

What's Next? Thinking About Life After High School

Developed by Rick Hansen

MODULE: STUDENT VERSION

Reading Selections for this Module

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University of North Texas. "Why Go to College?" *How 2 Choose*. University of North Texas, 23 Mar. 2010. Web. 18 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.unt.edu/pais/howtochoose/why.htm>>.

Activity 1: Getting Ready to Read—An Overview of “What’s Next? Thinking about Life After High School”

For the last few years of your life, high school has made several demands on your time and energy. Many people—teachers, family, school figures, and others—have worked hard preparing you for life after high school; and while you may or may not have devoted as much time and attention as you would like to life after high school, the fact is that this stage of your life is drawing to a close and you are confronted with the age old question: What’s next for me?

Life after high school can take many forms—some of you may be preparing for college, and others may be preparing for work of another kind. Regardless of your readiness as a student and an individual, thinking about how ready you are to enter the next stage of your life and making a few decisions about how to get started on that path are important tasks that support your potential successes. This module invites you to do just that—figure out what it is you want to do next, consider how well prepared you are for the next stage of your life, and then begin to develop plans for making the transition into life after high school.

During the next few weeks, you will be looking into your past experiences, figuring out where you excel and where you need more preparation, and then putting together a portfolio that will represent the work you have done to identify, assess, and then express your goals, plans, and readiness for whatever avenue of life you intend to pursue. The final expression of your research will be the development of one or two pieces of writing.

1. If you believe you are more inclined to pursue a career or enter the work force, write a “letter of introduction” to the work community or job that you wish to pursue.

OR

2. If you plan on entering college, write a personal essay for a college application.

At the end of this module you will have read about different aspects of career and college life, done some reflection and writing about your own goals and plans, and participated in research about your personal vision for the future. These activities will be documented in your portfolio, and the information you generate during these activities will help you as you compose the final text for the module—a letter of introduction for work or a personal application essay for college.

The culminating projects of the module will include the following items:

1. A collection of shorter writings you develop to help you generate ideas, think about your ideas, and finally make decisions about— or evaluate—the ideas you have – GRADED PACKET
2. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in which you provide answers to important questions regarding your application for a school or career opportunity (We may replace this with a copy of your Senior Culminating Project that essentially represents the *answers* to the FAQ) – PORTFOLIO ITEM
3. Your letter of introduction for work or a personal application essay for college – PORTFOLIO ITEM

Work in this module provides guidance and support as you investigate not just your own hopes for the next few years but also the requirements schools and workplaces will put on you as you enter the next stage of your life.

Activity 2: Quickwrite: Activating Prior Knowledge (Packet Item)

In this activity, you are using writing to collect ideas. In a way, you are taking inventory of your general thoughts about your future. If you need them, here are a few questions to get you started.

1. If you are going to college, why did you make this decision, and where will you go?
2. What do you want to get from your college experience?
3. If you are going into the work world or the military, why are you choosing that option?
4. What do you want from working or entering the military or any other career you might be considering?

Once you have finished writing, reread what you have written, and begin to list reasons why you are ready for the next stage of your life, or list questions regarding what you need to know about your plans.

Activity 3: Exploring Key Concepts

Words are more than lists to memorize for a test; they are concepts, the ideas that allow us to distinguish ourselves from one another. Some of us feel “courageous,” others feel “cautious,” and yet others may feel “indifferent” or “unconcerned.” The task here is (1) to find the words that best match ideas about who you think you are at this stage of your life; and (2) to begin to unpack these words for the information they provide about your attitudes and assumptions, skills and abilities, plans and goals. The more language you have to describe yourself and what you are bringing to the next stage of your life, the more opportunities you have to represent yourself accurately.

What follows is a rather brief list of words, certainly not a comprehensive list, that will help you find words that name the values and abilities you are bringing to the next stage of your life:

Activity 3 – continued (Packet Item)

Look through the list, and choose 10 words that best fit your sense of self. Write them down on a separate sheet of paper.

absent-minded	self-aware	Inarticulate	light-hearted
active	self-promoter	indispensable	low self esteem
adventurous	self-reliant	influential	mindful
analytical	self-starter	inquisitive	motivated
angry	selfish	intellectual	optimistic
appreciative	serious	kind	organized
artistic	shine at work	social person	outgoing
book smart	shy person	street smart	passionate
complicated	small steps	stressed	patient
cool	small steps	talkative	persuasive
curious	enterprising	trustworthy	pessimistic
dependable	enthusiastic	truthful	positive self esteem
determined	family person	underachiever	procrastinator
developed	fearful	valiant	realistic
devoted	goal-setter	warrior	
disciplined	habitual	wishful	
respectful	happy	worrier	
responsible	helpful	leader	
scientific	hungry	life of the mind	
	impatient		

Now rank your 20 words from most important to least important in describing who you are right now.

