APPENDIX - GLOSSARY

Wherever a term appears in bold anywhere in this handbook, in the main body or in the appendix, further information can be found here in the glossary, where each term is defined and explained, with examples given.

Special care has been taken in this section to be specific in this section about things that are commonly understood by all composition teachers. In cases where teachers have differing points of view, a comment is added about what and how to ask teachers for guidance.

academic dishonesty: intentionally or unintentionally passing off someone else’s academic work as your own. It occurs when a reader is misled into thinking that what he or she is reading is what the writer originated and wrote. (See Section 8 for further information.)

active voice: (See voice.)

adjective: A word used to describe, or modify, a noun or a pronoun.

Adjectives in the example phrases below are underlined:

A slippery slope
A hungry hippo
The royal we
Poor, pitiful me

Adjectival inflections can include the comparative and superlative degree. Inflections from the following examples are underlined:

He’s even stupider than that. (Comparative)
That’s the brightest one. (Superlative)

Adjectives can also be intensified or qualified (ex. “He seemed particularly annoyed.”).

adverb: A word used to describe, or modify, a verb, an adjective, or another adverb, giving further information about time, place, reason, manner, etc.

Adverbal inflections can include the comparative and superlative degree, often by the addition of more or most. Adverbal inflections from the following examples are underlined:

He ran more hastily than usual. (Comparative)
This was the **most** hotly debated election in years. (Superlative)

Adverbs can also be **qualified**. ("The machine works especially poorly.")

**agent**: The person or thing performing the action of a **sentence**.

The agent should not necessarily be confused with **subject**, however, because the performer of an action may not be the sentence’s subject and may not even be named. For example, in the sentence “Mistakes were made,” the sentence has “mistakes” as its subject even though mistakes cannot do anything, and it does not name the person(s) who made the mistakes.

Identifying the agent is especially important when it comes to using **active voice** and **passive voice**. (See **voice**.)

**analysis**: a writing method that involves the careful scrutiny of some **subject** for the purpose of establishing its **meaning** or its greater relevance.

This is an assignment that will appear often, particularly in ENGL 1102. (See **Section 2.2**.)

**antecedent**: In grammar, the **word** or idea reflected in a **pronoun**. For example, if one uses “this” in an essay to refer to “a reason,” then “this” is a pronoun and “a reason” is that pronoun’s antecedent.

Often, a pronoun may appear without any obvious antecedent. In those cases, the antecedent is considered to be “understood.” Errors can occur when an antecedent is meant to be understood, but really is not. This often occurs when writers use the **second-person pronoun** “you” because it is unclear to the reader if the antecedent of “you” is a hypothetical person or the reader him or herself. (See “pronoun-antecedent agreement” in the list of “Top 10 Errors at Gordon State College,” **Section 2.3.5**, for further explanation and examples.)

Another occasion where antecedents come into play, but their pronoun referents are not obvious is with the **relative pronoun**.

**apostrophe**: A mark of **punctuation** used to show **possession** or **contraction** and sometimes **plurality**.

In the case of possession, the apostrophe is used to connect the possessive ending -s with the word itself. There are, however, some stipulations to this rule:

- If it is a **singular noun ending in -s**, the possessive can be shown by leaving off the possessive ending -s, but it is not required, particularly in a circumstance where pronouncing the added -s would be difficult or awkward.
Alcibiades’s story (vs. Alcibiades’ story)

- If it is a *plural noun ending in* -s, an apostrophe only is correct.
  - His miracles’ effectiveness
- If it is a *plural noun not ending in* -s, both the apostrophe and the extra -s ending are required.
  - Children’s toys
- If it is *two or more nouns with shared ownership*, the apostrophe and the extra -s ending are required.
  - John and Nicole’s home

In the case of contraction, the apostrophe is used to indicate where some information has been removed, on occasion resulting in the combination of two or more words. For example, “can’t” is the appropriate contraction of “cannot” because the “o” sound in “not” is replaced with an apostrophe.

**NOTE:** The important thing to remember about using an apostrophe to indicate a contraction is that it must be placed where the letter sound is removed. The abbreviation for the word “little” often appears as “l'il” or sometimes as "lil'". The first abbreviation is common (though inaccurate) convention), but the second has some grammatical reasoning behind it: the apostrophe is placed where the silent “e” was removed. Even so, it is correct to put the apostrophe between the / and the second / because it is the sound made by the two t's that has been removed. It does happen that more than one sound is taken out of a word, as in “o’clock,” and in that case the apostrophe usually replaces the consonant sound.

Similarly, in a circumstance where a number is abbreviated (usually in reference to a year, as in “The winter of ’45”), an apostrophe is placed where the numbers are taken out.

In the case of plurality, an apostrophe should be placed to avoid confusion. With vowels particularly, this is important to consider. Without an apostrophe, A’s, I’s, and U’s would look like As, Is, and Us.

**argument:** in writing, an extensive commentary on a debatable **issue**, where the writer (1) clearly describes the issue and its context, (2) clearly states his or her **opinion** on the issue, and (3) carefully supports that issue with **factual** reasoning.

**article:** in grammar, a word used before a **noun** to indicate information about its number and specificity.

The distinction between **definite** and **indefinite articles** is an important one to understand. When a definite article is used, the writer has a specific idea in mind,
and when an indefinite article is used, the writer has a hypothetical or generalized idea in mind. Likewise, while there is only one definite article possible (“the”), there are two indefinite articles possible – “a” and “an.” The choice between the two is based on sound.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Consonant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definite</td>
<td>the</td>
<td>the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite</td>
<td>an</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With indefinite articles, the use of a or an is determined by the first sound the noun makes, and not necessarily whether the first letter in the noun is a vowel or a consonant. For this reason you will often see terms like “history” indicated with the article “an.”

