NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

Writing Guide

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U.S. Naval War College

Writing Guide

Introduction

"The man who cannot say what he has to say in good English cannot have very much to say that is worth listening to." [1]

As he frequently did, Winston Churchill found an eloquent way to describe a problem. By extension, Churchill was not referring **only**[2] to **oral** communication, but also to written English. The context of Churchill's assertion conveys to the reader just how rich the language can be, for in this case the bland adjective "good" carries a powerful message. Like much excellent advice, **however** his message often goes unheeded.

At the Naval War College all students will be required to produce written documents. Each of the core curricula and elective courses key on written products as a major part of their evaluation of student efforts. Some emphasize original thought and focus less on documentation of sources; others require more formal academic presentation. But all demand thoughtful, complete, analytical written works.

Writing marks the culmination of the educational process. Good writing facilitates the expression of powerful thoughts. The true depth and breadth of learning cannot be revealed unless one can write well. Unquestionably, constructing a cogent, relevant, and persuasive essay stands as the touchstone of academic achievement and excellence.

A variety of disciplines contribute to the quality of writing--logic, research, grammar, and organizational skills, for instance. Proficiency in writing comes more naturally to some people than to others. Nevertheless, since it is a psychomotor skill, writing can be expected to improve with attention and practice.

Many graduate level students do not write competently, but they remain unaware of **their** deficiencies. Writing habits often continue uncorrected for years because writing skills are not practiced routinely, or because substandard writing fails to receive the scrutiny and criticism it

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[1] Winston S. Churchill, quoted in William Manchester, The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill: Alone 1932-1940 (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1988), 26.

[2] This, and all words formatted in boldface and underlined, carries a "usage message," the text of which can be found in Appendix A. For those who access this document electronically, the text is hyperlinked to the Appendix. (Just click on the link.) Other conventions employed in this Guide are that titles and certain abbreviations are underlined, and *italics* convey emphasis.

needs. As people rise to higher stations in life, their ineffective writing becomes increasingly burdensome, for they tend to have greater public or professional exposure. Minimal writing capability that had sufficed, perhaps for years, is no longer good enough. One can no longer camouflage poor writing by arguing that "Well, you know what I meant." Shortcomings in the skills of expression result in lost ideas and missed opportunities.

Conceptualization and organization precede putting thoughts on paper--or into a computer file. Keeping the elements of writing in the proper order and perspective helps to **ensure** a superior product. This Writing Guide seeks to remedy some of the most common lapses and errors in student written work. It cannot fully repair what was never in place or what years of misuse and under use have reinforced. Moreover, no guarantees can be offered that this Guide will improve writing. One needs only to recall the fellow who said: "I used to have the worst time remembering names; then I took that Sam Carnegie course and I've been **all right** ever since."

The objectives of this Guide are modest: first, it seeks to alert students to problems or potential problems about which they had been unaware or insufficiently sensitive; second, it offers suggestions for organizing and writing a graduate-level paper. The construction of a paper is covered initially; elements of "good" writing, in Churchillian terms, are addressed subsequently. At the Naval War College a writing assignment might require extensive research, or it might call for a "think piece." The elements of good writing apply in any event.

This publication can only apply a band-aid to what might represent severe problems for some readers. Fortunately, additional, high quality help is abundant for those with the inclination and time to seek it. Appendix B contains a bibliography of materials that can either be located in the War College Library or procured by the library staff.

The following sections deal sequentially with selecting a topic, framing a question, preparing a proposal (if necessary), crafting and executing the plan, thinking and writing, and organizing and tracking the project.

Selecting a Topic

On occasion, students will be provided with topics on which to write. In other situations, students will be required to develop subjects on their own. The question: "What shall I write about?" often becomes a most vexing one, as students try to trade off levels of prior knowledge with appetites for new subject matter. In fact, students are likely to have better ideas about good topics on which to write than they might realize. By the time they arrive in Newport, they will have had years of experience in their career specialties, and possess a wealth of understanding not duplicated by others. It is important not to discount[3] the role of intuition about the value of a particular line of inquiry. Combined with the assistance of someone familiar with what research

[3] Notice that the infinitive "to discount" is not split. In general, it is not considered good form to split infinitives. Stylistically, however, sometimes infinitives sound better when they are split. This tends to be a matter of choice. One should not routinely split infinitives, for it demonstrates a disregard for good writing and an inattention to detail.

and publication has been done on a particular subject, these "gut feelings" can be a solid starting point for profitable writing projects.

In selecting a paper topic, a good place to begin is with an *observation*. One might notice, for example, that all military airborne reconnaissance aircraft have been modifications of existing airframes; none originated from dedicated design efforts. This observation stimulates questions: Is this true? Were, in fact, all reconnaissance aircraft modifications of other types? Was it because it was less expensive, or was there no overriding requirement for a ground-up reconnaissance aircraft design? In this way, starting with an observation that evokes researchable questions sets paper writers on the proper course.

The key criterion for a topic is its *relevance*.[4] Topics might emphasize the theoretical or the practical. Their pertinence is ascertained by asking such questions as: "What are the implications of the conclusions of this essay?" "What is **affected**, and in what ways?" or "Do the answers matter, and how?"

All that might be accomplished by producing the written product would be to make the student--and perhaps the reader--better informed on the subject. There is risk, however, that such a topic will fail the "who cares?"[5] test. In that event, one should select a more relevant topic or find a way to make the effort more analytical. The payoff need not have immediate practical application. Military planners ignored Clausewitz, for example, when his theoretical arguments might have made the difference between victory and defeat.

Another criterion for a good topic is more practical: its *researchability*. One must select a topic for which the time and energy available, and the resources obtainable, are adequate to complete the investigation. Otherwise, the effort might take too much time, or it might exceed the student's skills. (Reviewing materials in a language not comfortably within the student's competence is a good example of this, as is the need to evaluate quantitative sources if the

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[4] By convention, this Guide shows emphasis by *italicizing* words or phrases. Traditionally, emphasis has been indicated in *typewritten* materials by underlining. Today, word processors offer many options for setting words apart from the rest of the text. They can be rendered in **boldface**, underlined, double underlined, CAPITALIZED, or even presented in larger size. Different word processors offer a variety of capabilities. The careful writer will adopt one *and only one* method of indicating emphasis. Don't underline to show emphasis in one case, italicize in a second, and boldface in another. How can the reader interpret the difference? In such an instance, would underlining mean stronger or weaker emphasis than boldface or italics? If a quotation contains emphasis, whether the original author or the current writer has provided the emphasis should be indicated. To reduce ambiguity, the phrases "emphasis added" or "emphasis in the original" should be used. Examples appear in footnotes 15 and 25 of this Guide. The annotation "author's emphasis," should be avoided because it is almost always ambiguous.

[5] Quotation marks are used to set off direct quotations, and also to denote unfamiliar terms, words or concepts under discussion, nicknames and epithets, or that a word or phrase is being used in some special way. The good writer knows how to use quotation marks and also how other punctuation is employed in conjunction with them.

student does not possess sufficient training in the appropriate methodology.) Certain topics are too sensitive or too highly classified to treat adequately. Bureaucratic sensitivities should not prevent a particular question from being studied, but they might limit the availability of information that those with vested interests would be willing to share.

Finally, the topic chosen must be at a level suitable to the curriculum. The faculty assumes that students have amassed significant *tactical level* expertise in their areas of specialization. The Naval War College curriculum, however, focuses on the *strategic* and *operational* levels of war. Subjects such as antisubmarine warfare search techniques for patrol aircraft or the exigencies of sweeping mines tend to be inappropriate--except as they relate *directly* to the operational or strategic levels of war. The perspective should be from the national strategic level down to that of the unified commander-in-chief (CINC)[6] or a Joint Task Force Commander conducting a major operation or a campaign, rather than from the point of view of a ship's captain or a squadron or battalion commander.

