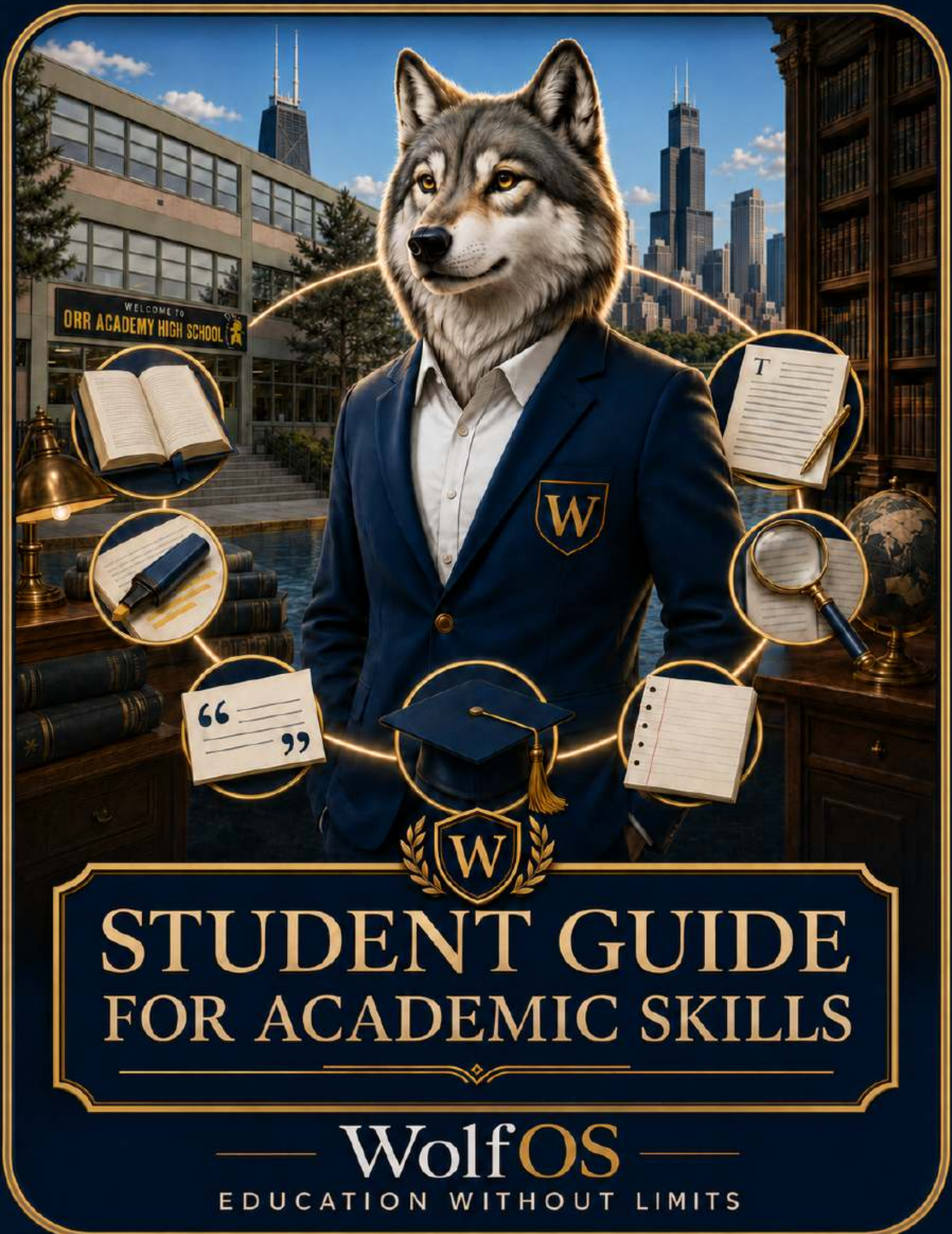




WELCOME TO
ORR ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL



STUDENT GUIDE FOR ACADEMIC SKILLS

— WolfOS —

EDUCATION WITHOUT LIMITS

WOLFOS • STUDENT GUIDE

DEDICATION

This guide is a product of collaboration, dedication, and a shared commitment to student success. It is with deep gratitude that we recognize everyone who helped bring it to life.

First, thank you to the **English Department at Orr Academy High School**. Their expertise in literacy, writing, and communication shaped the foundation of the strategies in this guide. Their daily work helping students read and write with confidence inspired much of what follows, especially the sections on constructing thoughtful essays and practicing academic honesty.

We are equally grateful to the **Social Studies Department at Orr Academy High School**. Their insight into critical thinking, evidence-based argument, and real-world inquiry shaped the way this guide connects academic skills to the wider world, from evaluating sources to understanding how a democracy asks its citizens to think.

A special thank-you goes to **Ms. Beckman** for her careful review and thoughtful suggestions, which made this guide clearer, more accessible, and more useful to students at every level.

To the students who open these pages: this guide is dedicated to you. Academic success is not only about what you know, it is about persistence, curiosity, and the willingness to keep learning. We believe in your potential, and we are honored to be part of your journey.

Randal P. Wolfinger

WOLFINGER EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS LLC



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Every title above is a live link — click any entry to jump straight to that page. Matching bookmarks are also built into this PDF, so you can navigate from your reader's sidebar at any time.

HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE

Every chapter uses the same small set of recurring page types, so once you learn to recognize them, you can jump straight to the kind of help you need.

WORKED EXAMPLE

A real situation, walked through step by step, so you can see the skill in action before you try it on your own work.

TRY IT YOURSELF

A short prompt at the end of most sections, so you can practice the skill on your own reading or writing right away.

INCORRECT / CORRECT COMPARISON

Two versions of the same example side by side — a common mistake on the left, the fixed version on the right — so you can spot the difference at a glance.

WHY IT WORKS / TAKEAWAY

A short explanation of the reasoning behind a strategy, so the skill sticks instead of feeling like an arbitrary rule.



INTRODUCTION

A JOURNEY OF RISK & REWARD

“Like a wolf navigating the wild, be fearless and determined in your quest for knowledge. Every challenge is a chance to grow stronger and wiser.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER

Welcome to Social Studies. This guide is your field manual for the skills that make every unit — history, geography, culture, and civics — click into place.

Every day you make decisions that shape your life and the lives of people around you: what information to trust, how to treat others, which causes deserve your attention, and when to speak up. Whether you realize it or not, those decisions are civic life in miniature. Many people think civics is about memorizing the three branches of government or a list of Supreme Court cases. Those facts matter, but they are only a small part of what it means to be an informed citizen.

To do well in Social Studies — and in nearly every class after it — you need five academic skills working together. **Reading** means understanding complex texts, not just moving your eyes across them. **Writing** means expressing an idea so clearly that someone else can

follow your thinking. **Research** means finding information you can actually trust. **Note-taking** means capturing what matters so you can find it again. **Critical thinking** means forming your own reasoned opinion instead of borrowing someone else's.

This guide will not just tell you facts and definitions. It will show you, step by step, how each skill works — with a real example, a visual model, and a chance to try it yourself. Keep it nearby. Flip back to it whenever an assignment asks you to read closely, build an argument, cite a source, or study for a test. This chapter starts with two tools you will lean on constantly: the WolfOS Inquiry Cycle, and the four lenses historians use to size up any source before they trust it.

READING & WRITING

Understand dense texts and turn your ideas into clear, well-supported paragraphs.

RESEARCH & CITING

Find trustworthy sources and give credit accurately, every time.

STUDY & REFLECT

Take notes that stick, plan your time, and think about how you think.

A HABIT OF MIND

THE WOLFOS INQUIRY CYCLE

Most people jump straight from noticing something to reacting to it — they see a headline, a photo, or a quote, and immediately decide what they think. That shortcut is how rumors spread and how weak arguments get made. The **Inquiry Cycle** is a deliberate habit that slows that process down: it is the same seven-step routine historians, scientists, journalists, and thoughtful citizens all use, in some form, to turn a first impression into an informed, defensible conclusion.

It is drawn as a **circle**, not a line, because the process never really finishes. Acting on what you learned in Step 7 almost always raises a new question, which sends you back to Step 1 to start again — that is what real, ongoing learning looks like. Read the diagram below starting at the top and follow the gold arrows clockwise; each stage feeds directly into the next.



Reading the sidebars: The five *Thinking Lenses* on the left (Who/Why/What/ What's Missing/ Why It Matters) are the exact questions to ask during Steps 1–4. The *Pack Norms* on the right are the ground rules for Step 5, Discuss — the goal of a discussion is to understand each other, not to win.

Why it works: Each stage forces you to slow down before you form an opinion. Jumping straight from Observe to Act is how rumors spread and how weak arguments get written — the middle steps (Question, Investigate, Analyze, Discuss, Reflect) are where real understanding happens.

WORKED EXAMPLE**Reading a Historical Source with the Inquiry Cycle****PRIMARY SOURCE EXCERPT**

“196. If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out. ... 199. If he put out the eye of a man’s slave, or break the bone of a man’s slave, he shall pay one-half of its value.” — The Code of Hammurabi, trans. L. W. King (c. 1754 BCE)

1. OBSERVE

The excerpt is written in short, numbered statements. It uses the phrase “eye for eye” and mentions specific punishments for specific crimes.

2. QUESTION

Why does the punishment depend on who committed the crime? Was this law applied the same way to everyone in Babylonian society?