**audience:** the term commonly used to describe that person or those persons whom a **writer** or **author** targets or envisions as the prime readers of a **text**, though **readership** would be a more accurate descriptor.

**author:** a **writer** who has published a written **text**.

**auxiliary verb:** a word or words added to indicate further information about a **verb**, particularly including correct forms of **have** and **be**.

(Also see **modal auxiliary**.)

**body:** in academic writing, that part of an **essay** that typically occurs between the **introduction** and the **conclusion**. Generally, it elaborates upon whatever is established generally in the introduction, and if the essay is an **argument**, it is the substantiation of the **thesis statement**.

**brackets:** marks of punctuation (“[” and “]”) resembling an angular parentheses used to enclose information that is not original to what is being reported.

The most common use for brackets is the “editorial brackets.” This is when brackets are used to enclose information that has been adjusted in some way from the original version, to suit the needs of both the writer and the reader. For example, if a writer takes a quote that reads “He walks with me,” but it would not be clear to a reader who “he” is, then the writer might change the quote to “[Frederick] walks with me,” to clarify for the reader who is the **antecedent**.

Likewise, editorial brackets can be used to make necessary adjustments to **capitalization** and **verb tense**:

“There it is” becomes “He said, ‘there it is.’”
“She has gone that way” becomes “He told me, “[s]he [went] that way.”

There is also the “editorial correction,” which enables a writer to use the exact language of an external source, but notifying the reader that any mistakes are the source’s mistakes and not the writer’s. To accomplish this, after the error, the writer places a “[sic].” In practice, it looks like this:

As Jourdan says, “I am an accomplished [sic] speller.”

**capitalization:** rules governing the use of capital letters (versus lower-case letters) in a written text. Generally, only nouns are capitalized.

The following is a list of some circumstances where capitalization should be used:

1. The first word of any sentence or question should always be capitalized.
2. The first letter of a person’s first, middle, and last name should always be capitalized.
3. The first letter of any language, place, direction, religion and its practitioners, self-identifying groups, institutions, historical documents, historical events, holy books, and titles preceding people’s names generally should be capitalized.
4. Words indicating family relationships when used in place of the formal name. (Also see #2 in the list below.)
5. Each letter in an acronym.

The following is a list of some circumstances where capitalization should not be used (but often is):

1. Seasons should not be capitalized, unless they are part of an official title or concept.
   
   this summer
   the fall semester
   will graduate Spring 2020

2. Words indicating family relationships when not used in place of the formal name. (See #4 in the list above.)
   
   He’s my dad
   Tell Mom I miss her

**case:** features in nouns and certain pronouns that indicate their grammatical function.
All nouns have a case inflection, but there is only one possible – the **possessive**. That inflection depends on the noun itself – whether it is **plural** or **irregular** (See **apostrophe** and Section 2.3.7.)

Certain pronouns have case distinctions, in the form of **subjective**, **possessive**, and **objective**. Whatever the pronoun’s function in the sentence determines this, depending on the pronoun’s **person**. Consider the following table to illustrate the point:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td><em>I, we, who</em></td>
<td><em>my, our, whose</em></td>
<td><em>me, whom</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td><em>you, you all</em></td>
<td><em>your</em></td>
<td><em>you</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td><em>they, it, he, she</em></td>
<td><em>their, his, her, its</em></td>
<td><em>them, him, her, it</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**clause**: a group of words that contains a **subject** and a **predicate**, but does not express a complete thought.

It is helpful to think of a clause as an otherwise complete **sentence** joined with another clause, but that definition can be limiting. It is most accurate to think of the clause as not expressing a complete thought because it is the joining of it with at least one other clause that makes them work together as a single complete thought. Here is an example of two sentences:

Hector is thoughtful. He brings me things I need.

In this case there are two sentences, both with a subject and a predicate. If they are joined together with a **conjunction**, they might appear this way:

Hector is thoughtful, **and** he brings me things I need.

By joining the sentences with a conjunction, the writer has made one sentence with two clauses. What were sentences previously now are clauses because they function as clauses do – they express one complete thought instead of two separate ones.

(Also see **phrase** and **sentence**.)

**cohesion**: a concept of writing that involves the clarified arrangement of **pronouns** in such a fashion that their **antecedents** are always clear.

**collusion**: receiving excessive help from another to the point that a work can no longer be the product of a single author. Collusion is a serious form of **academic dishonesty**.
(Also see Section 3.6 for further information on collusion and its significance to writing.)

**colon:** A mark of punctuation used to separate two **clauses** of one **sentence**, the first of which makes a general statement that the second one elaborates upon. (See “What’s the difference between a colon and a semicolon?” in the list of “Top Questions Students Ask,” Section 2.4, for further explanation and examples.)

A good rule of thumb to follow is that a colon is often called for if (1) it separates two clauses, and (2) if the colon could be replaced with the **phrase-conjunction** “that is” and still make sense in the way that it is intended.

It is a common misconception of the colon that what follows it must be a list, more often than not of three things.

**comma:** A mark of punctuation used to indicate meaning in the larger context of a **sentence**. Its function is distinguishable from other punctuation marks by its specialized use (see below). In the following few sections, the correct and appropriate uses for the comma are outlined and explained.

1. The comma is used with a **coordinating conjunction** to punctuate **compound sentences**.

   When **coordinating** two clauses, a comma is used along with a **coordinating conjunction** placed between them.

   I would have volunteered, **but** you beat me to it.