Framing the Question

When a writing effort is undertaken, asking the right question is pivotal to obtaining useful results. **It's** a good idea to always organize written work around a question. A carefully crafted question constrains the scope of the effort. Moreover, an appropriately constructed approach must elicit a substantive answer; one that can be answered with a variation of "yes" or "no" is clearly off the mark. A poorly articulated question will inevitably result in an inferior paper. Thus, rather than the "yes-no" of "Will increased defense budgets in the future result in higher force levels for the Air Force?" one might more appropriately ask: "What important factors would contribute most to increased force levels for the Air Force of twenty years in the future?"

Target the question at a known problem or issue. One should not begin by saying: "I wonder how the **principle** of surprise was employed by the Israelis in the 1967 War," unless one knows that surprise was in fact employed at the operational level and that there is more to be gleaned from that action than a mere description of it. Remember, the question should be able to pass the "so what?" test. If surprise was used at the operational level by the Israelis during the 1967 "Six Day War," for it to be of interest there must have been something worth extracting from that fact. In brief, the student should have an idea that a relevant, useful contribution will result from **his or her** efforts. Remember: start with an *observation*. Much can be learned about the 1967 War, but if the Israelis did not use surprise at the operational level, then the question is inappropriate, the inquiry has been essentially wasted, and effort should have been more

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[6] Use acronyms judiciously and sparingly. This demonstrates a convention in which the *first* time an acronym is introduced it appears in parentheses immediately following the long form. The convention is useful, and the acronym is introduced only if it will be used again later. If the acronym is not used subsequently in the paper, it makes no sense to introduce it! Notice how later in this paragraph no acronym for Joint Task Force Commander is presented because it does not appear later in the Guide. In short, do not mechanically introduce acronyms that are not employed later in the paper.

effectively invested elsewhere. In brief, fishing expeditions are discouraged, because there may be no fish to catch.

This does not mean that one must shoot one's fish in a barrel, however. The answer to the research question will ordinarily not be known before the project begins. If the question is framed properly, the output can be useful and fruitful. For example, "why" questions often point the way to beneficial research results. "Why," one might ask, "did Russia lose the Crimean War?" This was primarily a land war fought in Russia by expeditionary forces of its adversaries, far inferior in numbers and overall capability to what the Russians could field. What strategic and operational factors resulted in a Russian defeat, what might have been done by Russia to prevent the loss it suffered, and what insights might be drawn from that struggle? These typify questions **that** are appropriate, and useful.

Papers can be prepared for the purpose of discovery, verification, or synthesis. *Discovery* seeks to reveal something not previously known. Most papers at the War College are not undertaken with the purpose of discovery, **for** "discovery" does not mean something "not previously known" to the *author*, but something not previously known or recognized *in the field of study*. Unquestionably, the researcher will learn from the project, but such learning does not amount to discovery. It takes an expert in the field (or, perhaps, assistance from a knowledgeable advisor)[7] to design a research project that attempts to develop new information. This most difficult of tasks requires top flight research and analytical skills.

A paper can also *verify* (or falsify) information or ideas believed to be true. This does not mean *proving* that something is true, but seeking to determine *if* it is true. As a practical matter, the difference often lies in the author's openness to information proving the information or idea false. An investigation might be undertaken, for example, to ascertain whether decision makers in the United Kingdom knew beyond a reasonable doubt that the Argentine cruiser, General Belgrano, was outside the British Total Exclusion Zone and **proceeding** away from U.K. forces when it was torpedoed by the submarine H.M.S. Conqueror.

Synthesis stands as a third possible purpose. This goal tends to be more modest than the other two, but it is still valuable. Synthesis attempts to draw together relevant ideas and restructure them to make them more useful. Much of the literature on conventional deterrence, which relies on earlier writings on nuclear deterrence, provides an example of *synthesis*. The body of critical writings on deterrence draws heavily on nuclear deterrence theory because

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[7] To indicate something mildly parenthetical, one should ordinarily employ a pair of commas. For example: She was fair, with freckles galore, but hardly the fairest of them all. Dashes (see the discussion of hyphens and dashes in the next footnote) indicate an insertion more strongly parenthetical than commas would convey: She was fair--some would say beautiful--but hardly the fairest of them all. Parentheses are the strongest form of punctuation in this instance: She was fair, but hardly the fairest of them all (her sister was even more beautiful). Judgment should prevail.

Employ square brackets "[ ]" in the text for necessary interruptions by the writer. For example, the term "sic" is often inserted within brackets in a quotation to indicate that the writer recognizes an error in the quote. Thus, "The Declaration of Independence was signed on July 3, 1784 [sic]…." This technique should be used sparingly.

authors argued that it was of the highest priority to deter nuclear warfare, and **thus** they wanted to understand deterrence thoroughly. Once nuclear deterrence seemed stable and fairly well articulated, investigators turned to conventional deterrence, but tapped earlier, in-depth works on nuclear deterrence as the foundation for their ideas. Similarly, writings of early naval strategists could be employed for their insights into current problems. Good synthesis requires creativity on the part of writers.

The three purposes discussed above comprise the major kinds of efforts involved in writing academic papers. Yet, the unsuspecting can fall into a variety of potential traps. The following paragraphs address four: *backstopping*, *cheerleading*, *data dredging*, and *patron massaging*.

"Political language…is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind."[8]

Backstopping refers to attempts to rationalize and justify conclusions reached without the benefit of objective study. Those who have worked in the Pentagon will recognize this approach. Indeed, many "studies" are designed to demonstrate the validity of predetermined judgments and, consequently, are blind to contrary information that might turn up. The utility and integrity of this approach are both questionable. For example, a study designed to prove that a particular weapons program is valuable would be fraudulent from the outset if the conclusion were known in advance. Conclusions must be based on the results of evidence and analysis. On the other hand, a study that takes as a premise that a certain weapons system will be available and asks how it might be used to optimum advantage is legitimate. The middle case between these extremes is a study that admits at the outset that it is a "lawyer's brief" (or an OP-ED piece) designed to make a strong case for a certain conclusion, but does not pretend to be objective about it. Although students often find writing this kind of an advocacy essay attractive and enjoyable, it does not ordinarily satisfy curriculum requirements. Those who are wise will avoid this path.

Cheerleading is closely related to backstopping. It seeks to convince, but does not even attempt a scholarly pretense. Essays that merely repeat current buzz words or trendy doctrines might buoy the spirits of their proponents, but they should not be confused with objective writing. A "hatchet job"--[9]in which strong rhetoric without supporting evidence, analysis, and documentation is employed to denigrate a particular approach--is the opposite of cheerleading. It is equally unacceptable.

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[8] George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," in Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, eds., The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell: In Front of Your Nose, 1945-1950, Vol. IV (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 139.

[9] The dash (--) or (–) and the hyphen (-) are distinctly different marks of punctuation. Using a hyphen when a dash is appropriate can be distracting to the reader, and often misleading. Note that in word processing, the dash is rendered by typing two hyphens (--), or if the word processor has the capability, inserting the so-called "em" dash (–). When it is used--as in this case to indicate a strongly parenthetical insertion--no spaces separate the dash from the other words in the sentence.

Those who gather together large amounts of data and then try to determine what it means are guilty of the third error: *data dredging.* Students should collect data only to underwrite *focused* analysis. Frame the question *before* building the database to support the answer. If data is unrelated to the question, or if the question is conceived based upon the available data, the results will necessarily be flawed. This is true of qualitative data as well; the weight of multiple quotations that do not directly address the research question is as useless as a storm of charts, graphs, and numerical tables.[10] Selected quotations must address the research question directly. If a quotation is off the mark, it can dilute and in some cases negate an analytical effort. Data collection for the sake of data collection is not a useful pastime, and does not support the goals of the effort. The data, quantitative or verbal, must relate directly to the question.

Patron massaging--staking a position solely in order to curry favor--also has no place in serious academic work. A presentation skewed to advocate a particular viewpoint is generally transparent and unpersuasive. Any similarity between this and good scholarship tends to be coincidental, for the products tend to be second-rate.

