

WRITING IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Academic Skills

COMMON WRITING ASSIGNMENTS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Annotated bibliography
- Article summary
- Article review
- Literature review
- Research proposal
- Report
- Research paper

SOCIAL SCIENCE WRITING OFTEN

- Asks you to focus on a specific problem or issue. How, based on the literature, should this issue be seen or handled?
- Is based on your critical reading of sources. What arguments are authors making and how do they develop or support those arguments?
- Asks you to synthesize different sources and integrate evidence with analysis.

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL SCIENCE WRITING

1. Have a clear focus and controlling idea/thesis
2. Create a clear structure with well-developed paragraphs
3. Integrate evidence and analysis effectively.

CREATING A CLEAR FOCUS AND ARGUMENT

WHAT IS A GOOD TOPIC?

A good essay topic is manageable, analytical, and interesting.

- A **manageable topic** is one that you can consider in a deep and complex manner in the time and space that you have to write about it.
- An **analytical topic** is one that allows you to make an argument or answer a question. Consider phrasing your topic as a question (How? Why? So what?)
- A **good topic** is one that holds your interest!

NARROW AND QUESTION

- Narrow your topic as much as possible
- Create a research question to help focus and ensure that your own thinking is at the forefront. This may change!

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR SOURCES?

FOR EXAMPLE

Gender and Magazines (*what about it? what specifically?*)



How do magazines reinforce or breakdown gender ideals? (*All of them? Body image? Work? Childcare?*)



How do print media reinforce or breakdown gendered expectations for domestic life that working mothers face? (*what genre?*)



To what extent do women's magazines breakdown or reinforce gender ideals for working mothers? Do they promote isolation or connection to community?

USING SOURCES

- Create a **research plan** based upon your research question.
- Always start with the required or suggested sources! Only find other sources if you are asked to!
- Use the subject guides on the library home page to locate sources.
- Use google scholar effectively! Set your library links!



- Any time
- Since 2018
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- Since 2014
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- Sort by relevance
- Sort by date

- include patents
- include citations
- Create alert

Invisible **mothers**: A content analysis of motherhood ideologies and myths in **magazines**

DD Johnston, DH Swanson - Sex roles, 2003 - Springer

... Discussions regarding justifications for **working** (eg, feminism or economic nurturance), or justifications for ... review of motherhood ideologies suggests that the traditional "good-mother" ideology is ... allowed for comparisons of the racial representation of **mothers** and nonmothers ...

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Locating **mothers**: How cultural debates about stay-at-home versus **working mothers** define women and home

H Dillaway, E Paré - Journal of Family Issues, 2008 - journals.sagepub.com

... 4 million), Newsweek (touted as one of the "big three" of news **magazines**, with a ... and, by default, time spent in particular activities defines **working** women as "bad" **mothers**. However, the **working mother** is also characterized as a "supermom." The mythic "supermom" should be ...

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THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING NOTES ON SOURCES

- Your goal is to write your outline and draft from your notes. This puts distance between you and your sources and helps you to notice similarities and contradictions between sources.
- This will emphasize analysis rather than regurgitation.
- It will help you to avoid plagiarism

DEVELOPING A STRONG THESIS

- Your thesis should be a clear declaration of the direction and purpose of your essay.
- It needs to address the topic or answer the question!
- Your thesis is the centre around which the entire essay is organised.

A THESIS SHOULD NOT BE:

- An announcement: My essay will discuss the messages given to working mothers by domestic magazines.
- A factual statement: Working mothers are consumers of domestic advice magazines.
- A question: Do women's magazines breakdown or reinforce gender stereotypes?
- A fan letter: Women's magazines provide wonderful advice for **working mothers.**

FOR EXAMPLE

While domestic magazines may provide working mothers with helpful hints designed to make them feel as though they face common problems that can be solved, most of this advice is unrealistic and unattainable; thus, rather than easing working mothers' gendered anxiety and isolation, these magazines reinforce gendered ideals and make working mothers feel as though they are alone in their failure to fulfill their domestic duties.

**CREATE A CLEAR STRUCTURE WITH
WELL-DEVELOPED PARAGRAPHS**

OUTLINE

- This is the map / skeleton of your essay
- It allows **you** to see a lot of information and organize ideas clearly



KEEP IN MIND

- In general, all essays have:
 - Introduction (1-2 paragraphs w/ the thesis)
 - Body (paragraphs that develop and prove your ideas)
 - Conclusion (1 paragraph that ties points together)
- **The 5-paragraph essay model may not work!**
- Organize your writing around your thesis. Each section of the paper should be clearly linked to the thesis.

MY ROUGH OUTLINE MIGHT INCLUDE

- I. Intro
- II. Magazines seem to use community to provide many hints aimed at helping working mothers save time while still fulfilling traditional domestic ideals
 1. Advice on making quick, healthy, homemade lunches and dinners
 2. Personal stories promoting the importance of making time for time consuming, enriching experiences for kids
- III. Rather than being practical, these hints are actually unattainable by most working mothers
- IV. Rather than promoting community and easing anxiety, these magazines make working mothers feel that they alone are failing at domestic ideals.
- V. This form of print media thus tends to alienate readers and reinforce gender norms.
- VI. Conclusion

I CAN THEN ADD INFORMATION FROM MY SOURCES INTO THE APPROPRIATE SPOT.