   Note that without the coordinating conjunction “but” the sentence would be a **comma splice**, a significant grammatical **error**.

2. The comma is sometimes used in **complex sentences** to join together **dependent** and **independent clauses**.

   If the dependent clause comes before the independent clause, then a comma should be used to separate them.

   **When** you say you loathe me, what is it that you mean, exactly?

   If the dependent clause comes after the independent clause, then no comma is necessary.

   What exactly is it that you mean **when** you say that you loathe me?
If the dependent clause comes after the independent clause, then a comma can be used to separate them if the subordinating conjunction is “although” or “though.”

You say that, although you say you love me.

3. The comma is used after some introductory words, phrases, and clauses.

**NOTE:** There is a common perception that a comma should be used after introductory phrases that are at least a certain number of words in length. (The number depends upon the person, usually.) In truth there is no reliable formula for this. The most reliable rule of thumb is to consider whether adding the comma will improve on the sentences clarity or detract from it.

4. The comma is used with non-essential words, phrases, and clauses.

If a word, phrase, or clause could be taken out of a sentence and the sentence would still make sense in the context of the sentences around it, then the word, phrase or clause is non-essential and should be enclosed in commas.

Consider the following two examples:

The guy who stole my purse went that way.
The guy, who stole my purse, went that way.

The presence of the commas affects the meaning of the sentences. With the commas left out, the sentence indicates that there are several “guys” in question, but it specifies which guy the speaker is referring to. The element “who stole my person” is essential to understanding the speaker’s meaning. With the commas included, however, a non-essential element is added, and “who stole my purse” gives additional information about the “guy,” but the meaning and purpose of the sentence would be clear without it.

5. The comma is used to punctuate series and lists of three or more items.

When listing two or more grammatical elements (a word, phrase, or clause), each is distinguished from the others by a comma. The most common usage of the comma in these cases looks something like this:

I love him for his kindness, generosity, and ingenuity.

**NOTE:** There seems to be no consensus on the question of whether or not a comma should be placed before the final conjunction in a series. For example, in the expression, “this, that, and the other thing,” should there be comma after
“that”? That comma holds a place of honor in the English language – it is called “The Oxford Comma,” and no one has made a convincing, final case for or against it. The best policy to follow, then, is to follow the conventions of the discourse community for which you are writing.

6. The comma is used to separate two or more **adjectives** modifying the same **noun**.

   Abolitionist Wendell Phillips said of Abraham Lincoln that he was “a first-rate, second-rate man.”

7. The comma can be used for certain issues of **clarity**.

   This goes back to the question raised in comma usage rule #4 – when using a comma will help a reader understand the statement and when it will make a statement more confusing.

**comma splice**: a **sentence structure error** where a writer places a **comma** alone to join together two **independent clauses**. (See “comma splice” in the list of “Top 10 Errors at Gordon State College,” **Section 2.3.1**, for further explanation and examples.)

**community**: in writing, the people or types of people who participate in ongoing **conversations** on certain **topics**, and though they may not agree in their **opinions**, they converse in similar ways, using similar **methods**.

**comparative**: in **adjectives** and **adverbs**, an **inflection** that indicates **degree** in comparison with other **nouns**, **pronouns**, or **verbs** being modified, but not in terms of absolutes. (See **degree** for further information and examples.)

**concern**: term used to describe a potential problem with something written that is not necessarily a matter of “correctness”: the concern may involve a single, “correct” solution, or it may involve several “appropriate” solutions, any of which would be correct. (See **level errors**.)

**conjunction**: a **word** or **phrase** used to connect the material that comes before it with the material that comes after. In making this connection, it will indicate to a reader how he or she should relate what comes before the conjunction with what comes after it.

There are many types of conjunctions, a couple of which are listed and described below, using the same two clauses to illustrate how a conjunction can change the meaning of a sentence:
1. **Coordinating conjunctions** join together two clauses so that no one clause is emphasized over the other in importance. There are only seven coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so)

   I bought a new sofa, **and** it is also blue.
   I bought a new sofa, **but** it is also blue.

   Either sentence would make sense in a given context, but the conjunction used would determine the sentence’s meaning.

   **NOTE:** In academic writing, it is generally expected that a sentence should not **begin** with a coordinating conjunction.

   The clauses created by incorporating coordinating conjunctions are called **independent clauses** because they do not depend on one another to determine their general meaning.

2. **Subordinating conjunctions** join together two clauses so that one clause is emphasized over the other as the **main** clause of the sentence. There are quite a few more subordinating conjunctions than coordinating conjunctions. Most lists of subordinating conjunctions include (but are not limited to) although, because, before, if, since, though, unless, when, whereas, and while.

   I bought a new sofa **because** it is also blue.
   I bought a new sofa, **although** it is also blue.
   **Though** I bought a new sofa, it is also blue.

   **NOTE:** Notice the punctuation in these examples. First, see that there is a comma before although in the second example, but not before because in the first. Generally, subordinating conjunctions are not preceded by a comma, but an exception is made in the case of although because it indicates a reversal in meaning from the first clause to the second. Second, there is a comma in the third sentence where the subordinate clause ends and the main clause begins. This is because subordinate clauses that begin a sentence always are concluded with a comma.

   The clauses created by incorporating subordinating conjunctions are called **dependent clauses** because the clause that begins with the conjunction has no independent meaning.

3. **Conjunctive adverbs** join together two clauses as a coordinating conjunction would, but the punctuation differs: conjunctive adverbs are preceded by a **semicolon** and are followed by a **comma**. Most lists of conjunctive adverbs
include (but are not limited to) consequently, furthermore, however, meanwhile, and therefore.