The course or elective syllabus should be considered a resource to assist in framing project questions, insofar as the reference and supplementary readings for each lesson **constitute** signposts pointing the way for additional material amplifying that particular lesson. Professional journals such as the Naval War College Review, Military Review, The Marine Corps Gazette, Joint Force Quarterly, and Airpower Journal can also provide stimulus for questions.[11] In

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[10] This is a very common construction--one in which a *series* of coordinate elements appears. Two important issues arise. First, in series that contain three or more elements, place a comma after each of the elements except the last. (Bill, Tom, and Rocky slashed the tires.) If one is consistent in this, confusion can often be avoided. It seems far better to avoid ambiguity and confusion than to fight the convention. Here are three situations when the omission of the final comma leads to problems: "*I remember the gleam of the rain-washed pavement, the distant clatter of streetcars, the garlicky aroma wafting from the restaurant downstairs and the simple dress she wore* [where, again, does the aroma originate?]*…Skillin and Gay, Fowler and Strunk and White.* [who is with whom?]" Edward D. Johnson, The Handbook of Good English, revised and updated (New York: Facts on File, 1991), 2-6, 2-7. Finally, "The $1 million estate was to be divided among Don, Tom, Janet, and Nancy." With three commas, there are four parts. With two commas, there are three parts. If you were Janet or Nancy, which would you prefer?

Second, ensure that the elements are *parallel* in meaning and construction. For example, "*He has either gone swimming, or someone has taken him sailing* is faulty parallelism--and faulty grammar--because the second element is not a second predicate sharing the subject *He* with the first predicate, but an independent clause with its own subject, *someone*. The sentence can be made grammatically correct by changing the position of *either*: *Either he has gone swimming or someone has taken him sailing*." Ibid, 1-5.

Yes, this is tricky. For those who feel uncomfortable with the notion of parallelism, however, the subject merits additional study. Avoiding faulty parallelism is one of the hallmarks of high quality writing.

[11] These, and a large number of other journals of primary interest to writers on military subjects, are indexed in the especially useful Air University Index to Military Periodicals. The Index can

addition, each of the War Colleges publishes occasional papers. These tend to be longer in length than the articles appearing in the journals, but they should not be overlooked as potential lodes of ideas to be mined. Do not hesitate to try out ideas on seminar moderators or other faculty members. They can provide a quick check on whether a question is appropriate and researchable, and if it can be treated adequately within the paper's prescribed length.

Whether a paper is prepared for a seminar, an elective, or for prize competition, one should consider engaging the services of an advisor. With a topic already selected, look for a faculty member in one of the core curriculum areas--or, perhaps, someone from the Center for Naval Warfare Studies--to act as advisor. Pick a faculty member with expertise in the topic area; and, given a choice, favor those in the department for which the paper is being written. The advisor can assist in:

- composing the question and the proposal,
- selecting methodologies,
- drawing up the plan,
- collecting bibliographic material, and
- differentiating between experts and quacks in the field.

Advisors can provide the **very** important service of a thoughtful, critical proofreading. Advisors can dispense sanity checks, but they *cannot* evaluate (grade) papers. Evaluation is the function of the seminar moderators, electives presenters, and prize committees. Advisors cannot usurp the evaluators' prerogatives or responsibilities, and no one would want them to. Used intelligently, advisors can help ensure that a project stays on track, and they can provide some streamlining. The Naval War College recommends the use of advisors to assist in preparing papers--either within or outside of the curriculum.

Concentrate on the *question*. Invest substantial time and energy in its selection and presentation. Its importance cannot be overemphasized. Effort expended in the formulation stages of the project will pay high dividends later. Likewise, a disorganized, unfocused start will almost certainly result in a substandard product.

Preparing the Proposal

Often, a formal proposal will be required for the paper. It is intended to help students organize their efforts to:[12]

- select an appropriate topic,
- compose the question,

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be accessed through the War College library website. On the internet, the site http://www.SearchMil.com can be particularly useful.

[12] A list of bullets is often a forceful way to present a series of items in a clear, concise way. Ensure that each bullet tracks grammatically from the introductory statement.

- identify the manner in which the topic will be approached,
- evaluate the relevance of the effort,
- describe the methodology,
- craft a detailed outline, and
- list the working bibliography.

The proposal typically consists of three parts: a statement of the issue and questions to be addressed, a detailed outline of the proposed paper, and a preliminary bibliography. The proposal is presented by the student to the grading team at an arranged meeting. This is ordinarily labeled a "tutorial" session, for its purpose is to assist the student in ensuring that the paper will be correctly focused and scoped. As appropriate, the grading team will help to hone the question(s) to be addressed, guide the student to additional sources of information, or suggest alternative approaches.

The outline should be prepared with thought and care. Correctly framed, the outline can act both as an organizing tool and as a guide for writing the paper. Investment of effort in the outline pays high dividends. The relationship between time spent refining the outline--ensuring its completeness and richness, thinking through its flow and logic, and using it to structure research--and the success of the overall effort is usually close and direct. Construct an outline in as great detail as possible, and then present it in its top two or three levels to the grading team.

The student should expect the grading team members to ask some penetrating questions about topic selection, the proposed question, the outline, the research plan, and the selection of an advisor. They will probably discuss whether the proposed effort can be accomplished within a reasonable time budget and prescribed length. Team members will help ensure that the approach and methodology are sound, and offer suggestions as appropriate. In addition, they will review the outline to ensure that it accurately represents the topic, that the question will be addressed directly, and that it follows the format of the Style Manual and Classification Guide.[13] As necessary, the team may require that the proposal be redrafted and resubmitted in a follow-on tutorial.

Presentation and acceptance of the proposal results in an informal contract between the grading team and the student. The student has "contracted" to undertake the requisite research, thinking, and writing of the paper in accordance with the proposal. The grading team has reached an understanding with the student that the proposal--properly executed--should yield an acceptable paper.

Some course and electives will opt to approach this issue differently than outlined here. The essential points, however, will still apply. Selecting the right topic, framing the question to be addressed, organizing the effort, determining the methodology to be used, and ensuring that the project is relevant will all be important, regardless of the details of how a project is framed and agreed to.

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[13] The Naval War College Style Manual and Classification Guide contains valuable information on how to format a paper, create notes (either footnotes or endnotes) and bibliographies, and prepare classified information for inclusion.

Crafting and Executing the Plan

Given an agreed topic and question, the student then seeks to gather data, or evidence. Analysis and evaluation takes place concurrently with this process. Many sources can be tapped, primary among which are:

(1) War College Sources. The most obvious of these is the library. The holdings in many likely research areas are excellent, and knowledgeable professionals stand ready to assist students in all phases of their projects. The War College research librarians are highly trained, but often underutilized, professionals who can assist materially in selecting topics and identifying and retrieving useful sources. They can help determine how difficult a topic will be on which to find relevant information, and what similar studies have been performed in the past.

In addition to books and periodicals, there are congressional materials, student reports, specialized indexes, **and so forth**. The library also provides such services as inter-library loans and computerized searches of databases. Do not ignore the classified library[14] and the Naval Historical Collection, if these are relevant. For some projects the Naval Operational Intelligence Center and the Naval War College Security Office may be helpful as well. Of course, access portals to the internet are also available in the library.

An approach not to be overlooked is the "Delphi technique": find an "oracle" and ask pertinent questions. The halls abound with genuine experts on any number of interesting and relevant topics. Locate one or more of these masters, find out what he or she knows about the area of interest, and ask who else should be queried and what sources should be consulted. Get into the network of people with thoughts on the topic, and pick their brains. Do not confuse this with farming out the research to more knowledgeable people; this marks only the beginning of research, not the end.

(2) Other sources. Personal contacts outside the Newport area can often be useful as sources of ideas and information. This is not to recommend procuring "bootleg" copies of documents or undertaking other irregular or inappropriate activities, but these individuals can often provide valuable ideas to a student about what is worth doing and what information is relevant.

(3) Formal Interviews can be useful if they are well planned and undertaken with an awareness of the perspective of the subject interviewed. If a knowledgeable source is available and willing to participate, take the time to plan the interview carefully. This will make the time spent more productive and show consideration for the interviewee. Remember, an interview is a favor to the

[14] The classified library holds many unclassified publications as well as all classified ones. It should be considered an important resource for information. Choosing to write a classified paper will complicate the writing process. Guidelines for working with classified papers can be found in the Style Manual and Classification Guide.

researcher. After an interview, try to assess the accuracy and completeness of the provided information. It is important to ensure that interview material is used accurately, of course. Considerate interviewers will remember to send a note of thanks to their subjects, and perhaps to include or to promise a copy of the product that results.