3. INVESTIGATE

A student looks up background on the Code of Hammurabi and learns it was carved on a stone stele around 1754 BCE and displayed publicly.

4. ANALYZE

Publishing the laws in stone, in public, suggests the code was meant to be seen as fixed and authoritative — not something a ruler could quietly change.

5. DISCUSS

In a small group, the student explains this idea and a classmate points out that public law is also a form of control: everyone can be held to the same rule, including future kings.

6. REFLECT

The student realizes their first reaction — that the punishments seem harsh — was a modern judgment. The more useful question is what problem this law was solving in 1754 BCE.

7. ACT

The student writes a CEA body paragraph arguing that the Code of Hammurabi represents an early attempt to make justice public and predictable.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Pick any primary source from this class — a speech, a photograph, a law. Run it through all seven stages before you write about it. Notice how much stronger your Analysis becomes once you have Investigated first.



READING LIKE A HISTORIAN

Four lenses historians use to size up a source before they trust it.



No historical source tells you the whole truth by itself — every document was written by a specific person, at a specific moment, for a specific reason, and every author leaves something out. If you read a source only for what it says, you will miss all of that. So historians read every source through **four lenses at once**, asking not just “what does this say” but “why should I trust it, and how much.” You already met a version of this in the Inquiry Cycle; the four moves below are what “Investigate” and “Analyze” look like in practice whenever your source is a historical text.

1 SOURCING

CHECK THE SOURCE BEFORE YOU READ THE CONTENT

Before you dig into what a document says, find out who created it, when, and why. Authorship shapes everything else.

Example: *A general’s official battle report and a private soldier’s diary about the same battle read very differently — because of who wrote each one, and for whom.*

2 CONTEXTUALIZATION

PLACE THE SOURCE IN ITS MOMENT

Figure out what else was happening in the world when the source was created. The larger situation shapes what gets said, and how.

Example: *An article urging Americans to conserve food means one thing in peacetime, and something very different printed during wartime rationing.*

3 CLOSE READING

STUDY THE ACTUAL WORDS

Pay close attention to specific word choices, tone, and what is emphasized or left out. Language is never neutral.

Example: *Calling the same event a “riot” versus an “uprising” signals two very different judgments about who was in the right.*

4 CORROBORATION

CHECK IT AGAINST OTHER SOURCES

Compare multiple sources describing the same event. Agreement across independent sources builds confidence; disagreement shows you where to dig deeper.

Example: *If three unrelated eyewitnesses all describe a protest starting peacefully, that detail becomes far more trustworthy than if only one source mentions it.*

How this connects to the Inquiry Cycle: Sourcing and Contextualization happen mainly during *Investigate*; Close Reading happens during *Analyze*; Corroboration extends into *Discuss* and *Reflect*, once you compare notes with others.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Pick two sources about the same historical event from this class. Run both through all four lenses. Where do they agree? Where do they diverge, and what does that tell you about each author?



ACADEMIC HONESTY & PLAGIARISM

“Like a lone wolf, trust in your own strength and knowledge. True wisdom is earned, not borrowed — avoid the easy path of plagiarism, and let your own voice howl in the wilderness of learning.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER



Academic honesty means doing your own work and giving credit whenever you use someone else’s words or ideas. Plagiarism is the opposite: presenting someone else’s work or ideas as if they were your own. This chapter shows you exactly how to use quotes and paraphrases the right way, using examples from a Social Studies class.

WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

COPYING TEXT DIRECTLY

Taking words from a book, website, or any source without quotation marks or a citation. Changing a few words does not make it yours — if the structure and ideas are copied, it is still plagiarism.

USING SOMEONE ELSE’S IDEAS

Even if you never copy a sentence, using another person’s unique idea, argument, or finding without acknowledgment counts as plagiarism.

PARAPHRASING WITHOUT CITATION

Restating someone’s idea in your own words is a great skill — but you still owe the original author credit. Rewording without citing is still plagiarism.

COPYING AN ASSIGNMENT

Turning in a friend’s essay with minor changes and your name on it misrepresents your effort and denies you the chance to actually learn the material.

The simplest test: if the wording, the idea, or the finding did not originate in your own head, it needs a citation — whether you quote it, paraphrase it, or just borrow the idea.



WORKED EXAMPLE

Copying a Friend's Assignment

THE SITUATION

A friend already finished an essay on the role of religion in early societies. You copy it, change a few words, and turn it in with your name on it.

WHY THIS IS WRONG

This is plagiarism — you are presenting someone else's work as if you created it. It does not matter how many small changes you made; the core ideas and content were not developed by you. This misleads your teacher and, more importantly, robs you of the learning experience the assignment was designed to give you.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Next time you are tempted to copy a classmate's work, write down the real reason — out of time, confused by the prompt, afraid of a low grade — and bring that reason to your teacher instead. It is almost always a smaller problem to solve than the one plagiarism creates.

What It Costs You

- ! **A failing grade** — on the assignment, or the entire course.
- ! **Damage to your academic reputation**, which can follow you into future classes and opportunities.
- ! **Loss of trust** from teachers and peers — trust that is slow to rebuild.
- ! **A missed chance to learn** the material the assignment was built to teach.

In the long run, relying on someone else's work prevents you from building the skills and knowledge you will need later — skills no shortcut can replace.

W *WolfOS reminder: honest work now is what makes your future work trustworthy.*



USING QUOTES CORRECTLY

A **quote** uses a source's exact words. Quoting is powerful when the original wording matters or when you want to borrow the credibility of an expert — but you must always tell your reader where those words came from.

I

INTRODUCE THE QUOTE

2

USE QUOTATION MARKS

3

CITE THE SOURCE

Example source: a book states, “Religion played a central role in the governance of early civilizations, guiding both laws and daily practices.”

✗ INCORRECT (PLAGIARISM)

Religion played a central role in the governance of early civilizations, guiding both laws and daily practices.

No quotation marks, no citation — this reads as the student's own sentence.

✓ CORRECT (NO PLAGIARISM)

As one historian notes, “Religion played a central role in the governance of early civilizations, guiding both laws and daily practices” (Smith 45).

Introduced, quoted, and cited — the reader knows exactly whose words these are.

Why it works: The quotation marks show where borrowed words begin and end, and the citation (Smith 45) tells your reader exactly which source and page to check. Together, they give full, honest credit.

A Quick Reference for Punctuating Quotes

Commas and periods

go *inside* the closing quotation mark: she said, “the trial begins Monday.”

Changing a word to fit your sentence

use square brackets: the law “[protects] every citizen equally.”

TRY IT YOURSELF

Find one striking sentence in your current reading. Introduce it, quote it exactly, and cite it — using the three steps above.



PARAPHRASING CORRECTLY

Paraphrasing means restating someone else's idea in your own words and sentence structure. It is useful for simplifying complex information — but a paraphrase still needs a citation, because the *idea* is still borrowed even when the words are new.

Example source: “In ancient Egypt, society was structured like a pyramid, with the Pharaoh at the top, followed by nobles, priests, and then the working class at the bottom.”

× INCORRECT (PLAGIARISM)

In ancient Egypt, society was structured like a pyramid, with the Pharaoh at the top, followed by nobles, priests, and then the working class at the bottom.

This barely changes the original wording, and there is still no citation.

✓ CORRECT (NO PLAGIARISM)

In ancient Egypt, society was organized in a hierarchical manner, with the Pharaoh holding the highest position, and nobles, priests, and common workers below him (Jones 12).

New wording, new structure, and a citation that credits Jones for the underlying idea.

A Subtler Mistake: the “Too-Close” Paraphrase

“In ancient Egypt, society was formed like a pyramid, with the Pharaoh at the top, then nobles and priests, and the working class at the bottom” (Jones 12).

This one even has a citation — but it only swaps one or two words. A citation does not fix wording that is still almost identical to the source. Paraphrasing means rebuilding the *sentence*, not just find-and-replace.

How to Paraphrase

I

READ CAREFULLY

2

USE YOUR OWN WORDS

3

CITE THE SOURCE

TRY IT YOURSELF

Take one paraphrase you wrote for a recent assignment and check it against these three steps. Did you change the sentence structure, not just a few words? Is a citation attached?



STUDY STRATEGY**DO I NEED TO CITE THIS?**

When you are drafting and not sure whether something needs a citation, walk down this decision guide from the top. Answer each question honestly before you move to the next line.

QUESTION 1

Did this information, idea, or wording come from somewhere *other than* your own knowledge or experience?

↓ **NO — keep reading**

YES →

No citation needed — it's genuinely your own knowledge or experience.

QUESTION 2

Are you using the source's *exact* words?

↓ **NO — keep reading**

YES →

Quote it — in quotation marks — and cite it.

QUESTION 3

Is it common knowledge: a widely known fact you could find, unattributed, in many different sources?

↓ **NO — keep reading**

YES →

No citation needed — it's common knowledge.

FINAL ANSWER

Paraphrase or summarize it in your own words — and cite it.

Why it works: This guide is really just the definition of plagiarism, asked as a series of yes-or-no questions. If you can answer all three honestly, you will never have to guess whether a sentence needs a citation.



CHAPTER CLOSE

WHY ACADEMIC HONESTY MATTERS

Academic honesty is more than a rule — it is how you build a foundation of trust, integrity, and respect that carries far beyond this class.

BUILDS TRUST

When your work is genuinely your own, teachers and peers can rely on it — and on you.