I bought a new sofa; however, it is also blue.

(Also see transition and note the difference between it and the conjunction.)

current: term used to describe what is within (the contents of) a written document. It is non-specific otherwise, as “content” can be used to describe anything from the words and phrasing of the document to the ideas contained within it. More often than not, however, content is usually used to describe ideas, and terms like grammar and style are used to describe the low-level concerns of content.

Content is not limited to linguistic content, however. Students of writing often refer to an essay’s emotional content, its ethical content, etc. In circumstances like these, content is not what is explicitly stated in the essay, but what is implied.

contraction: a feature of language where some letters or sounds have been omitted, often but not always resulting in the combination of two or more words. The letters or sounds omitted are often replaced with an apostrophe.

NOTE: Generally speaking, a contraction is inappropriate to use in an academic context.

conversation: in the context of academic writing, the concept that all written statements are crafted in response to previous statements on similar topics and also in anticipation of subsequent topics.

coordinating conjunction: (See conjunction.)

copyright page: that page in most published books immediately following the title page that contains information useful for composing a works cited entry.

correlative conjunction: a method for joining two clauses together that incorporates a specified term at the beginning of each.

dash: a mark of punctuation used to set apart some word or group of words from the main part of a sentence.

Dashes are often used in ways that are similar to commas and parentheses. Take the following example, which is the same sentence punctuated with each of the three marks of punctuation:

He made a mistake, he said, because he hadn’t slept the night before.
He made a mistake (he said) because he hadn’t slept the night before.
He made a mistake – he said – because he hadn’t slept the night before.

The distinction between these three examples is a difference in tone: the reader understands the words differently because of the way they are punctuated.

degree: a variation of an adjective or adverb that indicates how one should relate the noun or verb being modified to other nouns and verbs of its kind.

These variations can be simple, comparative, or superlative, as illustrated in the following three sample sentences, with the varied degrees indicated in italics:

1. Jake is a hungry man. (SIMPLE)
2. Jake is hungrier than most men. (COMPARATIVE)
3. Jake is the hungriest man of all. (SUPERLATIVE)
4. Arnold ran fast. (SIMPLE)
5. Arnold ran faster than his classmates. (COMPARATIVE)
6. Arnold ran fastest of all his classmates. (SUPERLATIVE)

demonstrative pronoun: pronoun used to indicate proximity of its antecedent to the writer. (Also see pronoun.)

“Proximity” can be construed spatially or temporally, and the form of a demonstrative pronoun is determined by the number of the antecedent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proximate</td>
<td>this</td>
<td>these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant</td>
<td>that</td>
<td>those</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In English, we have only two basic dimensions of proximity, and we rely upon modifiers to clarify proximity further.

dependent clause: (See clause.)

design: the visual features of a written text. (Also see designer.)

designer: a broader term sometimes used for “writer” to describe a person who creates a written document. The idea behind this is that the act of writing, especially when using a computer, involves the use of more than just the use of linguistic elements. (Also see design.)

detail: in writing, the specific aspects and features of an essay. Detail typically occurs in the form of support-type features: data, facts, opinion, commentary, etc.
**development:** the phase of the writing process when a writer has established the general idea of an essay and is expanding upon it in order to help the **reader** to understand it more fully or to be more receptive of it.

**diction:** that part of writing that involves the selection of appropriate words to communicate meaning.

Diction is an element of **style** in part because it has to do with the selection of words most appropriate to a given writing context.

(Also see **Section 2.5.9** for helpful advice on appropriate diction.)

**direct object:** (See **object**.)

**documentation:** the method a writer uses to attribute certain ideas and the expression of those ideas to those who originated them.

(The subject of documentation and the standard methods or styles for proper documentation are treated fully in **Section 2.6**.)

**draft:** a term used to describe a distinct **version** of an **essay**. The idea behind it is that no essay is ever “complete” and that what a student turns in for a grade is really just a “final draft” or a “submission draft.” It is safer to say that a published essay is in final form because, once it has been published, there is little the writer can do to change it (though one could just as easily say that this version is the essay’s “published draft.”)

**effectiveness:** a term used to describe how well an **essay** achieves its **purpose**. To the extent that an essay accomplishes what its writer intended to accomplish, it is said to be effective.

**ellipses:** the correct mark of **punctuation** for indicating a deletion. It has the appearance of three **periods**, though its purpose is nothing like the period’s.

It is important to understand the difference between ellipses with **brackets** and ellipses without them.

**end-sentence punctuation:** the correct marks of **punctuation** for concluding a **sentence**. Generally, these are limited to the **period**, the **question mark**, and the **exclamation point**.

**error:** in writing, a feature that is considered “incorrect,” usually for some **grammatical** or **format** issue.
NOTE: The descriptor incorrect should not be confused with the term inappropriate, which is usually related to some stylistic, structural, or developmental issue.

**essay:** a written document composed for some small, specific purpose. They are often relatively brief (contrasted with a book) and, unlike a paper, are not written for publication. In college writing, many professors use the terms “essay” and “paper” interchangeably.

**exclamation point:** an end-sentence punctuation mark used to designate the completion of a sentence if that sentence carries with it some sense of surprise or outrage. Given the academic tone expected of most college writing, it is generally advisable to write without the use of an exclamation point.

**exigence:** those details of an essay that are required or demanded through the writing context.

**extrinsics:** those details of an essay or argument that originate from someone other than the writer.

(See Section 3.4 for further information on extrinsic detail and its role in an essay.)

**fact:** some detail of a written text that has been satisfactorily established as a “given” for the text’s intended readership. (Also see opinion for the counterpart to a fact.)