WRITING INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introductions

- invite the reader's attention and introduce the topic the paper will explore.
- clearly lay out the scope of the essay (such as the time period, places, and subjects you will discuss in the essay).
- introduce the research question or specific issue the paper will address.
- state the thesis.

Conclusions

- review and tie together main points using new language.
- point toward the larger significance of what you have argued. If everything you claim is true, so what?
- in some papers, show how your thesis has implications beyond the immediate scope of the essay. You might consider the applications of your findings or identify areas for future research. However, be careful not to jump into a whole new topic.

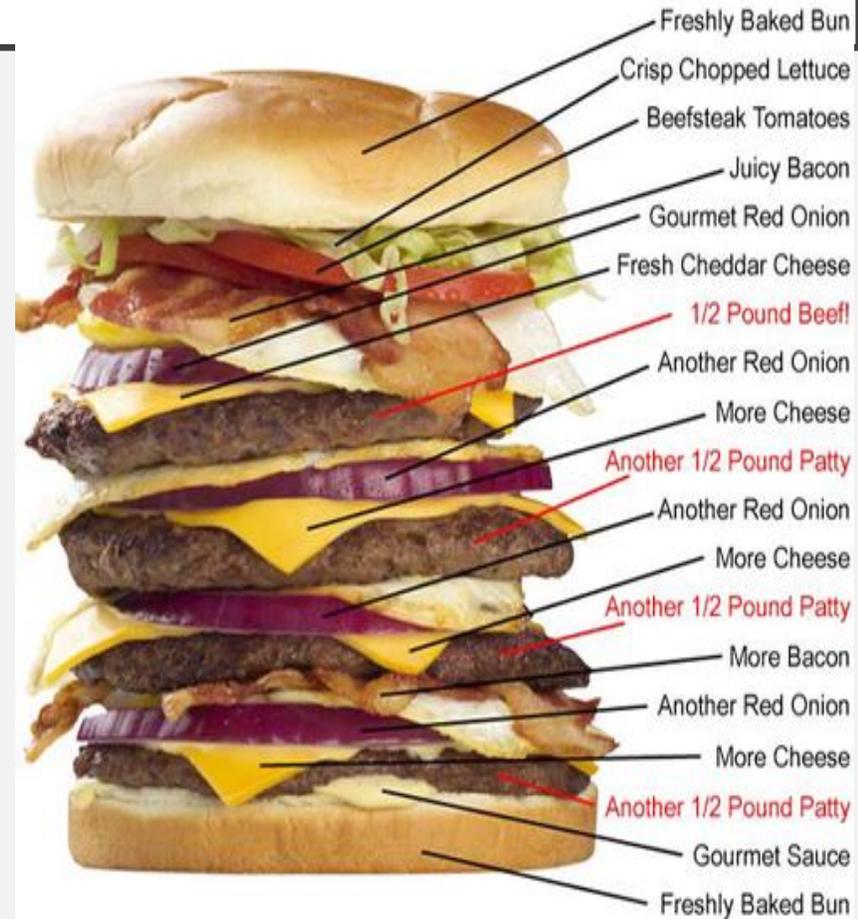
BODY PARAGRAPHS

- *Each paragraph has a purpose* that is related to the thesis or main idea of the entire paper
 - What is the main idea of this paragraph?
 - Why is this idea important?
 - Why is this paragraph placed here?

PARAGRAPH 101

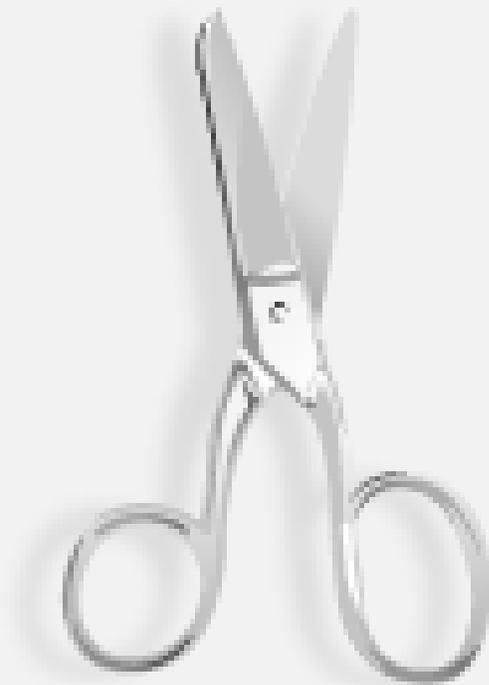
- Topic Sentence
- Evidence
- Elaboration / Analysis
- Conclusion

*ALL points must support
your topic sentence*



IMPORTANT

- ALL items in a paragraph **MUST** support the topic sentence. If something is interesting but off topic, **CUT IT**.
- Your reader never sees what you cut.
- Don't fear cutting!