1.	11.
2.	12.
3.	13.
4.	14.
5.	15.
6.	16.
7.	17.
8.	18.
9.	19.
10.	20.

Activity 4: Making Predictions and Asking Questions (Packet Item)

After gathering vocabulary, take some time to write about your word choices. This activity should help you consider the significance of the words you chose by asking questions about them as key concepts and then making predictions about what you will need to do to best represent yourself in your letter of introduction or your application essay:

- Why did you rank them as you did?
- What do your words tell you about your opinion of yourself in terms of readiness for work or college?
- What would someone who knows you well think of the words you chose?
- Based on your analysis of your key concepts, predict what you will need to learn more about to achieve your goals.
- Predict how well your key concepts will work for you as you move into the next stage of your life. For example, if one of your words is “stubborn,” write about how that concept may work for you or against you as you consider your future. The more you reflect on the significance of the words you choose to identify yourself, the more information you will have as you build your final portfolio.

Activity 5: Understanding Key Vocabulary

After school, discuss your words with someone you trust, and ask them about the words you have chosen. As they talk about your words, take note of their comments by letting them talk for a while and then writing down the gist of what they say. So if someone says that your selection of “trustworthy” as a key word is good, but that there are times that you may not be so trustworthy, don’t argue—just listen. Then write down the gist of their point—what they are saying, not what you are thinking.

Your job is to try to capture their thinking and extend your understanding of the word you have selected as representing your values, beliefs, or goals. This information may become a useful chunk of writing for your final letter or essay.

Remember: It is difficult to represent yourself well if you don’t have a fairly solid sense of who you are or what you believe about yourself.

Capture at least three reactions from what someone else said about your words, and bring them to class tomorrow.

Text—“Want to Succeed in College? Learn to Fail”

Prereading

Activity 6: Surveying the Text

Before we read Angel Pérez’s article, take a little time to preview it by responding to the following questions:

1. Look at the title, and make predictions about what you think will be Pérez’s message.
2. Take a look at the length of the article, and decide if your predictions can be fulfilled in this length of the article—752 words.
3. Skim through the first two paragraphs, and read the final paragraph. Once you have done that, can you add anything to your predictions about Pérez’s message?

Reading

Activity 7: Reading with the Grain

We are always reading to gather information for our writing. But sometimes we read to extend our thinking. Just as you did when you shared your key words with another person to get more information for your writing, you are using reading as a stimulus for more thought. Good reading should cause you to consider ideas or perspectives that you may not have considered on your own.

That is the case in this reading when we are “playing the believing game” to understand the specific advice Pérez offers about how to represent ourselves to an audience.

As you read, underline (or put a check next to) the best advice Pérez gives about how to represent yourself, believing that the advice he gives is good advice. During the first read, simply mark the ideas or sentences where you think Pérez is giving advice you can use as you consider the best way to represent yourself to the community you want to enter.

Activity 7 – continued (Packet Item)

After reading the essay the first time, go back through it again and choose a few of the sentences you marked. Copy them down on the left side of the dialectical journal provided below. Once you copy the sentence in the left-hand box, write for a few minutes on the right about what the quote made you think about or why you chose the quote.

Advice Pérez gives about how we represent ourselves to others	What his comments make me think

Postreading

Activity 8: Responding to Pérez (Packet Item)

After you have filled out the dialectical journal, write a one-page description of an event or moment when you were less than perfect and explain to a reader what your response to that moment says about your character, values, or potential for work or study.

Text—“Hidden Intellectualism”

Prereading

Activity 9: Getting Ready to Read and Exploring Key Concepts Packet Item

1. Take out a sheet of paper, and write down three people you feel are intellectuals.
2. In groups of three or four, share your list and choose three from the combined list that all of you can agree are intellectuals.
3. After a class discussion, write down your definition of an intellectual.
4. Look at the three quotations about intellectuals on the overhead.
Select the quote that best matches your definition of an intellectual.
5. Why did you select this quote? Share your answer in your group or as part of a class discussion.

Activity 10: Understanding Key Vocabulary Packet Item

Understanding—before reading—selected key vocabulary crucial to the concepts of the text and then applying that understanding as you read is an important strategy for all successful readers. Knowledge of word meanings can significantly shape how well you read a text and comprehend the writer’s message as well as the arguments the writer makes in support of that message.

The list of words and phrases below should support reading comprehension by allowing you to address unfamiliar or difficult concepts prior to reading the text. This list features several key ideas, difficult phrases, or challenging words that may present some obstacles to you as you read.