PREPARES YOU FOR WHAT'S NEXT

Employers and colleges value people they can trust to do honest work.

GROWS YOUR SKILLS

Doing the work yourself is how you actually get better at reading, writing, and thinking.

PROTECTS YOU

Plagiarism can mean a failing grade, a damaged record, or worse — consequences that follow you.

KEEPS THINGS FAIR

Everyone is held to the same standard, so grades and recognition are earned, not borrowed.

RESPECTS OTHER PEOPLE'S WORK

A citation is a small act of respect for the effort someone else put into their ideas.

CHAPTER RECAP

Quote it when the exact words matter — with quotation marks and a citation.

Cite it every time the words, idea, or information came from somewhere other than your own head.

Paraphrase it when you want to simplify an idea — in your own sentence structure, still with a citation.

When unsure, return to the decision guide on the previous spread.

Looking ahead: the next chapter shows you exactly how to build the citations that make honest work provable - in-text, in a Works Cited page, and in the format your paper is built on.



CITING & FORMATTING SOURCES

“Like a wolf marking its territory, mark your ideas with in-text citations. They show where your thoughts roam and honor the trail of knowledge that led you there.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER



A citation is a small, precise act — a few words in parentheses — that does a big job: it tells your reader exactly which idea is yours and which one you borrowed. This chapter covers the three moves every research paper needs: citing sources **inside** your sentences, listing them completely on a **Works Cited** page, and formatting the whole paper so it looks and reads like a professional document.

USING IN-TEXT CITATIONS (MLA)

Whenever you use someone else’s words, ideas, or information, add an **in-text citation** right where you use it — the author’s last name and the page number, in parentheses, before the period.

Basic format

Religion was not just personal belief in Ancient Egypt (Smith 89).

TWO AUTHORS

Include both last names: in Ancient China, the emperor sat atop the social hierarchy, followed by nobles, warriors, and peasants (Johnson and Lee 47).

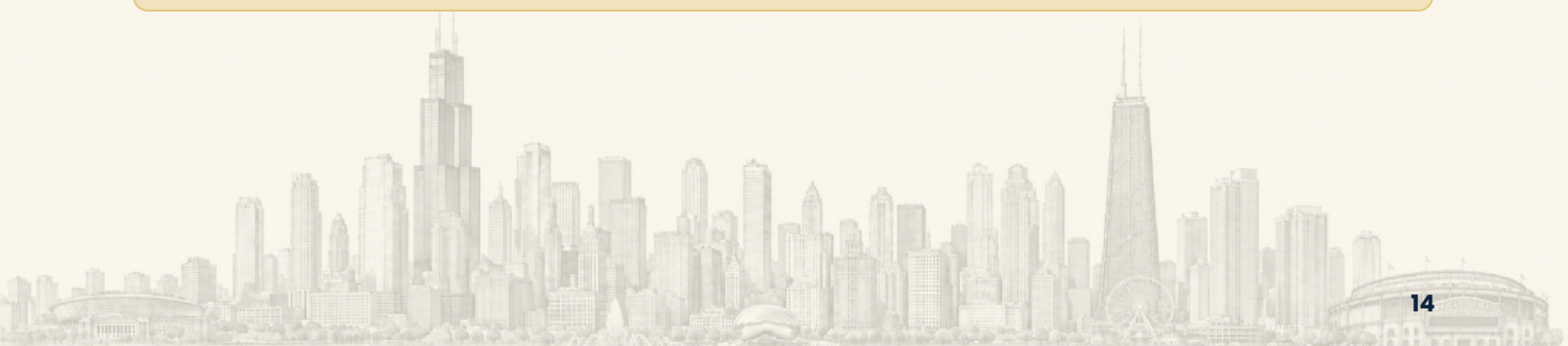
THREE OR MORE AUTHORS

Use the first author’s last name plus “et al.”: the caste system in Ancient India was deeply tied to religious belief (Johnson et al. 112).

NO AUTHOR LISTED

Use a short version of the title in place of a name: the Indus Valley civilization was known for its advanced urban planning (“Ancient Civilizations” 56).

Why it works: A reader who wants to check your source only needs two things — a name and a page number. That is exactly what an in-text citation gives them, every time.



HANDLING LONGER OR PARTIAL QUOTES

Sometimes you only need part of a sentence, or the sentence you need is especially long. Two tools handle both situations.

ELLIPSES — SKIPPING PART OF A QUOTE

Original: “In Ancient Egypt, religion was deeply intertwined with governance, making it a theocratic society.”

Shortened: “...making it a theocratic society” (Smith 89).

The three dots show your reader that words were removed — from the beginning, the middle, or the end — without changing what the source actually said.

BLOCK QUOTES — FOUR LINES OR LONGER

Set the quote off from your own text as its own indented paragraph, with no quotation marks. The citation goes *after* the final period, not before.

Religion was not just a matter of personal belief in Ancient Egypt but a crucial element of the state’s structure. Pharaohs were seen as gods on earth... (Smith 89)

Editing a Quote to Fit Your Sentence

Use square brackets around any word you change

The law “[protects] every citizen equally.”

TRY IT YOURSELF

Find a long quote in your current research. Practice trimming it with ellipses so it fits your sentence — without changing what the author actually meant.

“Just as a wolf honors its pack, honor the wisdom of others by giving credit where it’s due. Citing your sources is how you show respect for the knowledge that guides your own journey.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER



CREATING A WORKS CITED PAGE (MLA)

The Works Cited page is a complete, alphabetized list of every source you cited in your paper — it goes on its own page at the very end.

1

HANGING INDENT

2

ALPHABETIZE BY AUTHOR

3

DOUBLE-SPACE THROUGHOUT

Each entry starts flush with the left margin; every line after the first is indented one-half inch (a “hanging indent”). Entries are alphabetized by the author’s last name — or, if no author is listed, by the first significant word in the title.

Reference: Pattern + Example by Source Type (1 of 2)

Book — Author’s Last Name, First Name. Title of Book. Publisher, Year.

Smith, John. *Ancient Civilizations*. Penguin Books, 2023.

Journal Article — Author. “Title of Article.” Title of Journal, vol. #, no. #, Year, pp. ##–##.

Lopez, Maria. “The Influence of the Silk Road on Asian Economies.” *Journal of Ancient Trade*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2022, pp. 132–150.

Magazine Article — Author. “Title of Article.” Title of Magazine, Month Year, pp. ##–##.

Johnson, Kate. “Uncovering the Mysteries of the Pyramids.” *National Geographic*, Aug. 2023, pp. 42–55.

Online Encyclopedia — “Title of Entry.” Title of Encyclopedia, Publisher, Year, URL.

“Roman Empire.” *Britannica Online*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024, www.britannica.com/topic/Roman-Empire.

Every pattern follows the same logic: who made it, what it’s called, who published it, and when — in that order, with italics marking the title of the larger work (a journal, a website, an encyclopedia) that a shorter piece appeared inside.



Reference: Pattern + Example by Source Type (2 of 2)

Newspaper Article — Author. "Title of Article." Title of Newspaper, Date, p. #.

Davis, Alan. "New Discoveries in Ancient Egyptian Tombs." *The New York Times*, 12 May 2024, p. A1.

Website Page — Author. "Title of Webpage." Title of Website, Date, URL.

Brown, David. "The Influence of Geography on Ancient Societies." *History Today*, 15 Mar. 2023, www.historytoday.com.

Image / Video / Podcast — Creator. "Title." Title of Larger Work, Publisher, Year.

"Ziggurat of Ur." *Ancient Mesopotamia: Art and Culture*, Art History Resources, 2024.

Social Media / Government Doc / Lecture / Handout / Interview — Author or Username. "Content or Title." Platform or Publisher, Date.

Wolfinger, Randal. "Key Concepts in Early Civilizations." Social Studies, 9th Grade, 1 Sept. 2024, class handout.

Tips for Creating a Works Cited Page

DOUBLE-CHECK FORMATTING

Every line double-spaced, every entry using a hanging indent — no exceptions.

BE CONSISTENT

Use the exact same format for every entry, even if your sources are very different types.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Pull up your own research notes and build one Works Cited entry for each source you have used so far this year — then alphabetize the list by hand.



USING EASYBIB TO BUILD YOUR LIST

EasyBib is a free online tool that generates accurate MLA citations for you. It does not replace understanding the patterns above — always review what it gives you — but it saves time and keeps your formatting consistent.

1. OPEN & SET MLA

Go to EasyBib.com and confirm “MLA” is selected as your citation style before you begin.

3. REVIEW & CITE

Check that the author, title, publisher, and year are correct, then click “Cite.”

2. SEARCH YOUR SOURCE

Click the matching tab (Book, Website, Journal) and search by title, URL, or DOI.

4. EXPORT YOUR LIST

Once every source is added, export as “Copy and Paste” or download a ready-made Works Cited page.

A Complete Works Cited Page

EXAMPLE

Works Cited

Smith, John. *Ancient Civilizations*. Penguin Books, 2023.

“Early Religious Practices.” *Journal of Ancient History*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2024, pp. 25–42.

“Using EasyBib to create a Works Cited page in MLA format can save you time and help you avoid mistakes — but citing your sources accurately is what builds your credibility as a researcher.”

— ADAPTED FROM THE WOLFOS RESEARCH GUIDE



FORMATTING YOUR PAPER (MLA)

The **Modern Language Association (MLA)** format is the standard way research papers are structured in the humanities. Following it is not busywork — a consistent format helps your reader focus entirely on your ideas instead of being distracted by inconsistent spacing or missing information.