(4) Gaming offers an excellent, but infrequently used, technique for testing hypotheses. Conclusions, of course, will be affected greatly by the assumptions and artificialities of the game. Gaming neither produces verifiable results, nor can it validate concepts. Game insights can certainly be suggestive, however, and they often provide a gold mine of hypotheses for **further** testing. Seek advice from an expert war gamer before trying to interpret what a particular game conveys.

Make a plan: the order in which the various tasks will be undertaken, how notes and other materials will be compiled and organized, and where and how the work will be accomplished can make a significant difference. Then--and this is a key step--decide when in the chain of events the gathering of evidence must be terminated. Almost all subjects, no matter how carefully constrained, will support far more amassing of data than time will be available to accomplish. The process of compiling evidence, moreover, tends to be insidious. Most people say to themselves, "I'll just follow this one more **lead**, then I'll start to write the paper." Of course, "one more" inevitably spawns "one more," and, inadvertently, the analytical and writing segments of the project are short-changed. Endeavor to set and stick to a cut-off date for the leg-work in order to preserve adequate time to think and write. Following the Check List, Appendix C, will help avert this problem. The time line suggested in the check list has cut off for data gathering no later than the two-thirds point in the project's life. This leaves one-third of the time for analysis and writing.

Use the outline that was prepared for the paper proposal to aid in conducting your work systematically, but don't allow the outline to petrify. Work the outline as a living document--continually altering the order of presentation, adding and deleting topics, digging deeper for meaning and explanation, and identifying new areas for inquiry and analysis. Relate note taking directly to the outline. When it comes time to write, all that will need to be done is to stitch the facts and arguments of the outline together with some carefully constructed prose.

Skillfully executed note taking, abetted by a well-considered plan, will make the thinking and writing phases of the paper proceed much more smoothly. Because errors creep into papers from inaccurate or careless note taking, legible, accurate, complete, and understandable notes are a must. Annotate raw notes with an evaluation of the material that has been accessed.

Take care that direct quotations are identified as such, and that paraphrased material is also flagged. Failure to attribute words or thoughts to their proper author is *plagiarism*. In academia, where thoughts constitute the coin of the realm, appropriating another's ideas without attribution stands among the most severe of offenses. At the Naval War College, as in other graduate level institutions, it can even result in expulsion.

Most cases of plagiarism are unintended. A paraphrase of another's words may be too close to the original; a direct quotation should be used instead. Incomplete notes taken during the information-gathering stage may not have identified the author or work adequately, or may not have indicated that extracted information was actually a quotation from the source. Exercise care: the standards are stricter than one might think, and accurate, complete note taking is crucial.

Inadvertent or not, plagiarism is unacceptable. "*Never* present someone else's language, ideas, or information in such a way that it might be mistaken for your own."[15] Footnoting is necessary, therefore, not only when someone else's *words* are quoted, but also whenever someone else's *ideas* are being used.[16] The rule is straightforward: when in doubt, footnote.

Equally important, appreciate the difference between primary and secondary sources, and treat them accordingly in the analysis. Whether a source is primary or secondary depends on the subject under investigation.[17] For example, if the subject is how the Carter administration dealt with the question of procurement for the military, primary sources would consist of speeches, testimony, and written products of Carter administration members on the subject. A secondary source in this example would be a book by an academic or an article by a military officer comparing the approaches of the Carter and other administrations. Primary sources in general carry greater credibility than secondary sources. Sometimes, however, especially in the case of autobiographies, primary sources can contain large amounts of bias.

Finally, all sources were not created equal. One of the purposes of citation--of documenting in a paper the source of the information presented--is to reveal to the reader the origin of the information. Some citations have greater intrinsic merit than others. Accordingly, a quotation that was drawn from an article by an acknowledged expert in the field published in a respected professional journal would naturally carry more weight than an excerpt from an unpublished seminar paper by a graduate student. Likewise, a first-hand account of an event quoted from a first-class newspaper would be preferred to one from a tabloid or the newsletter of some interest group. Since the reader will judge the veracity and the credibility of the information provided by the strength of the sources, it is preferable to use the best source one can in presenting the results of research. Special care must be taken with materials found on the internet. For example, if one finds an article on the internet purportedly written by the

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[15] Michael Meyer, The Little, Brown Guide to Writing Research Papers, 2d ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 97 [Emphasis added].

[16] All papers must be *original*. A paper that contains ideas or material previously submitted by the student to any other organization for any purpose, or one that borrows substantially from a previously submitted paper is not plagiarism, but it is *misrepresentation*. Neither plagiarism nor misrepresentation will be tolerated at the Naval War College.

[17] Primary sources: "[are] materials that constitute the original source of information for your topic.…A familiarity with the primary sources of your topic will allow you to assess the accuracy and value of your *secondary* sources.…In short, *commentaries* and *interpretations* about people, events, works of art, statistics, or scientific data are secondary sources that should be evaluated on the basis of how well they describe and elucidate the primary sources they seek to explain." Meyer, Little, Brown Guide, 56 [Emphasis in the original].

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, but not published in a recognized professional journal, how does one know that it is authentic? Moreover, how can one verify that it has not been altered? This is a difficult problem, but one that can be ameliorated by not straying far from official or well recognized sources, especially on the internet. In any event, careful documentation renders transparent the source of the information so that the readers can make independent evaluations of authenticity and value.

Thinking and Writing

"Everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be said can be said clearly."[18]

Thinking about the paper begins and ends by considering the audience for the paper. At whom is it directed? Is the paper intended only the seminar moderators only, or is a broader audience the target? Are there experts in the field who need to be persuaded to change their minds about the topic, or perhaps to be introduced to a new way of thinking about it? Has the subject been approached as, perhaps, a staff study that one might perform working on the staff of a CINC? Is the essay suitable to compete for one of the War College writing awards?[19] Does the paper appear suitable for publication in a professional journal?

If gathering information, reading source material, and discussing the project extends too deeply into the allowed time for accomplishment, the thinking and writing portions of the project will be foreshortened and, necessarily, will suffer. This, unfortunately, is often the case. Generally, compressing the thinking or writing phases results in a disappointing paper that reconfirms the common wisdom, merely tacks a series of quotations together with flimsy bridging mortar, or, at worst, commits serious errors. The thinking phase should be integrated with the research and writing phases, of course, but it must be undertaken deliberately. Papers on which little thought has been expended are easy to recognize.

The thinking and writing phase is the place to pull everything together, analyze the collected data, and consider how it will be presented most effectively. Whether they emphasize reference to a variety of sources or are keyed to the required course materials, all papers will require a succession of logical steps. First, they will set forth clearly the question addressed. Second, they will provide a thesis. Third, they will marshal evidence to support the thesis. Fourth, they will consider and address, explicitly or implicitly, counter-arguments or weaknesses in the thesis and the supporting evidence. Finally, they will present this material in a clear, well-organized way. The result will be to have answered the question, while offering compelling, persuasive, factual evidence in a well thought-out analytical approach.

In general, *unsubstantiated* student beliefs and opinions are inappropriate. Thus, students should not write: "I believe the Japanese made a mistake in the way they approached the planning for the Midway operation." Instead, write: "The evidence suggests that the Japanese

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[18] Ludwig Wittgenstein, quoted in Joseph M. Williams, Style: Toward Clarity and Grace, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), xviii.

