

Using the **conventions** of any form of communication saves time and increases impact. In the social sciences and humanities, the conventions usually include a *specific thesis* at the end of the introduction; *topic sentences* that form a backbone of the argument; and a *conclusion* that synthesizes major points and reflects on their significance, implications, or other relevance. These areas deserve extra attention as you revise, but do not limit your revision to them.

A. FOCUS in the introduction: not too wide, not too tight, but on topic.

I often write a “throat-clearing” PP or more to get started, and I’ll later replace it. In the Writing Center, we call such writing “killing our darlings,” because we love what we’ve written, but you can save your excerpted bits for possible later use. *Wide*: “in the history of humankind,” “throughout history,” or “women always...”

Narrow: “Cady Stanton used vivid imagery, domestic examples, and X to support her argument that women should adopt trousers.” What text? When? Give the full names of the authors and texts in the first PP; use last names and abbreviations for texts in subsequent mentions (DOS, DOI, “Costume,” etc.).

B. Provide CONTEXT for the authors and texts

Start by “landing” readers in the topic of the essay: name a planet, country or city before discussing a building: “Here at MIT” = “The first wave of the US women’s rights movement began in the nineteenth century”; “Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Sojourner Truth both tried to change ideas about gender roles in the nineteenth-century American women’s rights movement.” Because the prompt asks you to analyze the rhetorical strategies these authors use, you normally would not discuss all three waves; instead, focus on strategies.

To locate authors and texts, give the dates, within parentheses, after titles.

Ex.: “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions” (1848), given at the Seneca Falls Convention.

C. Tailor your thesis statement so that it matches your essay and no one else’s; it should include your best ideas in a nuanced and complete sentence (or two) that captures the complexity of your analysis.

D. Quote the texts to support your interpretation. Readers may want to believe you, but give them reasons to do so by providing evidence.

E. Strong conclusions go beyond summary to reflect on the significance, implications, or relevance of your analysis. End with an impressive sentence. Ex.: “By juxtaposing the seemingly extremist nature of equality for women with the language of a quintessentially American and characteristically traditional text such as the DOI, the DOS suggests ...; the rights of women to equal treatment are as clear and as valid as Jefferson’s timeless words” (Ruby Tamberino 5).

F. Include a “Works Cited” page;

FOR THE MULTI-TEXT QUESTION

G. Provide a clear sense of organization (for the multi-text question—offer a rationale for analyzing one text is before another or others. Chronology?

H. Weave in your comparisons instead of "stacking" them on each other. Some papers offer multiple analyses atop one another, but the implicit connections between or among the texts need development. Make those connections explicit.

FOR THE DOI/DOS QUESTION

I. Analyze specific grievances. Instead of staying on the surface, dig in. Quote significant language, discuss it, and explain current relevance of the grievance.

IN general: avoid using “to be” verbs. English brims with specific active verbs; use them to add energy to your essay. Avoid the passive voice:

Sherlock Holmes solved the crime easily.

The crime was easily solved by Sherlock Holmes. The crime was easily solved.

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