PAPER & MARGINS

Standard 8.5 × 11-inch white paper, with all margins set to 1 inch on every side.

FONT & SPACING

Times New Roman, size 12, double-spaced throughout — including block quotes and the Works Cited page.

HEADER & PAGE NUMBERS

Upper right-hand corner of every page: your last name, a space, then the page number.

THE FIRST PAGE

Randal Wolfinger
Mr. Smith
Social Studies
1 August 2024

The Role of Religion in Ancient Societies

Religion has been a cornerstone of human societies for thousands of years, shaping not only spiritual beliefs but also the foundations of governance, social structure, and cultural practice...

Name/teacher/course/date in the upper left, title centered below — no underlining, italics, or quotation marks on your own title.

Indentation: Indent the first line of every paragraph one-half inch from the left margin, using the Tab key for consistency.



CHAPTER CLOSE

PUTTING THE WHOLE PAPER TOGETHER

THE MAIN BODY

Introduction: background on your topic, ending in a clear thesis.

Body paragraphs: one supporting idea each, opening with a topic sentence, followed by evidence and analysis.

Conclusion: summarize your findings and restate your thesis in a new way.

THE WORKS CITED PAGE

Center the title “Works Cited” at the top. Begin every entry at the left margin, with a hanging indent for any line after the first. List entries alphabetically by the author’s last name.

FINAL CHECKLIST

- ✓ Margins, font, and spacing all match MLA standards.
- ✓ Your header appears on every page, including the Works Cited page.
- ✓ Every in-text citation has a matching entry on the Works Cited page.
- ✓ You proofread for grammar, spelling, and formatting consistency.

“Just as a wolf navigates the wild with precision, format your paper with care. A well-structured document shows your strength in discipline and your respect for the journey of knowledge.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER



STRATEGIES FOR WRITING

“Just as a wolf’s howl echoes through the wilderness, your words have the power to resonate across time and space. Being a great writer allows you to share your insights and shape the world with the strength and clarity of a wolf’s voice.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER



This year you will explore history, geography, and culture while building six kinds of writing, each with its own job to do and its own memorable three-letter mnemonic.

Descriptive writing (VSS) vividly portrays a person, place, or moment. **Analytical writing** (CEA) breaks a complex topic down and examines its parts. **Argumentative writing** (CEA) takes a stance and defends it with evidence.

Expository writing (TEE) explains an idea clearly and concisely. **Narrative writing** (DDT) brings history to life through storytelling. **Reflective writing** (REA) connects a personal experience to a larger lesson.

Every one of these essay types shares the same backbone — a hook, background information, and a thesis statement in the introduction; a series of focused body paragraphs; and a conclusion that restates the thesis in a new way. What changes from type to type is the three-part mnemonic that shapes each body paragraph. Learn the six pages that follow, and you will have a plan for almost anything a writing prompt can throw at you.

EVERY ESSAY SHARES THIS SHAPE

Hook — Background — Thesis, then body paragraphs built on that type’s mnemonic, then a conclusion that restates the thesis in fresh words.

WHAT CHANGES BETWEEN TYPES

Only the mnemonic driving the body paragraphs — VSS, CEA, TEE, DDT, or REA — and the goal that mnemonic is built to achieve.



ESSAY TYPE ONE · DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS (VSS)

A descriptive essay creates a vivid picture in the reader's mind — of a person, a place, an object, or a moment — using specific sensory detail instead of vague summary. **VSS** stands for **Vivid Details**, **Sensory Language**, and **Similes & Metaphors**.

V

VIVID DETAILS

S

SENSORY LANGUAGE

S

SIMILES & METAPHORS

Structure

1. **Vivid Details:**

Use exact colors, shapes, sizes, textures, movements, and specific nouns and verbs instead of vague descriptions.

2. **Sensory Language:**

Describe what the reader can see, hear, smell, taste, or feel to place the reader inside the scene.

3. **Similes & Metaphors:**

Compare using “like” or “as” for a simile, or describe one thing as another for a metaphor.

Worked Example — Egyptian Pyramids at Sunrise

VIVID DETAILS

Golden light revealed rough limestone blocks, sharp edges, and shadows across the sand.

SENSORY LANGUAGE

Warm wind brushed my skin, dry sand scratched beneath my shoes, and the desert fell silent.

SIMILES & METAPHORS

The pyramids rose like golden mountains. Each one became a glowing monument to Egypt's past.

Why it works:

Vivid details show what is present, sensory language helps the reader experience it, and similes and metaphors create memorable comparisons.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Choose a place from your life or reading. Write one sentence with a vivid detail, one with sensory language, and one with a simile or metaphor.



ESSAY TYPE TWO · ANALYTICAL WRITING

ANALYTICAL ESSAYS (CEA)

An analytical essay examines and interprets the parts of a subject to understand it better. The goal is to break the subject into pieces, look closely at each one, and present your own interpretation. **CEA** stands for **Claim**, **Evidence**, and **Analysis**.

C

CLAIM

E

EVIDENCE

A

ANALYSIS

Structure

1. **Claim:**

State a clear interpretation that answers the prompt and gives the paragraph one idea to prove.

2. **Evidence:**

Choose an accurate quotation, fact, or detail that directly supports the claim. Cite the source.

3. **Analysis:**

Explain how and why the evidence proves the claim. Connect the reasoning back to the prompt.

Worked Example — Ancient Legal Systems

CLAIM

Ancient Mesopotamian law codes influenced modern legal systems.

EVIDENCE

The Code of Hammurabi recorded laws about property, trade, crime, and punishment (Jones 45).

ANALYSIS

Because the code made rules public and consistent, it helped establish the principle that societies should be governed by known laws - a principle still visible today.

Why it works:

Analysis shows your reasoning by explaining how the Evidence supports the Claim. Without it, CEA is only a claim followed by quotation.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Write one Claim about your current unit, add one relevant piece of Evidence, and write one Analysis sentence explaining how it proves the claim.

ESSAY TYPE THREE · ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS (CEA)

An argumentative essay takes a stance on a debatable topic and uses evidence to defend it. The goal is to convince your reader to agree with your position, or at least to see it as valid. Argumentative essays use the same **CEA** body-paragraph model as analytical essays — the difference is what the claim is *for*: proving a debatable position, not just interpreting a text.

C

CLAIM

E

EVIDENCE

A

ANALYSIS

Structure

1. Claim:

State a debatable point that supports your larger thesis and tells the reader what this paragraph will prove.

2. Evidence:

Use credible facts, quotations, data, or examples that give specific support for the claim.

3. Analysis:

Explain how the evidence proves the claim and strengthens the overall argument; show why it matters.

Worked Example — Should Ancient Civilizations Be Considered the Foundation of Modern Society?

CLAIM

Ancient Mesopotamian law codes helped establish ideas about justice that still influence modern legal systems.

EVIDENCE

Hammurabi's code recorded laws for property, trade, crime, and punishment.

ANALYSIS

By making laws public and consistent, Hammurabi's code promoted the idea that society should be governed by known rules - a principle still visible today.

Why it works:

An argument persuades when its Analysis connects the Evidence to the Claim and shows how that point supports the thesis.

TRY IT YOURSELF

State a debatable Claim, support it with Evidence, and add Analysis showing why the evidence should convince a skeptical reader.

ESSAY TYPE FOUR · EXPOSITORY WRITING

EXPOSITORY ESSAYS (TEE)

An expository essay explains, informs, or presents information clearly. Unlike an argumentative essay, it is not trying to persuade — the goal is simply for your reader to understand the topic better. **TEE** stands for **Topic Sentence**, **Evidence**, and **Explanation**.

T

TOPIC SENTENCE

E

EVIDENCE

E

EXPLANATION

Structure

1. **Topic Sentence:**

Name the paragraph's main idea clearly so the reader knows what information will be explained.

2. **Evidence:**

Add a relevant fact, quotation, example, or detail that develops and supports the topic sentence.

3. **Explanation:**

Clarify what the evidence means and how it connects to the topic sentence; do not make the reader guess.

Worked Example — Ancient Law Codes

TOPIC SENTENCE

One major contribution of ancient civilizations was the development of written law codes.

EVIDENCE

The Code of Hammurabi recorded rules for property, trade, crime, and punishment.

EXPLANATION

These written rules made expectations and consequences more consistent, creating an early model of organized government.

Why it works:

Explanation tells what the Evidence means and how it supports the Topic Sentence. That connection turns facts into clear information.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Write a Topic Sentence, add one relevant fact as Evidence, and explain in your own words how the evidence develops the topic.



ESSAY TYPE FIVE · NARRATIVE WRITING

NARRATIVE ESSAYS (DDT)

A narrative essay tells a story or describes a sequence of events, engaging the reader with a clear beginning, middle, and end that conveys a lesson or insight. **DDT** stands for **Describe** the scene, provide vivid **Details** and dialogue, and use **Transitions** to connect events smoothly.

D

DESCRIBE

D

DETAILS

T

TRANSITION

Structure

1. **Describe:**

Establish the setting, characters, and situation with precise action so the reader can enter the scene.

2. **Details & Dialogue:**

Add sensory details and purposeful spoken words that reveal what the moment looked, felt, and sounded like.

3. **Transitions:**

Use time, place, and sequence words to connect events smoothly and make the order easy to follow.