[19] See the Naval War College Standard Organization and Regulations Manual, Appendix A, Section 1, "Awards."

made a mistake in the way they approached the planning for the Midway operation. For example, …." Likewise, the statement: "Force planners of 2020 will have to worry about protecting operations to extract resources from the seabed under the high seas from enemy attack," would not be fitting unless it had been preceded by the presentation of a body of expert opinion or evidence, or there was some clear analytical or experiential basis for such assertions. Strunk and White contend:

> Unless there is a good reason for its being there, do not inject opinion into a piece of writing. We all have opinions about almost everything, and the temptation to toss them in is great. To air one's views gratuitously, however, is to imply that the demand for them is brisk, which may not be the case, and which, in any event, may not be relevant to the discussion.[20]

This does not mean that students cannot exercise expert opinion or reach conclusions. A student who had been a mine warfare planner for Desert Storm, for example, could quite appropriately offer an opinion about the mine warfare planning for Operation Chromite, the attack on Inchon in the Korean War. When students reach conclusions and express opinions, they must be *informed* conclusions and opinions, and the basis for reaching them must be demonstrated in the paper. For example, after setting forth the pros and cons, and citing experts about placing a Joint Force Air Component Commander on board a large amphibious vessel for conducting a particular major operation, one might conclude that the weight of evidence favored locating it afloat.

To the extent the project outline was carefully executed, the organization of the paper will be predetermined and sound. An outstanding outline should provide strong support for a correspondingly well organized paper. *Both* organization and presentation are important; don't take either for granted. Some argue that Arny's Law:

Form Is Substance

constitutes the rule. Pay attention to both, but do not mistake one for the other.

Likewise, do not take writing the paper for granted. Ideas do not amount to much unless they are presented accurately, cogently, and persuasively. Write **literally**. The reader has the expectation that you mean everything you write. Thus, it would not be a good idea to write: "It would take a ton of ordnance delivered on the targeted launcher to neutralize it," unless you literally mean 2,000 pounds. If the readers believes that you are writing figuratively rather than literally, then they must decide in each and every instance whether or not to believe what they read, for the question keeps arising. Also, avoid **figures of speech** unless you know exactly what you are doing. No matter how solid the research and analysis, even great ideas packaged in a semi-literate or an awkward writing style will have difficulty garnering respect.

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[20] William Strunk, Jr., with revisions, an introduction, and a chapter on writing by E.B. White, The Elements of Style, 3d ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), 80.

Be sure to include a significant amount of time in the writing phase for *rewriting*. Once the paper has been completely written, placed in proper format, proofread for spelling and writing errors, and stapled together, it has attained the level of "first draft." First drafts are not suitable for graduate-level submission--particularly in the computer age when rewriting can be so readily **accommodated**. Accordingly, set aside ample time to review and revise each sentence, paragraph, and section.

"To the vexation of some of his students, Nimitz corrected and graded their papers for English composition as well as for facts.[21]

Use the Naval War College Style Manual and Classification Guide to format the paper. That document contains procedures and examples to assist in the proper presentation of text on the page (**e.g.**, margin size, placement of page numbers, indentation), preparing footnotes and bibliography, affixing security markings, submitting the paper for processing, and correctly depositing student and advanced research papers.

Here are some quick tips and suggestions designed to help writers polish their essays:

- Write with a dictionary and a thesaurus literally at your elbow.
- Own and *use* one or more of the manuals listed in Appendix B.
- Write with nouns and verbs; prefer the active to the **passive voice**.
- Keep the approach and style fresh;[22] use adverbs and adjectives sparingly, for only then will they have maximum impact.
- Employ the parts of speech correctly,[23] for it is true: "verbing weirds language."

Calvin and Hobbes. ©1993, Waterson. Reprinted with permission of Universal Press Syndicate. All rights reserved.

[21] E.B. Potter, Nimitz (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1976), 176.

[22] A "fresh" style is not repetitious, except deliberately for effect. Writers often find it difficult to spot repetition in their own writing, so an intelligent proofreader should be engaged to help eliminate this problem. The practitioner of a fresh style purges unnecessary words, and relies on the power parts of speech (verbs and nouns) rather than the embroidery (adjectives and adverbs).

[23] Mountains of help are available to those who need it and are willing to seek it. The bibliography to this guide offers only a small sample of what is easily attainable.

- Avoid jargon, cliches, acronyms, and trendy words and phrases.[24]
- Don't dangle modifiers.[25]
- Don't leave questions unanswered.[26]
- Ensure that pronouns agree with their antecedents, elements in series are parallel, and punctuation is flawless.
- Refrain from using the first person ("I," "me," or "we"), and from changing point of view within the paper.[27]

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[24] For example, careful writers never use "hopefully" to mean "I hope," even though such usage is widespread in the vernacular. Likewise, neither "attrit" nor "attrite" have gained full acceptance as verb forms of the noun "attrition." Nor have "impact" and "liase" gained approval by usage experts in the role of transitive verbs. For example, procurement of the B-2 bomber does not "impact" national strategy. Instead, it "has an impact on" national strategy. As another example, lawyers seem to have an affinity for juxtaposing two words with a backslash, particularly favoring *and/or*. Such usage has nothing to recommend it and it gives the impression that the work is jargon-riddled.

Because English language usage is dynamic, and because daily oral usage often diverges from accepted writing practices, solecisms such as these can be difficult to identify. This Guide seeks, among other things, to raise awareness of some of the disjunctures between the vernacular and good writing practices. So do not follow the contemporary wisdom about "writing as one speaks." Instead, write as you *think*.

[25] These often produce laughter, but in serious writing they should do the opposite. Here's an example: *"Being made of stone,* the builder expected it to stand for a century." To which the author of the book on writing appended: "(They called him Old Stoneface, no doubt.)" Hans P. Guth, Words and Ideas, 3d ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1969), 528 [Emphasis in the original.] Note that participles are usually the dangling culprits, but any modifier can be misplaced. Here's a non-participial example: "I feel *subconsciously* Hamlet wanted to die. (Are you talking about *your* subconscious feelings--or Hamlet's?)" Ibid, [Emphasis in the original.] Indeed, "Danglers are a flouting of clear, logical word order." Theodore M. Bernstein, The Careful Writer (New York: Atheneum, 1965), 129.

[26] Sometimes an author asks questions and then forgets to return to them. Good writers institute safeguards to ensure that this--and the related problem of making promises and then not fulfilling them--does not burden their written products. After all, it's a self-inflicted wound.

[27] In general, unless invited to do otherwise, write in the "third person omniscient." This means that in an analytical paper the first person (*I, we, us*) and the second person (*you*) are suppressed in favor of the third person (*he, she, it, one, they*). Many reasons argue for doing it this way, not the least of which is to permit the author to stand off from the work and not be personally encumbered by its argument, and to avoid the appearance of claiming to be an expert on the subject. Using the first person places one in a position of advocacy rather than in a more neutral, objective stance as analyst. The first person plural can be disorienting to the reader. For example, in the sentence: "We know that the fall of the Berlin Wall was a major event in the breakup of the Soviet Union," who is the "we"? Is it all Westerners, all Germans, Germans and Americans, members of NATO, the writer and the reader, all students at the war college? Just who? And, who the "we" is can change from sentence to sentence. Finally, graduate level papers are rarely a registration of the student's opinions on a subject. Therefore, to write "I

- Understand how to use the **apostrophe** and the **ellipsis**.
- Be leery of homonyms (e.g., *role* model versus *roll* model), words that sound alike (e.g., tenets and tenants, dominate and dominant, lose and loose, determinate and determinant), and words that are often unartfully used (e.g. infer and imply).
- Avoid preaching. Over use of the verb "must" leaves an impression of arrogance.[28]
- Quote seldom and briefly.[29] Emphasize primary sources as much as possible, and avoid hearsay.

Qualms and questions about style can be fairly easily resolved. As Casey Stengel said, "You could look it up."[30]

Employ concepts from the curricula correctly. Appreciate how discouraging it is for the grader when the student incorrectly uses concepts taught in the course. Consider how this will influence the evaluation of a paper.

Be careful about challenging the reader unnecessarily. Consider the following: "There are only three ways to skin a cat." Or, "Mines have never succeeded in stopping invading forces, whether from sea or land." These encourage the reader to offer counter-examples. But, how about: "Among the many ways to skin a cat, three stand out as the most effective."? This is better, for the writer will presumably then present evidence to support his claim of effectiveness. Absolutes and strong assertions make for powerful writing; just make sure the ground is solid before using them.