**font:** the graphical characteristics of the words in a document, including particularly the size and shape of the letters.

In academic writing, font is expected to be standard in size and non-decorous in shape. Some disciplines have strict requirements for which font-types and font-sizes to use. Some professors have even more specific guidelines than that.

**format:** in writing, the rules governing the appearance of a document.

**fragment:** a sentence written without a complete subject or predicate (or both). (See “fragment” in the list of “Top 10 Errors at Gordon State College,” Section 2.3.1, for further explanation and examples.)

**gerund:** an -ing verb functioning as a nominal does.

That is, the suffix -ing is added so that what was formerly a verb now acts as a noun or the beginning of a noun phrase.

(Also see participle.)
grammar: those elements of language use that take “correctness” most into account. (Also see error.)

heading: in formatting, the information in an essay that goes above the title, but below the header that includes certain required information.

In MLA, the heading should include, in this order, the following items of information: the writer’s name, the teacher’s name, the course number, and the date on which the essay is submitted. All should be double-spaced.

NOTE: Most disciplines require students to their names and their teacher’s names in their essay headings, and students are often confused about how to write their teachers’ names without offending them somehow. (Is she “professor” or “doctor”? “Mr.” or “Mrs.”? Is it okay to use his formal first name or the nickname he has?) In circumstances like that, it is often a good idea to consult the syllabus: teachers generally state their names on their syllabi in the way they want their students to think about them. (Note that this is not a universal rule, but it generally works.)

header: in formatting, the information in an essay that goes in the upper right-hand corner of every page to inform the reader of the author’s name and the page number.

high-order concern: (See level errors.)

hook: a feature of many essays included to gain a reader’s attention or designed to compel a reader to read further. It most often appears in an essay’s introduction, but it can appear elsewhere.

There is nothing inherently “right” or “wrong” about the use of a hook, and teachers have a variety of perspectives on it.

hyphen: a mark of punctuation used to join together words that would otherwise have been separate. This can be done for many reasons:

1. To join two or more words

   If two or more words are acting as a grammatical unit, they should be attached to one another with hyphens.

   father-in-law
   cul-de-sac
   first-year
three-year-old

NOTE: When making a hyphenated word combination **plural**, it is not usually acceptable simply to put an -s or -es at the end of it. Usually it is the primary word in the word combination that gets pluralized. For this reason, “father-in-law” becomes “fathers-in-law,” “cul-de-sac” becomes “culs-de-sac,” etc.

2. To join words with prefixes, suffixes, and letters

   pro-league
   anti-American
   Vice-President

3. To deal with potential ambiguity

   A hyphen can make the difference between two completely different words or between a word and a nonsense word.

   re-rent (to rent again) vs. rerent (a nonsense word)

4. To divide words

   If a writer, for whatever reason, finds the need to divide a word by syllables, then a hyphen can be placed at the point between two syllables.

   NOTE: It is common practice in publishing to divide words with the use of a hyphen to conclude the line of a paragraph. This enables the printer to save space and make the words seem more uniform by making the alignment even on both margins. To achieve this, the printer places a hyphen between two **syllables** in a word. Student writers should note, however, that this is not common practice in academic writing.

(Also see **dash** and note the significant differences between the dash and the hyphen, though visually they are very similar.)

**independent clause**: (See **clause**.)

**indirect object**: (See **object**.)

**inflection**: a **suffix** added to a **noun**, **verb**, **adjective**, or **adverb** for the purpose of changing its grammatical role.
Noun inflections -s and -’s are added to indicate number and possession. Examples include

- desks (to indicate more than one)
- desk’s (to indicate something belonging to a desk)

Verb inflections -s, -ing, -ed, and -en are added to indicate tense and case.

Adjectival and adverbial inflections -er and -est are added to indicate comparative and superlative degree.

- smaller and smallest
- faster and fastest

**intensifier:** modification to a verb for the purpose of emphasis.

**introduction:** in medium-length academic essays, the paragraph that prepares a reader for the main part (or “body”) of the essay. If the essay is an argument, usually the final sentence of the introduction will be the essay’s thesis statement.

There are many approaches to writing an introduction, and most of them depend on teachers’ requirements and on students’ preferences.

One approach is to introduce with what is called a “hook.” This involves the inclusion of some astonishing fact, profound or provocative statement, or some other method for the purpose of compelling a reader to continue reading the essay.

Another approach is what is called the “telescoping method.” This involves starting from a wide perspective – the idea being to establish the writer’s view of “the big picture” – and narrowing the focus until the thesis is reached.

Yet another, even simpler method of introduction is what might be called the practical approach. The idea in that case is that, if the thesis statement is the most important sentence in the essay, then what comes after the thesis is the substantiation of it, and what comes before the thesis is whatever information the reader will need to be prepared to understand it.

**invention:** a term often used to describe the early stages of the writing process, when the writer is making decisions about what he or she wants to say and how it should be said. (See Section 3.2 for further discussion of this idea.)

**irregular:** term used to describe a verb that changes its base form when used in different tenses and cases.
issue: in a written argument, the debatable point being addressed: it is the point of disagreement between two or more reasonable and well-informed individuals.

italics: a feature of most writing fonts that alters the form, but does not add to it (as bold-face and underlining do).

A good rule of thumb to follow when it comes to italics is to remember that if you are citing a source that exists or has ever existed as an independent publication, it should usually go in italics, and if it has never existed as an independent publication, its title should be given in quotation marks. There is no threshold of word length where if it falls below that length it should be in quotation marks and if it falls above it italics should be used. A good example to illustrate this point is Samuel Clemens’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. This book was originally a novel, published independently, so it goes in italics. The novel is also sometimes included in anthologies of American literature. (Also see Section 2.7.)