Worked Example — A Trip to the Great Pyramid

DESCRIBE

At sunrise, I stood at the base of the Great Pyramid as its stone walls rose above the desert.

DETAILS & DIALOGUE

Warm sand scratched beneath my shoes. "Imagine moving every stone by hand," my brother whispered.

TRANSITION

Moments later, we stepped closer as our guide began the pyramid's story.

Why it works:

Transitions show when, where, or how events move. They connect the Describe and Details portions so the narrative reads as one story.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Write a short DDT paragraph about a memorable event. Include a clear scene, sensory Details or Dialogue, and at least one Transition.

ESSAY TYPE SIX · REFLECTIVE WRITING

REFLECTIVE ESSAYS (REA)

A reflective essay connects a personal experience to a broader lesson or insight. The goal is not just to tell what happened, but to think honestly about what it taught you. **REA** stands for **Revisit** the moment, **Explore** how it felt, and **Analyze** what it taught you.

R

REVISIT

E

EXPLORE

A

ANALYZE

Structure

1. Revisit:

Return to one specific moment and describe what happened with enough context for the reader to understand it.

2. Explore:

Examine your thoughts, feelings, reactions, and questions honestly instead of only retelling the event.

3. Analyze:

Explain what the experience taught you, why the lesson matters, and how it may shape future choices.

Worked Example — A Community Service Project

REVISIT

On the first day of our service project, we discovered that the playground was larger than expected and our supplies were limited.

EXPLORE

I felt frustrated by the size of the task, but I also felt determined to help the group find a solution.

ANALYZE

The experience taught me that resilience grows when people adjust their plan, share responsibility, and keep working through setbacks.

Why it works:

Honest Exploration allows the Analyze step to develop a meaningful lesson instead of merely retelling what happened.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Write one REA paragraph about a challenging moment: Revisit what happened, Explore your reaction, and Analyze what you learned.

“Just as a wolf’s howl echoes through the wilderness, your words have the power to resonate across time and space. Being a great writer allows you to share your insights and shape the world with the strength and clarity of a wolf’s voice.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER

DEMYSTIFYING ANALYSIS, EXPLANATION & TRANSITION



CEA, TEE, and DDT each rely on one shared, harder skill: turning evidence into insight. This chapter is a deep dive on that shared skill — **Analysis** (for CEA), **Explanation** (for TEE), and **Transitions** (for DDT) — with several ways to build each one and a worked example for every method.

UNDERSTANDING ANALYSIS

In a CEA paragraph, **Analysis** is where you explain *why* your evidence supports your claim — it is your reasoning, connecting the dots between what you found and what you are arguing. Analysis is what shows a reader you understand the material, not just that you can locate a fact.

CAUSE & EFFECT

“The Silk Road (Evidence) increased cultural exchange across Asia and Europe (Claim). This shows trade carried ideas and technologies, not just goods (Analysis).”

SIGNIFICANCE

“The wheel (Evidence) was a major advancement (Claim). Its importance lies in how it revolutionized transport and trade across long distances (Analysis).”

COMPARISON & CONTRAST

“Rome expanded through conquest while Persia used diplomacy and marriage alliances (Evidence/Claim). This contrast reflects each empire’s different political strategy (Analysis).”

CONTEXTUALIZATION

“European nations sought new trade routes to Asia (Evidence), leading to the discovery of the Americas (Claim). This marked the start of major cultural exchange between the Old and New Worlds (Analysis).”

Tips: be specific, not vague. Use transition words like *because*, *therefore*, and *this demonstrates*. Keep asking yourself “why?” And always tie your analysis back to the claim.



UNDERSTANDING EXPLANATION

In an expository (TEE) essay, **Explanation** is where you break down how your evidence supports your topic sentence — clarifying, expanding, and making the evidence understandable, without arguing a side the way Analysis does.

CLARIFYING COMPLEX CONCEPTS

“The ‘Mandate of Heaven’ justified an emperor’s rule (Evidence). Claiming divine approval let emperors keep legitimacy even during turmoil (Explanation).”

DEFINING TERMS

“Feudalism exchanged land for military service (Evidence), creating a rigid class structure with specific roles for lords, vassals, and peasants (Explanation).”

PROVIDING EXAMPLES

“The Columbian Exchange brought new crops and animals worldwide (Evidence) — potatoes fueled population growth in Europe; horses transformed how Native Americans hunted and traveled (Explanation).”

DRAWING CONNECTIONS

“Enlightenment ideas of liberty and equality (Evidence) spread across the Atlantic to inspire the American and French Revolutions (Explanation), showing how ideas travel between distant events.”

WORKED EXAMPLE

Thesis: The development of agriculture was a turning point in human history. **Evidence:** Agriculture let early humans settle in one place, leading to villages and cities. **Explanation:** Settling down let humans build stable communities, advance technology, and create surplus food — the beginning of civilization as we know it.

Tips: be clear and concise, avoid jargon, always connect back to your thesis, and take the time to fully explain how the evidence supports your point — do not assume the reader will make the connection on their own.



WRITING SKILL

UNDERSTANDING TRANSITIONS

In a narrative (DDT) essay, **Transitions** are the words and phrases that move your reader smoothly from one idea or scene to the next, keeping the sequence of events clear and logical.

TEMPORAL

“Later that evening, the explorers set up camp near the ruins of the ancient city.”

Signals when events happen relative to one another.

DIALOGUE

“‘We’re getting closer,’ whispered the leader, approaching the tomb.”

Links dialogue to action, keeping the story dynamic.

SPATIAL

“As they moved deeper into the jungle, towering trees blocked out the sunlight.”

Helps the reader visualize movement or a change in location.

EMOTIONAL

“As the days passed, excitement gave way to frustration.”

Reflects a change in the character’s feelings.

CONCEPTUAL

“Despite the harsh conditions, the explorers remained determined to uncover the ruins.”

Shows a shift in ideas or focus.

“Write like a wolf on the hunt — use analysis to sharpen your focus, explanations to strengthen your understanding, and transitions to move seamlessly through the terrain of your ideas. Let your writing be as strategic and powerful as the wolf’s pursuit.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER



STRATEGIES FOR READING & ANNOTATION

“Just as a wolf hones its senses to navigate the wild, becoming a better reader sharpens your mind and opens up new worlds of understanding.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER



In Social Studies, you will often meet complex texts that seem difficult at first. The WolfOS Active Reading Method combines six proven active-reading moves into one repeatable routine that turns you into an active reader instead of a passive one.

1. PREVIEW THE TEXT

Before you start reading, look at the headings, subheadings, and any highlighted terms. This gives you a general idea of the main topics before you dive in.

2. ASK QUESTIONS

Turn each heading and subheading into a question. This gives you something specific to look for as you read, instead of reading passively.

3. READ ACTIVELY

Look for answers to the questions you just wrote. Take notes in the margins or on a separate sheet, and highlight key dates, names, and concepts.

4. MAKE CONNECTIONS

Relate the text to other knowledge you already have. This is Barron's strategy for deepening understanding by linking new information to what you know.

5. SUMMARIZE

After reading a section, write a brief summary in your own words. This reinforces what you learned and confirms you actually understood it.

6. REVIEW

Go back over your notes, highlights, and summaries. This step is what moves the material from short-term to long-term memory.



WORKED EXAMPLE

APPLYING THE WOLFOS ACTIVE READING METHOD TO A PASSAGE ON PREHUMAN SOCIETIES

1. PREVIEW

Look at headings: “Hunter-Gatherer Lifestyles,” “Social Structures,” “Cultural Developments.”

2. ASK QUESTIONS

What were the main characteristics of hunter-gatherer lifestyles? How were early human societies organized? What cultural developments occurred?

3. READ ACTIVELY

Note that hunter-gatherer societies were nomadic, relied on hunting and gathering for food, and had simple social structures.

4. MAKE CONNECTIONS

Relate the hunter-gatherer lifestyle to modern societies — consider how the development of agriculture and technology led to settled communities.

5. SUMMARIZE

Write a summary of each section in ten words or less.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Pick your next reading assignment. Preview it, write three questions from the headings, and read with those questions in mind before you take any other notes.

“Each book is a path through the forest of knowledge, guiding you to greater wisdom and insight.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER



ACT READING & ANNOTATION SYSTEM

“A wolf sits patiently, waiting for the perfect moment to seize today’s goal.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER



Reading complex passages under time pressure is its own skill. This system uses a small set of symbols to mark proper nouns, facts, and relationships as you read — and adapts cleanly whether you take the ACT on **paper** or on the **online/digital ACT**.

If You’re Reading a Physical Document

□ **SQUARE — PROPER NOUNS**

Names of people, places, and specific events. *Example:* □ *Mesopotamia*

○ **CIRCLE — FACTS & DATA**

Dates, statistics, specific details likely to be tested. *Example:* ○ *3500 BCE*

△ **TRIANGLE — RELATIONSHIPS**

Comparisons or cause-and-effect. *Example:* △ *Irrigation’s impact*

UNDERLINE & MARGIN NOTE

Underline key vocabulary; write the paragraph’s main idea in 5 words or less in the margin.

Best Practices for the Online ACT

The digital ACT gives you built-in tools that do the same job as paper annotation — use them the same way, every passage:

HIGHLIGHT TOOL

Highlight proper nouns, key facts, and vocabulary as you read — the same targets as the square, circle, and underline on paper.