Documentation (in the form of footnotes or end notes) is an important part of a research paper. Notes come in two varieties: *source* notes and *explanatory* notes. The former documents a location for a quotation or idea, and it conforms to a standard style. The latter enlarges on a

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believe that the Army should develop a new tank gun," lends no value or authority to a paper unless the writer happens to be a recognized expert on development of tank guns. Thus, a dispassionate analytical paper rarely assumes the first person as a point of view. Instead, let the evidence speak for itself, as in: "The material presented clearly indicates that the Army should develop a new tank gun."

[28] This usually goes something like: "The Joint Chiefs of Staff must change the doctrine to…" Or, "The Army must invest more heavily in…"

[29] Employ citations to elaborate an important point or to bring expert references to bear on the analysis. An acceptable paper must have documentation from one's own data collection. A first-rate paper will contain, on average, no more than two citations per page of text. Stitching together quotation after quotation with a minimum of analysis will not find favor with the grader. Quotations exceeding fifty words of text should be single-spaced and indented; quotations stretching beyond one paragraph in length should be rare.

[30] Quoted in Lee Green, Sportswit (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), 63. Appendix B of this Guide offers a jump start to those who would “look it up.”

textual point, but the explanation is not important enough to disrupt the flow of the text. Consult the Style Manual and Classification Guide to determine how notes should appear in the paper.

Establish the credibility of all sources if there is any possibility of a question. One of the reasons for documentation is to present *authority* for the textual material.[31] As was noted earlier, references are not equal. Experts quoted from very reliable--and checkable--sources are to be preferred to, for example, unpublished works or internet citations. Feeble documentation, such as: "Bushwhack and Cypher say: 'Patton was the most effective leader of the Twentieth Century,'" challenges the reader to ask: Who are Bushwhack and Cypher? And, why should I care what they say? In brief, readers of papers are attuned to the quality of the sources presented.

Document items in the paper when the material is not considered common knowledge, or so that correct attribution is given to their authors. "Common knowledge" refers to facts or observations that appear in a multiplicity of sources and can be expected to be known both to the writer and to anticipated readers. Thus, it is appropriate *not* to document in a Naval War College paper a statement to the effect that the moon is a major determinant of tides, the Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, or Richard M. Nixon was President[32] of the **United States** from 1969 to 1974. The "anticipated reader" qualification means that some items would be common knowledge for certain readers, but for others they must be documented. This, in the final analysis, is a matter for the exercise of judgment: keep the recipient of the paper firmly in the forefront of your thoughts!

Do not play fast and loose with facts. As Barzun puts it: "The first virtue required is accuracy…next comes the love of order….honesty might be the best policy, but in research it is the only one."[33] The tolerance for errors of fact in graduate-level papers is *zero*. Errors in fact cast a mantle of suspicion over the entire work. The readers ask themselves: "If this is incorrect, and I know it, how much of the remainder is to be believed?" Such a loss of credibility could be devastating. Be particularly careful when drawing inferences from statistical, graphical, or tabular data. Remember the adage: "Figures lie, and liars figure." Moreover, the paper should

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[31] According to Brown and Duguid: "Documents not only serve to make information but also to warrant it--to give it validity….information has trouble, as we all do, testifying on its own behalf. Its only recourse in the face of doubt is to add more information. Yet people do not add much to their credibility by insisting 'I'm telling the truth.' Nor does it help much to write 'good' on the face of a check." John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid, The Social Life of Information (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2000), 187.

[32] While some would call it niggling, and perhaps anachronistic, in formal writing it is courteous to refer to people by their titles. The convention of not using titles probably arose with newspapers--The Washington Post is a good example of a paper that employs last names alone once a subject has been identified. Identifying presidents of the United States by their last name alone started with Richard Nixon. Before that time, one rarely heard a president referred to by his last name alone, because it could be interpreted as a sign of disrespect. It is better, even when referring to unsavory characters, to maintain formality in address in academic writing. The New York Times, for example, follows this convention.

[33] Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, The Modern Researcher. 5th. ed. (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 44-45.

contain *no* spelling or typographical errors. While this seems picky, such errors **imply** commitment of the *Hallmark Error*:

You Didn't Care Enough
To Send
Your Very Best

Organizing and Tracking the Project

Whether a "think piece" or a research paper, the submission should be well organized. A straightforward, simple organizational scheme will help orient the reader and add to the paper's impact. So, the introductory material should provide the "what and why" of the effort, and it might foreshadow the paper's conclusions. It should be short--no more than *15* percent of the paper's total length.

The main part of the essay should have some logic to underwrite its organization. That is, it should proceed chronologically, in the form of a dialectical argument (thesis, antithesis, synthesis), or in some other sensible--but deliberate--fashion. At the end of this section readers should not feel that they had somehow staggered through a crazy quilt of disjointed thoughts lacking any thread of continuity. Subdivisions might be usefully employed to reinforce the paper's organization and assist the reader's comprehension. Once again, the paper's outline stands out as a ready-made organizational road map.

The final part of the paper frequently offers a brief summary of the paper's thesis and findings, draws conclusions, and, as appropriate, makes recommendations. It should restate the paper's significance and relevance. Lessons and recommendations are welcome, but they are not mandatory. Footnotes should appear only rarely in the concluding section. Frequently students introduce new ideas or reach conclusions in this section that do not flow from the analysis or data presented. Guard against this commonplace error.

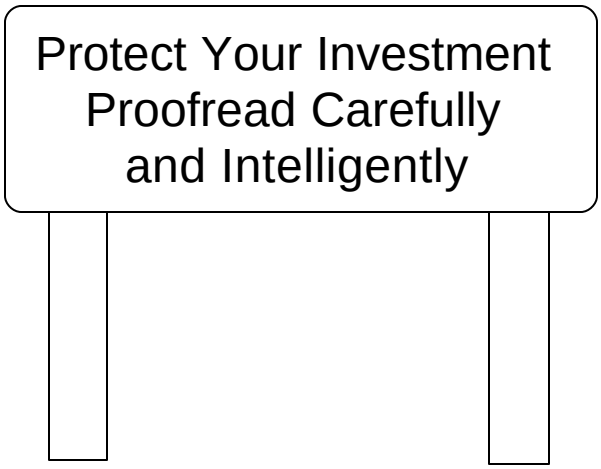
Heed the length limitations imposed on the paper. Failure to do so says much about the paper, little of which tends to be favorable.

If an abstract is required, do not slight it. It should concisely provide the reader with the paper's premises, approach, and findings. A well constructed abstract will summarize the paper and at the same time encourage the reader to delve into it more deeply. Do not render the abstract in a style that differs from the main paper. It should be written from the same point of view as the essay it describes. Thus, it should not say "This paper analyzes the operational

insights that can be gained from the Battle of Midway," but "Research and analysis revealed six insights from the Battle of Midway:…"[34]

Reading follows writing. While this seems self-evident and elementary, a shocking number of papers are submitted without having been carefully proofread. Engage an outside reviewer at some point late in the drafting process to read the paper carefully and critically. This reader must be knowledgeable on the subject so that *substantive* comments will be forthcoming. In addition--as noted earlier, but worthy of repetition and emphasis--prior to submission the paper must be rigorously checked for spelling and typographical errors. Almost all computer word processors have useful spell-checking routines. Many grammar-checkers are also available. While these aids to the mechanics of writing should be used if they are available, they do not eliminate the need for careful proofreading.

It is also a good idea to take the time to read the paper in its entirety aloud. If the reading process unearths areas that are troublesome, change them. If the author of the paper is not entirely satisfied with it, can the evaluators be expected to love it?



In some instances, the paper will be turned into a briefing, with or without graphic aids.[35] Remember, a briefing must be more sharply drawn than a paper, because the audience does not have the ability to review the information presented in the same way. Briefings must be carefully prepared and rehearsed so that incorrect impressions are not conveyed. Briefing charts, if they are used, should be crisp and uncluttered. They should include only as many words as the briefer wants the audience to remember. The minimum guidelines are: use as few words as

[34] The Naval War College Style Manual and Classification Guide contains additional information on writing abstracts.

