of writing that restricts and unifies all parts of the writing. The thesis uses precise vocabulary to achieve this restriction and unity.

**Topic Sentence** is the sentence that unifies the paragraph with the thesis. It also organizes the information in the paragraph.

**Paragraph** is a sub-unit of the development and organization of the thesis. Typically, it is a group of sentences that are indented to develop a single idea. A topic sentence unifies and organizes the paragraph. However, depending on the writer's purpose, paragraph organization and development may vary.

**Introduction** is not necessarily restricted to one paragraph. However, whether it is one paragraph or more, the introduction has essential functions. It clarifies the thesis or controlling idea of the writing. It provides a "map" for the organization of the writing. It establishes the audience for the writing and the voice of the writer.

**Conclusion** is the paragraph or paragraphs that convey a sense of completeness for the writing.

**Unity** is the clear relation of all writing elements. Words relate the idea(s) in a sentence; sentences relate to the topic sentence of the paragraph; paragraphs relate to the thesis.

**Coherence** is "flow" between sentences and paragraphs that reinforces the unity of ideas in the writing. There are four basic methods to create this "flow:" transitional expressions, repetition of key words and phrases, pronoun reference, and parallelism.

**Transitions** are the elements in writing that clarify the relationship of one idea to another.

**Audience** is the intended group of readers for a piece of writing. To write effectively, you should estimate your audience's knowledge of your subject, its interest in it, and its biases toward it.

**Syntax** is the order in which words are arranged in a sentence to convey the meaning of the sentence.

**Diction** is the precise choice and use of words appropriate to your purpose and audience.

**Voice/Tone** is the element of writing that conveys your unique understanding of the subject of your writing. Your voice or tone "speaks" to your audience. It is the "personality" of your writing.

**Conventions** are the standard rules of grammar, punctuation and mechanics. Conventions are crucial to effective writing.

**Revision** is "re-seeing" your draft. It occurs during the entire writing process. Revision improves the meaning and organization of the drafts of your writing.

**Editing** identifies and corrects errors in grammar, punctuation or mechanics.