ANSWER ELIMINATOR

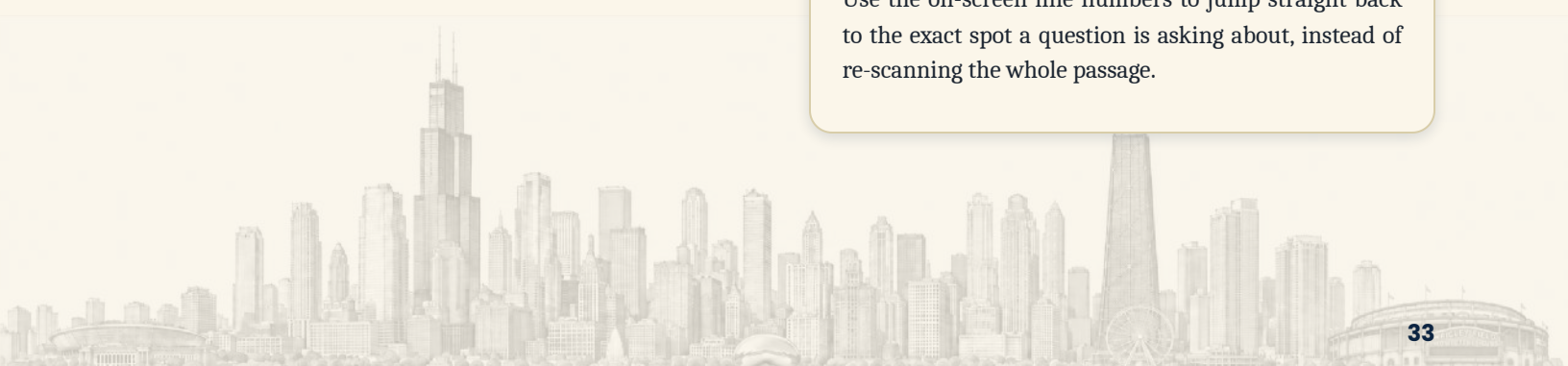
Cross out choices you’ve ruled out instead of just re-reading them — it narrows the field and saves time on a second pass.

FLAG FOR REVIEW

Flag any question you’re unsure of and move on. Answer every question at least once, then use remaining time to revisit flags.

LINE REFERENCE NUMBERS

Use the on-screen line numbers to jump straight back to the exact spot a question is asking about, instead of re-scanning the whole passage.



EXAMPLE: AN ANNOTATED PASSAGE

Shown here in the physical (paper) format, with each mark drawn directly on the words it covers — on the online ACT, the same marks become a highlight, and the margin note becomes a typed note or the passage's line-reference number.

MAIN IDEA (MARGIN NOTE)

"Development of Mesopotamian civilization."

PASSAGE EXCERPT

Mesopotamia, often referred to as the "cradle of civilization," was located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This region saw the rise of some of the earliest cities around 3500 BCE. The development of irrigation systems allowed for the cultivation of crops, which led to the growth of stable communities. These advancements in agriculture supported larger populations and led to the formation of complex societies.

WHAT GOT MARKED

☐ Mesopotamia, Tigris and Euphrates rivers · ○ 3500 BCE, earliest cities · △ irrigation's impact on stable communities · underline irrigation: a method to water crops

When to start annotating: Read the questions first, so you know what to look for. Preview the passage for structure. Then annotate as you read actively — not after you finish, and not before you have a reason to mark something.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Take any short passage from your current reading and mark it with all four symbols. Then cover the passage and see if your margin note alone is enough to remember what it said.

THE SAME PASSAGE ON THE ONLINE ACT

The digital ACT's highlighter only comes in one color — the category lives in your typed notes, not the color.

HIGHLIGHT**ELIMINATE****FLAG****LINE 1-8**

¹ Mesopotamia, often referred to as the "cradle of civilization," was located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. ² This region saw the rise of some of the earliest cities around 3500 BCE. ³ The development of irrigation systems allowed for the cultivation of crops, which led to the growth of stable communities. ⁴ These advancements in agriculture supported larger populations and led to the formation of complex societies.

MY NOTEPAD

L1 — Mesopotamia, rivers (proper nouns)
L2 — 3500 BCE, earliest cities (facts)
L3 — irrigation systems (vocab)
L3 — irrigation → stable communities (cause/effect)

Main idea: Development of Mesopotamian civilization.

FLAGGED

Q3. Irrigation most directly led to — ~~A. discovery of the Tigris River~~ **B. growth of stable communities** ~~C. founding of complex societies~~ — eliminated choices are struck through; flagging saves the spot to revisit later.

CHAPTER CLOSE

HOW THIS SKILL HELPS YOU

Effective annotation is a powerful habit that transforms how you read under pressure. Time management on the ACT is essential to a high score — proper pacing means every question gets answered, which reduces the risk of leaving anything blank and boosts both your confidence and your score.

- ✓ Identify key information quickly.
- ✓ Understand main ideas and themes at a glance.
- ✓ Recognize important facts and details without re-reading.
- ✓ Compare and contrast information effectively.
- ✓ Retain critical vocabulary and concepts under time pressure.

“A wolf sits patiently, waiting for the perfect moment to seize today’s goal. It is a commitment. It is an unrelenting pursuit of your goals. It will enable you to achieve greatness. Ordinary is not an option. Everyone wants it, but are you willing to hunt for it?”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER



SOCIAL STUDIES LITERACY

Reading and writing standards for historians, citizens, and researchers.

Social Studies literacy has two connected strands:



RH • READING HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES

Analyze primary and secondary sources, historical vocabulary, causation, perspectives, evidence, data, and competing interpretations.

WHST • WRITING HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES

Build arguments and explanations, conduct research, synthesize sources, cite evidence, revise, publish, and write routinely.

GRADES 9-10 • FOUNDATIONS

Develop reliable habits: cite precisely, summarize accurately, compare accounts, evaluate claims, and write evidence-based explanations.

GRADES 11-12 • UPPERCLASSMEN

Work independently with complex sources, reconcile conflicting evidence, evaluate interpretations, and produce sustained historical arguments.

RH.9-10 • READING STANDARDS

Grades 9-10 • Social Studies Foundations

RH.9-10.1 • TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Cite specific evidence from primary and secondary sources, attending to the date and origin of the information.

Tier 1: Locate one relevant detail.
Tier 2: Select the strongest evidence and explain why it fits.
Tier 3: Corroborate or challenge the evidence with another source.

RH.9-10.2 • CENTRAL IDEAS

Determine central ideas and accurately summarize how key events or ideas develop across a source.

Tier 1: Identify the central idea.
Tier 2: Trace how key details develop that idea.
Tier 3: Compare how several sources develop or complicate it.

RH.9-10.3 • CAUSATION

Analyze a series of events and determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply came before them.

Tier 1: Put events in sequence.
Tier 2: Explain a likely causal relationship.
Tier 3: Evaluate competing explanations and acknowledge uncertainty.

RH.9-10.4 • VOCABULARY

Determine the meaning of political, social, and economic words and phrases in historical context.

Tier 1: Define the term in context.
Tier 2: Explain how its meaning shapes the passage.
Tier 3: Compare how the term changes across periods or sources.

RH.9-10.5 • STRUCTURE

Analyze how a text's structure emphasizes key points or advances an explanation or analysis.

Tier 1: Identify a section or structural feature.
Tier 2: Explain how the structure emphasizes a point.
Tier 3: Evaluate how an alternate structure would change the argument.

RH.9-10 • READING STANDARDS

Evidence, perspectives, data, and corroboration

RH.9-10.6 • POINT OF VIEW

Compare how two or more authors treat the same topic, including the details each includes or emphasizes.

Tier 1: Identify the author's viewpoint.
Tier 2: Explain how evidence or emphasis reveals that viewpoint.
Tier 3: Evaluate competing viewpoints using their reasoning and evidence.

RH.9-10.7 • DATA & TEXT

Integrate charts, data, maps, or technical information with qualitative analysis.

Tier 1: Read information from a map, chart, or image.
Tier 2: Connect the visual evidence to the written account.
Tier 3: Synthesize multiple formats to resolve a historical question.

RH.9-10.8 • CLAIMS & EVIDENCE

Assess how well a text's reasoning and evidence support the author's claims.

Tier 1: Identify the author's claim.
Tier 2: Explain how a reason or piece of evidence supports it.
Tier 3: Evaluate the argument by corroborating or challenging its premises.

RH.9-10.9 • MULTIPLE SOURCES

Compare and contrast several primary and secondary sources about the same topic.

Tier 1: Identify one agreement or disagreement.
Tier 2: Compare how two sources treat the same event.
Tier 3: Reconcile several sources into a coherent interpretation.

RH.9-10.10 • COMPLEX TEXTS

Read and comprehend Grades 9-10 history/social studies texts independently and proficiently.

Tier 1: Explain the text's explicit meaning.
Tier 2: Analyze a complex passage independently.
Tier 3: Synthesize the full text with other demanding sources.

WHST.9-10 • WRITING STANDARDS

Grades 9-10 • Arguments, explanations, and revision

WHST.9-10.1 • ARGUMENT

Write discipline-specific arguments with precise claims, counterclaims, reasons, and relevant evidence.

Tier 1: State a clear claim and one reason.
Tier 2: Use relevant evidence and address a counterclaim.
Tier 3: Sustain a nuanced argument that weighs competing evidence.