[35] An excellent resource for briefings is: RAND, Guidelines for Preparing Briefings, Published by the Communications Consulting Group and Publications Department (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996).

necessary; pictures are better than words; use clean (sans-serif) fonts[36] in sizes that do not provide an eye test for the audience. The presentation should use the slides for organization and to drive points home. No viewers of slide presentations like to have slides read to them--life is just too short for that, they can read faster themselves.

For many students, writing a paper represents an extraordinary event in their lives. Graduate-level papers written at the Naval War College might well be the most sustained, intensive writing experience a class member will ever undertake. Without prior experience, the student might be unable to judge the appropriate tempo for the project. Appendix C provides some tracking guidance to help the concerned student work through the process of preparing and submitting a lengthy paper.

Conclusion

"Good pitching will always stop good hitting, and vice versa."[37]

Faculty experience confirms that many students require structured guidance and assistance in the preparation of their Naval War College papers. Even the best students can be helped to become better writers and thinkers by working through the process of preparing a paper. Some topics require greater amounts of research than others; but in each department the requirements are rigorous, the effort is substantial, the available time is limited, and the standards are high. Accordingly, this Guide has been prepared to provide some signposts to help the student at each step along the way--from conceptualizing the topic prior to conducting research, to proofreading the paper incident to its submission.

It is important to the process for the student to appreciate his or her shortcomings and to adopt methods to remedy them. This Guide has sought to alert students to some of the dangers as well as many of the recovery measures.

Of greatest importance to the submission of an outstanding paper are: preparing a thorough, detailed outline; setting aside sufficient time to think and to write; remembering the audience for whom the paper is intended; and carefully reading and revising the product before submission. These seem to be elementary, basic points, but careful attention to them has time and again proven to be the hallmark of prize-winning essays.

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[36] Sans-serif fonts do not have the little "hats" and "pedestals" of serif fonts, such as the one in which this Guide is written (Times). Newspapers, magazines, and academic papers should be composed in a serif font because in small sizes they are easier to read. Sans-serif fonts, such as arial are cleaner and easier to read in large sizes. In small sizes, however, they are much more difficult to comprehend, as the comparison of this sentence and the next demonstrates. In small sizes, however, they are much more difficult to comprehend, as the comparison of this sentence and the preceding one demonstrates.

[37] Casey Stengel in Green, Sportswit, 158.

> Although one can think without writing and--alas! we know it is true--one can write without thinking, these are not, ultimately, separate activities. I am not much impressed when a student tells me that he has thought A-plus thoughts but has written them in C-minus language. We do not think wordlessly and later put our thoughts into words. Language is a medium of thought as well as of expression; we think in and with words, just as we speak and write with words. In short, I believe that muddy writing is, more often than not, a symptom of muddy thinking. If you cannot say clearly what you want to say, you probably haven't thought it out clearly. Taking the time to think can do wonders for our writing. [38]

[38] Inis L. Claude, Jr., "Valedictory, Mea Culpa, and Testament," in K.W. Thompson, ed., Community, Diversity, and a New World Order: Essays in Honor of Inis L. Claude, Jr. (n.p., University Press of America, 1994), 314.

Appendix A

Usage

accommodated: Frequently misspelled, this word has two c's and two m's.
back to text

affected: Don't become trapped by the similarity between the verbs *affect* and *effect*. According to the American Heritage Electronic Dictionary: "*Affect* and *effect* have no senses in common. As a verb, *affect* is most commonly used in the sense of 'to influence' (how smoking affects health). *Effect* means 'to bring about or execute': layoffs designed to *effect* savings." (The *nouns* have different meanings also!) Another stumbling block for those who are not alert is **complement** versus **compliment**.
back to text

all right: While "altogether" has attained status as one word, all right is never "alright."
back to text

and / or: See footnote 24.

and so forth: A usage avoided by good writers. Along with *et cetera* or *etc.* it says to the reader: I have stopped thinking at this point; you are welcome to complete the set if you'd like to. Discriminating readers are not favorably impressed.
back to text

apostrophe: The apostrophe has two primary usages, and they are frequently confused. One is to indicate the possessive form. "Tom's hat" or "James's radar." The rule for possessives is simple: add an apostrophe "s" to singular forms, and only an apostrophe to plural forms ending in "s". Thus, the possessive form of Chris is Chris's, and of horses is horses'. The other is to indicate an omitted letter or letters in a contraction: e.g., doesn't, haven't, he's, and it's.[39]
back to text

attrit or attrite: See footnote 24.

constitute: The question here involves "constitute," "comprise," and "compose," which are often confused for one another. The parts *constitute* or *compose* the whole. The whole *comprises* the parts. A good test for the correct use of "comprise," the usual troublemaker, is to see if the appropriate form of the verb "include" can be substituted for it. Thus, a team is *comprised* of (or includes) its players. The players do not *comprise* a team, they *compose* (or form) it.
back to text

e.g.: "e.g." means "for example." In contrast, "i.e." means "that is." The former is used to provide non-literal examples of a set; the latter, to offer a literal substitute. So, one would write,

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[39] For more information on the subject, see Strunk and White, Elements of Style, 1.

Baseball players (e.g. Griffey and Garciaparra)… But, the Joint Task Force Commander (i.e. Major General Tom Givens for this exercise)… The terms are not interchangeable.
back to text

ellipsis: The *ellipsis* (…) indicates the omission of part of a quotation. The omitted portion should never alter the meaning of the excerpt. Moreover, both fragments of the quotation--the part before and the part after the ellipsis--must have the same context as the original source. Three dots are used to indicate missing material. If the ellipsis occurs at the end of a sentence, the final punctuation of the sentence is included also: (!...) (?...) and (....). Choosing to use ellipses presupposes that one knows how to use them correctly. Don't get caught short!
back to text

ensure: Ensure, assure, and insure are often used interchangeably. Good writers distinguish among them, however. According to the American Heritage Electronic Dictionary: "Only *assure* is used with reference to a person in the sense of 'to set the mind at rest': *assured the leader of his loyalty.* Although *ensure* and *insure* are generally interchangeable, only *insure* is now widely used in the commercial sense of 'to guarantee persons or property against risk.' "
back to text

figures of speech: Rhetorical devices used to dress up written or oral works. They include metaphors and similes, analogy, euphemism, hyperbole, irony, oxymoron, synecdoche, and zeugma. Writers of academic papers employ these techniques only with great care.
back to text

for: "For" is used here as a *coordinating conjunction*. Other common coordinating conjunctions are "and," "but," "nor," "or," "yet," and "so." A coordinating conjunction frequently connects two independent clauses. When it does, a comma is used *before* the conjunction. If commas appear elsewhere in the sentence, the comma separating the clauses is strengthened to a semi-colon. If two independent clauses in the same sentence are *not* separated by a coordinating conjunction, a semi-colon is normally employed. For example: "Prime Minister Turner spoke at the convention, but she said nothing important." Alternatively: "Prime Minister Turner spoke at the convention; she said nothing important."

Independent clauses are groups of words containing a subject and a predicate; they also express a complete thought. Independent clauses can stand alone as a sentence. In contrast, dependent clauses do not provide complete thoughts. *Complex sentences* have a combination of an independent and one or more dependent clauses. Here is an example of a complex sentence: "Having run four miles already, Jim sat and rested before finishing the race." Complex sentences invariably require punctuation; know how to punctuate them.
back to text

further: Sometimes used imprecisely for "farther," *further* is the more abstract of the two. "*Farther* means 'more distant,' usually in a measurable sense...*further*, meaning 'more' or

'additional,' has a much wider application.…No one misuses *farther* for *further*, and you're safe with *further* provided that you don't apply it to distance."[40]
back to text

his or her: This is one of the devices used to avoid "sexist" writing. Many grammarians refuse to bend the language in this way, but the trend is clearly away from using masculine pronouns as universals. Often the problem (student…*he*) can be dodged simply by using the plural--e.g. students…they. What English usage experts do not condone, however is mixing the singular and the plural in order to avoid "sexist" language. Thus, one should not write: "The child put on their mittens." Another incorrect example is: "Japan should change their foreign policy."
back to text

hopefully: See footnote 24.

however: "Avoid starting a sentence with *however* when the meaning is 'nevertheless.' The word usually serves better when not in first position.…When *however* comes first, it means 'in whatever way,' or 'to whatever extent.' [for example] However you advise him, he will probably do as he thinks best."[41]
back to text

impact: See footnote 24.

imply: Often confused with "infer," but, according to Strunk and White, the terms are "not interchangeable. Something implied is something suggested or indicated, though not expressed. Something inferred is something deduced from evidence at hand. 'Farming implies early rising. Since he was a farmer, we inferred that he got up early.' "[42]
back to text

it's: "It's" is a contraction for "it is." It's *never* the possessive for "it." One cannot, therefore, correctly write: "The aircraft took off and immediately pulled up it's wheels."
back to text

lead: Be alert not to substitute this homonym for its past tense: *led.*
back to text

liase: See footnote 24.

literally: An often-confused adverb. The American Heritage Electronic Dictionary includes this entry: "Literally means 'in a manner that accords precisely with the words.' It is often used [incorrectly] to mean 'figuratively' or 'in a manner of speaking,' which is almost the opposite of

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[40] Claire Kehrwald Cook, Line by Line: How to Improve Your Own Writing (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985) 177-178.