INTEGRATE EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

Topic sentence

Evidence

Analysis

Conclusion Link

Paradisiac images are also a major part of what constitutes “Hawaiianess” to the tourist audience. But it is an idea of paradise that has been systematically cultivated by the commercial advertising for the islands as a destination (Cohen 1982), and by the Hollywood film and music industry (Brown 1982; Farrell 1982: 227-230; Schmitt 1988). It is a place of crystal waters, rugged lush mountains, with slopes heavy with luxuriant perfumed flowers, white sand beaches upon which seductive hula maidens and handsome beach boys stroll strumming ukuleles. It reflects strongly the image about which the anonymous visitor of the 30s, mentioned above, waxed eloquently. As Cohen has suggested, Hawaii, like other “touristic paradises” is “an inversion of the intensive, complex, highly differentiated, ‘unnatural’ modern life: [they are] . . . far-off place[s] where life is simple and toilless, nature unspoilt, the natives happy and their women free and lively” (1982:8). Hawaii is thus a place of dreams, magical romance and sexual indulgence, and of peace and perpetual arcadic happiness. A very key dimension to the understanding of touristic Hawaiianess is that the islands are a place where strangers are always warmly greeted, and where local cultural traditions are willingly and openly shared, views strongly challenged by Trask (1991, 1991/92). It is, in every sense of the word, a mythical place. It is a wonderful place for a holiday.

- Julia Harrison (1997). Museums and Touristic Expectations. *Annals of Tourism Research* 24: 23-40.

PARAGRAPHS 202

- Don't catalogue examples. Keep your argument moving forward by using effective transitions.

If most of your connecting words are *also, another, moreover, furthermore*, you may simply be listing.

Words like *however, nevertheless, despite this* advance the argument and indicate THINKING.

TRANSITIONAL WORDS

If you want to ...	Write ...
Add ideas	In addition, furthermore, also
Emphasize ideas	Above all, in particular, especially
Contrast ideas	In contrast, nevertheless, however
Show cause and effect	Therefore, thus, accordingly
Place ideas in time	First, finally, now, always, then, simultaneously
Summarize ideas	Finally, in conclusion, in other words

TRANSITIONS BETWEEN PARAGRAPHS

When introducing or concluding a paragraph:

- Tie the paragraph back to **your main point** to show your reader how it fits into the larger argument
- Use a **transitional word** to show the relationship between the paragraphs (contrasting ideas, adding ideas)
- Use a **key word** from the preceding paragraph
- Use a sentence which glances both backward to the previous paragraph and forward to this paragraph you about to write
 - e.g.. Despite the positive aspects of nursing, the challenges of the profession can have a negative impact on an individual's wellbeing.

Paradisiac images are **also a major part of what constitutes “Hawaiianess”** to the tourist audience. **But** it is an idea of **paradise** that has been systematically cultivated by the commercial advertising for the islands as a destination (Cohen 1982), and by the Hollywood film and music industry (Brown 1982; Farrell 1982: 227-230; Schmitt 1988). **It is a place of crystal waters, rugged lush mountains,** with slopes heavy with luxuriant perfumed flowers, white sand beaches upon which seductive hula maidens and handsome beach boys stroll strumming ukuleles. It reflects strongly the image about which the **anonymous visitor of the 30s, mentioned above,** waxed eloquently. As Cohen has suggested, Hawaii, like other “touristic paradises” is “an inversion of the intensive, complex, highly differentiated, ‘unnatural’ modern life: [they are] . . . far-off place[s] where life is simple and toilless, nature unspoilt, the natives happy and their women free and lively” (1982:8). Hawaii **is thus** a place of dreams, magical romance and sexual indulgence, and of peace and perpetual arcadic happiness. A very key dimension to the understanding of **touristic Hawaiianess** is that the islands are a place where strangers are always warmly greeted, and where local cultural traditions are willingly and openly shared, **views strongly challenged by Trask** (1991, 1991/92). It is, in every sense of the word, a **mythical place**. It is a wonderful place for a **holiday**.

TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE
PARAGRAPH

TRANSITIONS BETWEEN
THE PARAGRAPHS

DO NOT DROP IN A QUOTE

Working women have had competing demands on their time. “Many working mothers feel as though they face a double burden of home and work” (Mankad & Jones, 2014, p. 12).

**INSTEAD, INTEGRATE THE QUOTE AND
EXPLAIN ITS IMPORTANCE TO YOUR
ARGUMENT.**

Scholars have long noted that working women have had competing demands on their time. In their study of the hours mothers spent doing labour at home and office, Mankad and Jones (2014) noted that “many working mothers feel as though they face a double burden” (p. 12). This concept of a double burden indicates that as women have entered the work world, they have not left their domestic responsibilities behind.

MAKE THE AUTHOR'S INTENTION CLEAR

Original Source: “We cannot conclude that one event causes another just because the second follows the first. Nor can statistical correlation prove causation. But no one who has studied the data doubts that smoking is a causal factor in lung cancer.”

Inaccurate use of source: Jones claims that “we cannot conclude that one event causes another just because the second follows the first.” No wonder responsible researchers distrust statistical evidence of health risks such as smoking and lung cancer.

Make sure that you use quotations accurately and fairly!

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