WHST.9-10.2 • EXPLANATION

Write informative texts that organize and explain historical events, ideas, and processes with accurate evidence.

Tier 1: Explain the topic with accurate facts.
Tier 2: Organize evidence to show relationships among ideas.
Tier 3: Synthesize complex information into a precise explanation.

WHST.9-10.3 • NARRATIVE ELEMENTS

Use narrative elements inside historical arguments and explanations; this is not a separate writing requirement.

Tier 1: Place events in a clear sequence.
Tier 2: Use narrative details to clarify a historical process.
Tier 3: Integrate a focused narrative account into analysis.

WHST.9-10.4 • TASK & AUDIENCE

Produce clear, coherent writing appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience.

Tier 1: Match the response to the assigned task.
Tier 2: Adjust organization and tone for purpose and audience.
Tier 3: Make deliberate structural choices for a complex audience.

WHST.9-10.5 • REVISION

Strengthen writing through planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Tier 1: Correct errors and unclear sentences.
Tier 2: Revise organization, evidence, and explanation.
Tier 3: Reconceptualize the draft when the argument requires it.

WHST.9-10 • WRITING STANDARDS

Research, technology, evidence, and regular practice

WHST.9-10.6 • TECHNOLOGY

Use technology to produce, publish, update, and link information in individual or shared writing.

Tier 1: Use a digital tool to produce writing.
Tier 2: Publish and link relevant supporting information.
Tier 3: Update a publication in response to new evidence or arguments.

WHST.9-10.7 • RESEARCH

Conduct short and sustained research, refine the question, and synthesize multiple sources.

Tier 1: Answer a focused research question.
Tier 2: Refine the question and synthesize several sources.
Tier 3: Conduct sustained inquiry that generates new related questions.

WHST.9-10.8 • SOURCE INTEGRATION

Gather authoritative sources, search effectively, assess usefulness, integrate selectively, and cite properly.

Tier 1: Record source information and cite it.
Tier 2: Evaluate usefulness and integrate evidence selectively.
Tier 3: Search strategically and balance sources with different limitations.

WHST.9-10.9 • TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Tier 1: Use one textual detail as evidence.
Tier 2: Connect several details to analysis or reflection.
Tier 3: Synthesize evidence across complex informational texts.

WHST.9-10.10 • ROUTINE WRITING

Write over both extended and shorter time frames for discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Tier 1: Complete a brief discipline-specific response.
Tier 2: Develop writing over multiple drafts and time frames.
Tier 3: Independently manage extended and timed writing for varied purposes.

UPPERCLASSMAN STANDARDS

Grades 11-12 • Civics & Electives

Upperclassmen move from applying a method to evaluating complexity.

FROM CITING TO SYNTHESIZING

Connect specific details to the source as a whole and integrate evidence across multiple sources.

FROM COMPARING TO EVALUATING

Judge competing interpretations by examining claims, reasoning, assumptions, and evidence.

FROM ASSIGNED TO INDEPENDENT INQUIRY

Develop and refine research questions, investigate strategically, and resolve discrepancies.

FROM PARAGRAPHS TO SUSTAINED ARGUMENTS

Anticipate audience needs, address counterclaims fairly, and maintain a formal, evidence-driven line of reasoning.

RH.11-12 • READING STANDARDS

Upperclassmen • Complex sources and interpretations

RH.11-12.1 • TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Cite precise evidence and connect insights from details to an understanding of the source as a whole.

Tier 1: Locate one relevant detail.
Tier 2: Select the strongest evidence and explain why it fits.
Tier 3: Corroborate or challenge the evidence with another source.

RH.11-12.2 • CENTRAL IDEAS

Determine central ideas and summarize the relationships among key details and ideas.

Tier 1: Identify the central idea.
Tier 2: Trace how key details develop that idea.
Tier 3: Compare how several sources develop or complicate it.

RH.11-12.3 • COMPETING EXPLANATIONS

Evaluate explanations for historical actions or events and determine which best fits the evidence, acknowledging uncertainty.

Tier 1: Put events in sequence.
Tier 2: Explain a likely causal relationship.
Tier 3: Evaluate competing explanations and acknowledge uncertainty.

RH.11-12.4 • VOCABULARY

Determine how political, social, and economic terms are used and developed in historical context.

Tier 1: Define the term in context.
Tier 2: Explain how its meaning shapes the passage.
Tier 3: Compare how the term changes across periods or sources.

RH.11-12.5 • COMPLEX STRUCTURE

Analyze how sentences, paragraphs, and larger sections contribute to the structure of a complex primary source.

Tier 1: Identify a section or structural feature.
Tier 2: Explain how the structure emphasizes a point.
Tier 3: Evaluate how an alternate structure would change the argument.

RH.11-12 • READING STANDARDS

Upperclassmen • Evaluation and synthesis

RH.11-12.6 • DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS

Evaluate authors' differing views of the same event by assessing claims, reasoning, and evidence.

Tier 1: Identify the author's viewpoint.
Tier 2: Explain how evidence or emphasis reveals that viewpoint.
Tier 3: Evaluate competing viewpoints using their reasoning and evidence.

RH.11-12.7 • DIVERSE FORMATS

Integrate and evaluate information from maps, data, images, video, and texts to address a question or solve a problem.

Tier 1: Read information from a map, chart, or image.
Tier 2: Connect the visual evidence to the written account.
Tier 3: Synthesize multiple formats to resolve a historical question.

RH.11-12.8 • PREMISES & EVIDENCE

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

Tier 1: Identify the author's claim.
Tier 2: Explain how a reason or piece of evidence supports it.
Tier 3: Evaluate the argument by corroborating or challenging its premises.

RH.11-12.9 • SYNTHESIS

Integrate diverse primary and secondary sources into a coherent understanding while noting discrepancies.

Tier 1: Identify one agreement or disagreement.
Tier 2: Compare how two sources treat the same event.
Tier 3: Reconcile several sources into a coherent interpretation.

RH.11-12.10 • COLLEGE-READY TEXTS

Independently comprehend complex Grades 11-CCR history/social studies texts.

Tier 1: Explain the text's explicit meaning.
Tier 2: Analyze a complex passage independently.
Tier 3: Synthesize the full text with other demanding sources.

WHST.11-12 • WRITING STANDARDS

Upperclassmen • Advanced arguments and explanations

WHST.11-12.1 • ARGUMENT

Write sustained discipline-specific arguments with knowledgeable claims, fair counterclaims, logical organization, and strong evidence.

Tier 1: State a clear claim and one reason.
Tier 2: Use relevant evidence and address a counterclaim.
Tier 3: Sustain a nuanced argument that weighs competing evidence.

WHST.11-12.2 • EXPLANATION

Write precise historical explanations that organize complex ideas and use significant facts, quotations, and examples.

Tier 1: Explain the topic with accurate facts.
Tier 2: Organize evidence to show relationships among ideas.
Tier 3: Synthesize complex information into a precise explanation.

WHST.11-12.3 • NARRATIVE ELEMENTS

Use narrative accounts strategically within historical analysis; this is not a separate writing requirement.

Tier 1: Place events in a clear sequence.
Tier 2: Use narrative details to clarify a historical process.
Tier 3: Integrate a focused narrative account into analysis.

WHST.11-12.4 • TASK & AUDIENCE

Produce clear, coherent writing whose organization and style fit its task, purpose, and audience.

Tier 1: Match the response to the assigned task.
Tier 2: Adjust organization and tone for purpose and audience.
Tier 3: Make deliberate structural choices for a complex audience.

WHST.11-12.5 • REVISION

Strengthen writing through focused planning and revision, addressing what matters most for purpose and audience.

Tier 1: Correct errors and unclear sentences.
Tier 2: Revise organization, evidence, and explanation.
Tier 3: Reconceptualize the draft when the argument requires it.

WHST.11-12 • WRITING STANDARDS

Upperclassmen • Independent research and publication

WHST.11-12.6 • TECHNOLOGY

Use technology to produce, publish, and update writing, including responding to new arguments or evidence.

Tier 1: Use a digital tool to produce writing.
Tier 2: Publish and link relevant supporting information.
Tier 3: Update a publication in response to new evidence or arguments.

WHST.11-12.7 • INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

Conduct sustained research, synthesize multiple sources, and pursue increasingly focused questions.

Tier 1: Answer a focused research question.
Tier 2: Refine the question and synthesize several sources.
Tier 3: Conduct sustained inquiry that generates new related questions.

WHST.11-12.8 • AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES

Search strategically, evaluate strengths and limitations, integrate selectively, and avoid overreliance on any one source.

Tier 1: Record source information and cite it.
Tier 2: Evaluate usefulness and integrate evidence selectively.
Tier 3: Search strategically and balance sources with different limitations.

WHST.11-12.9 • EVIDENCE

Draw evidence from informational texts to support advanced analysis, reflection, and research.

Tier 1: Use one textual detail as evidence.
Tier 2: Connect several details to analysis or reflection.
Tier 3: Synthesize evidence across complex informational texts.

WHST.11-12.10 • RANGE OF WRITING

Write routinely over extended and shorter periods for varied Social Studies tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Tier 1: Complete a brief discipline-specific response.
Tier 2: Develop writing over multiple drafts and time frames.
Tier 3: Independently manage extended and timed writing for varied purposes.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GUIDE TO CORNELL NOTES

A note-taking system built for review, not just for capture.