Italics can also be used for emphasis, but should be used sparingly in academic writing for that purpose.

level error: a term used to distinguish errors or concerns by their “level” of relevance to the overall writing context.

There are several ways that teachers and editors think of the level error. One common way is the distinction between what are called high-order and low-order concerns. Another is to distinguish between sentence-level, paragraph-level, and essay-level concerns. Yet another is to distinguish between grammatical, stylistic, structural, and developmental concerns.

logic: thought and reason made valid through structure rather than content.

(See Section 3.2.5 for further information on this topic.)

low-order concern: (See level errors.)

main verb: the verb in a sentence which is the main action performed by the subject.

meaning: the significance attached to what is read or seen.

(Also see theme.)

mechanics: in writing, the rules governing typographical and transformative features, including the use of abbreviations, italics, and numbers.

medium: the form or method used to communicate meaning.
In MLA medium is an important consideration as one of the parts of any MLA works cited entry. Each source should be identified in its works cited entry by its medium. (See Section 2.6.2.1.)

method

modal auxiliary: auxiliaries given to add nuance to the meaning of the main verb, usually with reference to probability, possibility, obligation, etc. Most often they are one of the following – can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, and would, but [...]

One common issue with modal auxiliaries is the tendency to used them when no auxiliary is needed. For instance, many writers will write “this would be my reason for…” or “this could be a contributing factor…” when they might have written “this is my reason…” or “this is a contributing factor.” [...]

mode: In writing, the generic pattern used to develop an argument. Writing “modes” are generally named according to their purpose and structure: the “compare and contrast” essay, the “cause and effect,” the “narrative,” etc.

Often, a student-writer is not specifically asked to write a “process” essay, so it is important for that student to be able to understand what writing mode is being implied in the writing prompt. This can be accomplished by reading the prompt carefully and critically. (See Section 7.2 for more detailed information and advice on how to do this.) [...]

modify, or modifier: a word used to clarify or give more information about another word.

mood: that aspect of a verb that indicates something about the purpose of the sentence. Often it is accomplished through diction, but not always. It can also be accomplished through the use of auxiliaries.

Verbs can be expressed in the indicative, the imperative, and the subjunctive mood.

- Verbs in the indicative mood communicate statements of simple fact or opinion.
- Verbs in the imperative mood communicate a command or advice.
- Verbs in the subjunctive mood communicate an idea that is not necessarily true.

One way to illustrate mood is to examine statements that are very similar but differ only in mood. Consider the following sets of examples.
You need to **wash** the dishes. (indicative)

**Wash** the dishes. (imperative)

I had hoped that you would **wash** the dishes. (subjunctive)

It is clear that the verb ("wash") is the same in each of the three sentences, but in the context of each usage, the purpose differs. Notice how the similarities outline the differences in tone: in each case, the sentence is stated by a person who wants his or her reader to wash the dishes, but the writer is using different means to achieve that end. In the *indicative* mood,

**narrative**: term used to describe the events of a fictional story as they are explained or described. (Also see *plot* and note the differences between it and narrative.)

**nominal**: a word or phrase that functions as a *noun* would function in a sentence. A nominal can be a noun, but it might be many other things, such as a *gerund* phrase.

**noun**: a word used to express a person, place, thing, or idea.

*Proper nouns* are nouns that [*...*]

**number**: those features of a *noun* or *pronoun* that indicate whether it is one or more than one. (Also see *inflection* and *plural*.)

**object**: in *grammar*, that *noun* in a *sentence* that is the direct or indirect recipient of an action or observation. The difference between *direct object* and *indirect object* is implied in their names. The following example illustrates that point:

She gave *me* a *flower*.

In this case, "me" is the indirect object and "flower" is the direct object. This can be confusing, since "me" is the recipient of the gift, and by the definition here, the direct object is the direct recipient of the action. The reason "me" is the indirect object is this: in the most literal sense, the *flower* is the thing that was given, not "me." In this sentence, "me" is the recipient of the flower.

The **object of a preposition** is the *noun* or *pronoun* that is the focal point of a *prepositional phrase*.

**opinion**: some *detail* of a written text that has yet to be satisfactorily established as a "given" for the text’s intended *readership*. (Also see *fact* for the counterpart to an opinion.)

**organizing principle**: the *method* by which an essay is structured.
**paper**: an essay written for more formal (usually public) presentation than an essay submitted for a class grade. A paper, then, is a type of essay. There is little distinction otherwise, though many think of a paper as being longer or written for an advanced course.

**paragraph**: a *sentence* or group of sentences that function as a single rhetorical unit.

**parallelism**: a principle of *grammar* and *style* that involves the construction of sentences in such a way that parts of equal significance are also explained in ways that are grammatically similar.

**paraphrase**: the incorporation of someone else’s ideas, without omissions, but converted into language suited to a different context.

**parentheses**: marks of punctuation used to enclose information. (Also see *brackets*.)

**participle**

**passive voice**: (See *voice*.)

**period**: an *end-sentence punctuation* mark used to designate the completion of a *sentence* if that sentence expresses a declaration or a command.

**person**: the aspect of *pronoun* usage that signals an *antecedent*’s position relative to the person speaking. The following statement illustrates this point, with the pronouns underlined:

> I introduced you to her already.

In this case, the antecedent of the first pronoun (“I”) is the person writing and is called *first person*. The antecedent of the next pronoun (“you”) is the person to whom the writer is addressing or “speaking” (the *reader*) and is called *second person*. The antecedent of the final pronoun (“her”) is the person about whom the writer and the reader are discussing and is called *third person*.