[41] Strunk and White, Elements of Style, 48-49.

[42] Ibid, 49.

its true meaning. Thus, it is not correct to say he was *literally* breathing fire except when speaking of a dragon." [Emphasis added.] Occasionally, moreover, inexperienced writers will use the adverb *virtually* to mean *literally*. In fact, they are virtually opposites!
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only: Be sensitive to the placement of this adverb. Where it appears can change what was intended by the author. In addition, accurately locating "only" in good writing demonstrates attention to detail. According to Johnson, "I recommend allowing *only*--an especially vagrant word even among the adverbs--to wander with some freedom in speech, but positioning it precisely in anything but the most casual writing. The habit can have a surprisingly pervasive beneficial effect on overall expression, because it is by just such attention to detail that prose becomes truly good instead of merely workmanlike and adequate."[43]
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oral: "Oral" means "by mouth." "Verbal" means "by words." If one communicates a thought "verbally," it might be written in a message, spoken over the telephone, or whispered in someone's ear.
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passive voice: The *active* voice uses strong verbs that take direct objects. In contrast, the *passive* voice relies on the verb *to be*, which is a static, linking verb. Passive writing tends to be flat and weak because the action words--the verbs--are inert. Here's an example of how to activate a passively written excerpt, and at the same time economize in length.

> *passive version:* The shelter will be owned by the town, but it will be run by members of the humane society and supported, in part, by funds raised by them. The bulk of the operating funds, however, will be supplied by the town.
>
> *active version:* Although the town will own the shelter and pay most of the operating expenses, members of the humane society will run the facility and provide additional support through fund raising.[44]

Writing that emphasizes active verbs over passive ones tends to be more interesting and powerful.
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principle: Confusing this word with its homonym, *principal*, is a common error. Appreciate and maintain the distinction between them
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proceeding: Understand the difference between *proceed*, *precede*, and *supersede*. Know also how to spell them!
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[43] Johnson, Handbook, p. 1-20.

[44] Cook, Line by Line, 4.

that: *That* should be used for restrictive, or defining clauses and *which* for nonrestrictive, or nondefining, clauses. A defining clause limits the word it modifies. It sets it apart as a particular item. For example, "The bicycle that is standing next to the wall belongs to Peter," tells the reader it is that *particular* bicycle. The fact that it is standing next to the wall is vital to determining which bicycle is being described. Alternatively, to write: "The bicycle, which is standing next to the wall, belongs to Peter," says the bicycle is Peter's; and, as an additional piece of information, it is standing next to the wall. In this latter instance there is probably only one bicycle. The meaning of the second sentence is not materially influenced by leaving out the nondefining clause. The commas enclosing the clause beginning with *which* offer a strong clue.

Good writers are careful to tell the reader by the correct use of *that* and *which* whether the element about which they are writing is vital to the meaning (restrictive) or mildly parenthetical (nonrestrictive). While *which* can often substitute easily for *that*, the reverse is not true. Consequently, an easy test to distinguish between them is to try to substitute *that* whenever one has written *which*. If *that* fits, chances are the clause is restrictive and *that* is preferable. This test, incidentally, should also indicate whether or not the clause needs enclosing punctuation. If the construction can be enclosed by commas without affecting the central meaning of the sentence, then *which* is probably correct. High quality writing benefits from going on a *which hunt*. Each usage of *which* is challenged to see if it introduces a restrictive clause (incorrect) or if it is set off by commas and introduces a nonrestrictive clause (correct).
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their: Pronouns must always appear in the same gender and number as their antecedents. The pronoun's grammatical case, however, depends on how it is used in context. In the sentence to which this explanation is linked, "their" refers back to "students," which is a plural noun.

Incorrect: The Navy should always keep *their* ships ready to deploy.

Correct: The Navy should always keep *its* ships ready to deploy.

See also: **his or her**.
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thus: "Thus" is correct, while "thusly," according to Tressider, "is a vile word. Don't use it."[45]
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United States: Used as a noun, the name of our country should be written in full: "The committee members were from the United States and France." Used as an adjective, U.S. is appropriate: "The U.S. Congress was in session at the time." This avoids cumbersome constructions, and also strange possessive forms, such as the incorrect: United States' Congress. For more information on possessives, see **apostrophe**.
back to text

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[45] Argus John Tresidder, WATCH-WORD!!! A Glossary of Gobbledygook, Clichés, and Solecisms. (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Association, 1981), 77.

very: "Use this word sparingly. Where emphasis is necessary, use words strong in themselves."[46]
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virtually: See **literally**.

[46] Strunk and White, Elements of Style, 63.

Appendix B

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Internet: An excellent resource on the internet, including searchable grammar and style notes is Jack Lynch's site: http://www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/links.html. Another useful site is: http://www.sharpwriter.com.

Appendix C

Checklist for Preparing Papers

At The Beginning:

❑ ----------Select an interesting, challenging topic. (Or receive topic from seminar moderator.)

❑ ----------Engage faculty advisor, if appropriate.

❑ ----------Prepare a detailed outline.

❑ ----------Become comfortable with topic, outline, approach--*before tutorial.*

❑ ----------Consider seriously whether paper will be submitted for an award. Do this as early in the process as possible.

No later than at two-thirds point in time budget:

❑ ----------Cut off data collection; begin focused thinking and writing.

❑ ----------Analyze, synthesize, THINK.

❑ ----------Procure independent, knowledgeable proofreader.

Always:

❑ ----------Write *throughout* for the *reader* of the paper. Write for someone who:

- Is reasonable but skeptical;
- Does not need a tutorial on the subject matter;
- Can be persuaded with reason and common sense;
- Is *alive* (can be surprised, angered, and moved);
- Can be easily bored;
- Can spot baloney and padding with high fidelity at a range of seventy kilometers.

❑ ----------Write with a dictionary and a thesaurus at your elbow, and in accordance with this Guide and the Style Manual.

❑ ----------Quote infrequently and briefly, but definitely *as necessary*.

❑ ----------Avoid plagiarism and misrepresentation.

❑ ----------Recognize trouble early; seek help, *if needed*.

❑ ----------Avoid backstopping, cheerleading, data dredging, and patronizing.

Once first draft is written:

❑ ----------Deliver draft to advisor--in time to receive and act on advice.

❑ ----------Go on a "which hunt."

❑ ----------Reconsider whether paper will be submitted for a prize essay contest.

Before submitting:

❑ ----------Read the paper from end to end. *Read every word.* Repeat: *Read every word!*

❑ ----------Rewrite any sentence, paragraph, or section that can be improved in any way.

❑ ----------Understand and address each point of the advisor's review

❑ ----------Read the paper aloud to *hear* if any parts sound weak.

❑ ----------Ruthlessly expunge errors of fact.

❑ ----------Relentlessly reduce typographical errors to zero.

❑ ----------Reread conclusions to ensure they track with material presented in the body of the paper.

❑ ----------Make corrections. *Never submit a paper that contains known errors.*