Taking good notes is a skill that helps you understand and remember what you learn — and one of the best systems for doing it is **Cornell Notes**. Unlike a plain page of bullet points, Cornell Notes is built with review already in mind: every page has three working parts.

1. NOTES SECTION

The wide right-hand column, where you write the main information from the lesson as you learn it.

2. CUE COLUMN

The narrow left-hand column, where you write key terms and questions after the lesson, to test yourself later.

3. SUMMARY

A few lines at the bottom of the page where you condense the whole page into your own brief takeaway.

HOW TO TAKE CORNELL NOTES

1

DIVIDE YOUR PAPER

2

WRITE NOTES

3

CREATE CUES

4

SUMMARIZE

Divide Your Paper: Draw a vertical line about 2.5 inches from the left edge — that is your cue column, with the rest of the page as your notes section. Leave about 2 inches at the bottom for your summary. **Write Notes:** During the lesson, write down important information in the notes section, using short sentences or bullet points. **Create Cues:** After the lesson, go back and write key terms or questions in the cue column that relate to the notes beside them. **Summarize:** At the end of your notes, write a brief summary of the main points — this is what helps you review later.



WORKED EXAMPLE — THE RISE OF ANCIENT EGYPT

A completed Cornell Notes page, labeled part by part. This is exactly the layout to draw on your own paper — or the structure to recreate in a notes app.

① TOPIC / TITLE HEADER	
Topic: The Rise of Ancient Egypt · Social Studies · Sept. 12	
② CUE COLUMN	③ NOTES SECTION
Nile River	The Nile River provided water, transportation, and fertile soil for crops.
Pharaohs	Rulers of Egypt, considered gods on Earth.
Pyramids	Tombs built for pharaohs, showing advanced engineering skills.
Religion	Polytheistic, with gods like Ra (sun god) and Osiris (god of the afterlife).
Hieroglyphics	Used for record-keeping and communication.
④ SUMMARY (WRITE LAST)	
Ancient Egypt's civilization thrived because of the Nile River, which provided resources. Pharaohs, seen as gods, ruled the land and built pyramids as tombs. The Egyptians practiced polytheistic religion and used hieroglyphics for writing.	

① Header: what the notes are about and when you took them, so you can find them later.

② Cue column: written *after* the lesson — the key term or question for each row.

③ Notes section: written *during* the lesson — the actual information, in short sentences or bullets.

④ Summary: written last, in your own words, condensing the whole page.

HOW TO REVIEW YOUR CORNELL NOTES

1. COVER & 2. REVIEW CUES

Use a sheet of paper to cover the notes section, then look at each cue and try to recall the related information.

3. CHECK & 4. REPEAT

Uncover the notes to check yourself, then review regularly — repetition is what moves notes into long-term memory.

“Like a wolf tracking its prey, track your learning with sharp, detailed notes. They’ll guide you through the wilderness of knowledge and lead you to success.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER





CHAPTER NINE

RESEARCH & STUDY SKILLS

Finding what you can trust, using your time well, and knowing how you learn best.

A HABIT OF MIND

THE RESEARCH QUALITY PATH

Good research is not just “find an answer” — it is a five-step path from a real question to a trustworthy, properly credited answer. Skipping a step is how weak or inaccurate research happens.

1. QUESTION

Start with a specific, answerable question — not just a broad topic.

2. SEARCH

Use more than one search strategy: a general search engine, your library’s databases, and a subject-specific site.

3. EVALUATE

Check who wrote it, when, and why, before you trust what it says (see The Quality Gate, next page).

4. SYNTHESIZE

Combine what multiple trustworthy sources say in your own words — do not just summarize one source.

5. CITE

Record where every fact and idea came from as you go, not at the end when you have forgotten.

Why it works: Each step catches a different kind of mistake — a vague Question produces an unfocused search, and skipping Evaluate is how an unreliable source ends up in your paper.

STUDY STRATEGY

THE QUALITY GATE

Before a source earns a place in your notes or your paper, run it through this gate. Answer honestly at each question.

QUESTION 1

Can you identify who wrote or published this, and do they have real expertise or a stake in the topic?

YES →**Keep reading — move to Question 2.****↓ NO — keep reading****QUESTION 2**

Can you find the same core facts confirmed by at least one other independent, trustworthy source?

YES →**Keep reading — move to Question 3.****↓ NO — keep reading****QUESTION 3**

Is it current enough for your topic, and free of an obvious agenda that would distort the facts?

YES →**It passes the gate — safe to cite.****↓ NO — keep reading****ANY “NO”?**

Do not cite it yet — keep looking, or use it only to find better sources.

Why it works: Almost every unreliable source fails at least one of these three questions — running the gate takes thirty seconds and saves you from building an argument on a shaky foundation.



LATERAL READING

Most people evaluate a source by staying on its page and reading closely — checking the “About” section, scanning the tone. Professional fact-checkers do the opposite: they leave the page almost immediately and read **laterally** — opening new tabs to see what other, independent sources say about the site or claim before trusting a word of it.

1. OPEN A NEW TAB

Before reading deeply, search the name of the site, author, or organization itself.

2. CHECK WHAT OTHERS SAY

Look for a Wikipedia entry, a news profile, or a fact-checking site that describes who runs the source and why.

3. TRACE THE CLAIM

If a striking claim or statistic matters to your argument, search for it directly to see if other independent sources report the same thing.

4. DECIDE, THEN RETURN

Only go back to the original page to read closely once you know whether the source is worth your trust.

Why it works: A well-designed site can look credible regardless of who runs it or why — lateral reading checks the source’s reputation from the outside, where it is much harder to fake.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Pick a source you are using for a current assignment. Open a new tab and spend sixty seconds reading laterally about it before you use anything else it says.



USING AI & DIGITAL TOOLS RESPONSIBLY

AI tools can be genuinely useful for studying — but using them well is a skill of its own, and using them the wrong way is still academic dishonesty (see the Academic Honesty chapter). The line is simple: AI can help you *think*, it cannot *think for you*.

✓ REASONABLE USES

Explaining a concept a different way; quizzing you on material you already studied; brainstorming essay angles you then develop yourself; checking your own grammar.

✓ ALWAYS VERIFY

AI tools can state incorrect facts confidently. Treat any fact, date, or quote an AI gives you as unconfirmed until you check it against a real source.

✗ NOT REASONABLE

Submitting AI-generated writing as your own; having it do your research for you; using it during a test or quiz unless explicitly allowed.

✗ WHEN UNSURE

Ask your teacher before you use an AI tool on a specific assignment. Policies vary by class and by assignment — assuming permission is how honest mistakes turn into academic honesty violations.



STUDY SKILL

PLANNING & TIME MANAGEMENT

Most missed deadlines are not a motivation problem — they are a planning problem. Working backward from a due date turns one large, vague task into several small, specific ones.

1. START FROM THE DUE DATE

Write the due date down, then work backward, marking the date each major step needs to be finished.

2. BREAK IT INTO STEPS

Turn “write the essay” into research, outline, draft, revise — each with its own target date.

3. PROTECT SMALL BLOCKS

Thirty focused minutes most days beats one long cram session — and leaves room for the unexpected.

4. BUILD IN A BUFFER

Plan to finish a day before it is actually due, so a bad day doesn't become a missed deadline.

Why it works: A vague task feels overwhelming and is easy to postpone; a specific, dated step is easy to just start.



STUDY SKILL

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE & SPACED REVIEW

Re-reading your notes feels productive but is one of the least effective ways to study. **Retrieval practice** — forcing yourself to recall information without looking — builds much stronger, longer-lasting memory, especially when it is **spaced** out over several days instead of crammed into one.

**SELF-QUIZ,
DON'T RE-READ**

Cover your notes and write down everything you remember, then check what you missed — the struggle to recall is what builds memory.

**USE REAL
FLASHCARDS**

One question per card, tested in both directions. Cornell Notes cue columns (previous chapter) make ready-made flashcard questions.

SPACE IT OUT

Review new material after one day, then three days, then a week — each successful recall makes the next one stick longer.

MIX TOPICS

Studying several related topics in one session (interleaving) beats drilling one topic repeatedly — it forces you to actually retrieve, not just recognize.



CHAPTER CLOSE

METACOGNITION

Metacognition means thinking about your own thinking — noticing when you actually understand something versus when it just feels familiar. It is the thread that runs through every skill in this chapter: the Quality Gate, spaced review, and honest planning all depend on accurately judging what you do and do not yet know.

**BEFORE YOU
STUDY**

Ask: what do I already know about this, and what specifically am I unsure of?

**WHILE YOU
STUDY**

Ask: could I explain this to someone else right now, in my own words, without notes?

AFTER A TEST

Ask: which mistakes were careless, and which showed a real gap in understanding?

**ACROSS THE
TERM**

Ask: which of my study habits are actually working, and which just feel productive?

“A wolf that studies the terrain before it moves outlasts one that simply runs. Know your own mind as well as you know your material, and every skill in this guide becomes sharper.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER



WOLFOS • STUDENT GUIDE

KEEP THIS GUIDE CLOSE

Every skill in this guide, from the Inquiry Cycle on page one to metacognition on the last, is meant to be used together, not memorized in isolation. Come back to it whenever a reading feels dense, a paragraph feels stuck, or a source feels shaky — that is exactly what it is here for.

“Like a wolf navigating the wild, be fearless and determined in your quest for knowledge. Every challenge is a chance to grow stronger and wiser.”

— RANDAL P. WOLFINGER



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