Of course the order in the sentence does not matter, and person differs depending on number and case, as the following example statements indicate:

> You all need to give those back to us.
> They gave me yours.

Not all sentences will necessarily include one of each person.

**phrase**: two or more words acting together as a single grammatical unit, but not incorporating a *subject* and a *predicate* or expressing a complete thought.
NOTE: It is tempting but inaccurate to say that “a phrase has either a subject or a predicate, but not both” because a subject cannot be a subject without a predicate, really, and neither can a predicate be a predicate without a subject. The terms subject and predicate are functional terms – meaning, they are terms we use for nouns, verbs, etc. when they are functioning grammatically in some specific way.

(Also see clause and sentence.)

plot: term used to describe the events of a fictional story as they occur.

NOTE: there is an important distinction between plot and narrative. While plot describes the events of a fictional story, narrative describes the events of a fictional story as they are explained or described.

plural: term used to describe a noun where more than one of its kind is implied, usually through its inflection.

The term plural is also used occasionally to describe a verb, but for different reasons. In the case of verbs, it is said that a verb is in its “plural form” if it takes the form of that verb when it is referring to the action or state of being of a plural noun.

possession: those elements of writing that indicate ownership, on the part of some person, persons, or object or idea.

predicate: that part of a sentence that contains the main verb and any objects or complements that go along with it.

There are few stipulations on the length of a predicate. Where there is an intransitive verb, for example (“You stink.”), the predicate may be only one-word long.

prefix: a letter or group of letters, with no independent meaning, that when affixed to the beginning of a word, modify its meaning.

preposition: a word used to relate its object to some other word (usually a noun or pronoun) in its sentence. The preposition combined with its object is called a prepositional phrase. Typically, a prepositional phrase will act as a modifier of the word to which it relates.

[Examples]

Any list of common prepositions will usually include

[Common prepositions]
print: (Also see medium.)

prompt: in academic writing, the term used to describe the instructions given to students on how to write an essay.

pronoun: a word used to stand in the place of a noun when the noun is not specifically named.

The relative pronoun is a common cause for sentence fragments because the writer senses a subject in the pronoun, but it cannot function as a subject does because a relative clause is a modifier.

(Also see cohesion.)

proper noun: (See noun.)

punctuation: in writing, non-verbal marks used to better communicate meaning. (See Section 2.3.3 for further information on punctuation and on avoiding punctuation errors.)

qualifier

question: a group of words, ending in a question mark, that set the parameters for an anticipated response.

question mark: an end-sentence punctuation mark used to designate the completion of a question if that sentence anticipates an answer, or response. The nature of the answer is usually established in the wording of the question.

quotation marks: marks of punctuation used to enclose the exact words of someone else in order to clarify the distinction between one person’s words from the writer’s own.

NOTE: It does happen on occasion that the words of someone else will be enclosed in quotation marks, but those words also have quotation marks as well. In that case – in what is often called “a quote within a quote” – the writer should enclose the quote in quotation marks and enclose the word or words previously given in quotation marks with single quotation marks.

Quotation marks are also used to signal to a reader that the word or words enclosed in them are unstable, informal, imperfect, or inaccurate. Here is one example:

She told me she was “sleepy.”
This is the type of statement where a speaker would make quotation marks with his or her fingers as the word “sleepy” is pronounced. The instinct in writing is the same.

(Also see Section 2.4.9.)

**quote**: the incorporation of someone else’s words, exactly as they were written, with the use of **quotation marks**.

**readership**: the person or persons whom a **writer** envisions as the prime readers of a text.

(Also see **audience**.)

**relative clause**: (See **clause**.)

**relative pronoun**: (See **pronoun**.)

**research**: the work a writer does to discover knowledge that he or she did not know beforehand or information that he or she did not discover independently.

**resource**: a tool used for the discovery of **source** material.

(Also see **source**.)

**run-on sentence**: (See “run-on” in the list of “Top 10 Errors at Gordon State College,” Section 2.3.1, for further explanation and examples.)

**semicolon**: A mark of **punctuation** used to separate two **independent clauses** of one **sentence** without the aid of a **conjunction**. The semicolon is very similar in function to the **colon**, but the colon has a more specialized usage.

(sentence)

**sentence**: a group of words that contains both a **subject** and a **predicate** and expresses a complete thought.

The difference between a **sentence** and a **clause** can be difficult to understand. If you have read the definition of a clause also, you know that the clearest distinction is that a sentence expresses a “complete thought” and a clause does not. It all hinges on what is meant by a complete thought, then. (sentence)

(See **clause** and **phrase**.)

**shift**: term used to signify some change in **number**, **person**, or verb **tense**. The shift might be appropriate or inappropriate, correct or incorrect, depending on the circumstance.
**singular:** term used to describe a **noun** where only one of its kind is implied.

The term *singular* is also used occasionally to describe a **verb**, but for different reasons. In the case of verbs, it is said that a verb is in its “singular form” if it takes the form of that verb when it is referring to the action or state of being of a singular noun.

**sound**

**source:** material used for the support of an **argument** or observation.

(Also see **resource**.)

**spatial:** descriptor used when a thing or idea is understood in terms of physical arrangement and properties.

**style:** those elements of language use that take “appropriateness” most into account.

...[

**structure:** a term often applied to grammar as well as to an essay’s organization.

**subject (content):** the person or idea about which an essay is written.

**subject (grammatical):** the person or idea about which a sentence is written.

There is an important aspect of subject also in **voice** because [...]

**subordinating conjunction:** (See **conjunction**.)

**subtitle:** a kind of second title to a written text, often appearing below the main title or following the main title and a **colon**. The subtitle is a writer’s opportunity to cast his or her title in different terms.

**suffix:** a letter or group of letters, with no independent meaning, that when affixed to the end of a **word**, modify its meaning.

**summary:** the incorporation of someone else’s ideas, but including only the most relevant or important ones.

**superlative:** in **adjectives** and **adverbs**, a variation that indicates **degree** in comparison with other **nouns** or **verbs** being modified, to the extent that the noun or verb being modified is more of something than any other noun or verb of its kind. (See **degree** for further information and examples.)

**temporal:** descriptor used when a thing or idea is understood in terms of time and in relationship with things that occurred before and after it.
tense: that aspect of verb usage that involves the clarification of when the action or state of being referred to by the verb takes place.

Generally, there are three timeframes (past, present, and future), each of which has four tense distinctions (simple, progressive, perfect, and perfect progressive), making twelve typical tenses altogether. In all three time frames these four tense distinctions indicate certain things about the actions or states of being indicated by their verbs:

- simple tenses indicate habitual or completed events or states of being occurring independent of other events or states of being,
- progressive tenses indicate ongoing events or states of being in relation to other events or states of being within the same time frame,
- perfect tenses indicate completed events or states of being occurring in relation to other events or states of being within the same time frame, and
- perfect progressive tenses indicate ongoing but completed events or states of being occurring in relation to other events or states of being within the same time frame.

These descriptions can only be helpful with examples. First consider the following chart where an example is given for each of the twelve tenses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>Simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worked</td>
<td>I work</td>
<td>I will work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We worked</td>
<td>We work</td>
<td>We will work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was working</td>
<td>I am working</td>
<td>I will be working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We were working</td>
<td>We are working</td>
<td>We will be working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had worked</td>
<td>I have worked</td>
<td>I will have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We had worked</td>
<td>We have worked</td>
<td>We will have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had been working</td>
<td>I have been working</td>
<td>I will have been working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had been working</td>
<td>I have been working</td>
<td>I will have been working</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice in this example all of the forms taken by the verbs and their auxiliaries and how the differences you see indicate different meanings.

Make a special note to understand the difference between habitual action and ongoing action. […]
text: the arrangement of words, by a given medium, taken into direct consideration.

NOTE: It can be helpful to think of text as one might think of forensics. The idea, in either case, is that there is some object (in the case of writing an arrangement of words, and in the case of forensics an actual dead body) for consideration and scrutiny.

theme:

This is not to be confused with plot because (Also see meaning.)

thesis statement: a sentence, usually at or near the end of the introductory paragraph, that very clearly states the writer’s position on an issue or is a summary of the essay itself (depending on the teacher’s requirements for the essay).

The thesis often, but not always, includes a brief comment on the reasoning behind the opinion stated.

It is a common practice to include in the thesis a “map” of the structure of the essay.

NOTE: The thesis is an essential part of the essay for any composition teacher, but there is not much consensus on its form and function. For this reason, it is helpful for students to get a clear idea from their teachers exactly what they expect to find in a thesis statement, using the ideas that are given here.

title: in essay writing, a group of words (usually in phrase or word form) used for the convenience of the reader to understand the contents of the essay.

In publishing, the title is the group of words used for the convenience of the reader to understand the contents of the book, article, etc.

NOTE: When formulating a title, it may be helpful to think of it this way: if the thesis statement is a one-sentence summary of the essay, then the title is a summary of the thesis.

title page: the page very near the beginning of a book that includes the book’s title and other useful information. Apart from the title, this page usually includes the book’s
subtitle (if any), its author’s name, the publisher’s name, and the city of publication (among most other things needed for an MLA works cited entry).

[NOTE: One bit of crucial information not often found on the title page is the year of publication. This can almost always be found on the copyright page.]

**tone:** an aspect of **voice** that indicates the writer’s attitude toward the subject. [...]

**topic:** in writing, the narrowest view of an essay’s scope, but before an **issue** or a **purpose** is determined.

Though they can be closely related, topic is distinguishable from **subject** and **issue**. [...]

**transition:** a word, phrase, clause, or even a sentence used to help a reader understand the connection between one point in a written text and the point previous to it.

(See **conjunction** and note the difference between it and a transition.)

**verb:** a word used to express an action or to connect the **subject** of a sentence to its **complement**.

There are transitive, intransitive, linking, and “to be” verbs.

**video:** (Also see **medium**.)

**voice:** those features of writing that establishes the relationship between a **subject** and its **predicate**. Voice is an aspect of **style**, but it has aspects of **grammar** in it as well.

One of the most common issues related to voice is the use of **active voice** versus **passive voice**, and the distinction between the two is fairly simple: a sentence is written in active voice if the **subject** of sentence is also the **agent**, and it is written in passive voice if the agent is in the **predicate** or, in some cases, is not mentioned at all. Take the following sentences as examples.

1. Donald borrowed $100 from Gary. (ACTIVE VOICE)
2. Someone borrowed $100 from Gary. (ACTIVE VOICE)
3. Gary loaned $100 to Donald. (ACTIVE VOICE)
4. Donald was loaned $100 by Gary. (PASSIVE VOICE)
5. Donald got a $100 loan from Gary
6. Donald secured a $100 loan from Gary
7. Mistakes were made.
**word**: a letter or a combination of letters used to designate a sensible concept.

**writer**: a person who is responsible for the composition or design of a written text.

“Writer” is distinguishable from “author” in that “author” designates a person who has not only created a text, but also has published it, whereas “writer” designates a person who writes, for whatever purpose.