Working in groups, predict what you all think each word you are assigned may mean before you go to the paragraph where you will find the word or phrase. As a group,

1. Predict the meaning of the word or phrase by discussing what you all believe it may mean.
2. Once you have predicted a possible meaning for the word or phrase, go to the paragraph listed and find the word or phrase.
3. Once you find the word or phrase, read the sentences or section that surrounds the word and see if you can figure out the meaning of the word or phrase as it is used in context.
4. Then look at the function of the word or phrase (what it is doing in the section where it is used). See if you can add to your understanding of the word or phrase.
5. Finally, if needed, use a dictionary or other resource to finalize your understanding of the word or phrase. The dictionary definition you select for the word should match the context for the use of the word or phrase in the passage where it is located.
6. After you have filled out your part of the vocabulary worksheet, prepare to inform the rest of the class about the meaning of the words or phrases you have been assigned.

Your job is to come away from this work with a sense of what others need to know about the words or phrases your group is looking into and how these words relate to what you think Graff might be saying about “intellectualism.”

The word or phrase	Our prediction	Its meaning in the essay
Group 1 educational depth and weight (¶3) retrospect (¶8) interminable (¶9) to exploit its game-like element and turn it into arresting public spectacle (¶12) domain (¶16)		
Group 2 cogitations (¶3) it's more complicated (¶8) philistine (¶9) intellectual thirst (¶11) school culture (¶11)		
Group 3 life of the mind (¶2) anti-intellectualism (¶5) negotiating this class boundary (¶6) public argument culture that transcended the personal (¶12) a sociologically acute analysis on an issue (¶18)		
Group 4 book smart (¶6) egghead world (¶9) propose a generalization (¶10) analysis (¶11) literacy training (¶16)		
Group 5 inarticulate (¶7) ambivalent (¶8) Adlai over Ike (¶8) rudiments of the intellectual life(¶10) school culture (¶11)		
Group 6 the trouble with this assumption (¶3) grist for their mill (¶3) the intellectual bit (¶8) invidious (¶14) see those interests through academic eyes (¶16)		

Reading

Activity 11: Reading for Understanding—Stop and Respond **Packet Item**

Gerald Graff’s essay “Hidden Intellectualism” poses questions about the way we see “intellect” in and outside of school. In this essay, Graff argues that a student’s intelligence may be “hidden” when viewed only from the perspective of school learning. He prompts all of us to look again at the intellectual abilities we possess, even if a person is not so proficient at school learning.

As we read this essay aloud, together, your teacher will stop at various points and ask you to respond, not by talking but by writing on a separate sheet of paper. You will be given a few minutes to write down whatever thoughts you have—questions, observations, ideas, comments, stories, things the text reminds you of, whatever comes to mind as you read.

Once you have had a few minutes to write a response to the reading, you will discuss what you have written with the class. This discussion will give you the opportunity to say what you are thinking about the reading.

Don’t wait for your teacher to answer or respond to what you have to say. He or she is simply reading the essay and providing you with places to stop, write, and then discuss the reading. The more you say about the reading, the deeper your understanding of what Graff has to say and how this work relates to your own writing project will be.

You will repeat this process several times during the reading. At the end of your reading, you will discuss with the class what you have discovered and how the text relates to your thinking about the next stage of your life.

If you do this with an open mind about making sense of the text, your writing should provide plenty of information for you to use in the development of your letter of introduction or your college application essay at the end of this module.

Postreading

Activity 12: Thinking Critically Packet Item

In response to Pérez's and Graff's essays—as well as your list of key concepts and key vocabulary—write three separate “idea chunks” that respond to these thoughts. Idea chunks are short pieces of writing, maybe one to three paragraphs long, that attempt to capture an idea you have, find some support for that idea, and explain the importance of the idea. These are not essays; you are still writing to figure out what you are thinking. In this activity, you are primarily making connections between what Pérez and Graff have written and aspects of your own life and experience.

Idea chunks are just that—chunks of ideas that you are trying out for the purpose of using in your writing. The more you write about the idea you have chosen, the easier it will be to understand and explain its significance. Push yourself to be as specific as you can be.

Here are some ideas that may help you get started:

- Review your key vocabulary list. Do the words you chose still best represent key aspects of your identity, values, goals, or abilities?
- Has the meaning or significance of your key words changed in any way?
- Have new key words surfaced or do different words seem more important after reading Pérez and Graff?
- Have Pérez or Graff added any insight to your thoughts about career or school?
- Have Pérez or Graff made you think of any moments in your life that best represent who you are just now?
- Have Pérez or Graff caused you to change your thinking about anything?

Activity 13: Summarizing and Responding Packet Item

Without really worrying about how well you spell or whether you are making complete sense, write a letter to a trusted person about how well you are—or are not—prepared for the next stage of your life.

Texts—

“10 Rules for Going to College When Nobody Really Expected You To”

“Not Going to College is a Viable Option”

“Why Go to College?”

“The 10 Most Common Excuses for Not Going to College and Why They’re All Wrong”

Prereading

Activity 14: Surveying the Text

The class will be reading four essays that address decisions about whether to start working or go to college. You will be assigned one text to read, analyze, and then summarize for its relevant information. In preparation for reading, survey the text and then make predictions about its value in terms of the usefulness of the information it provides.

- What kind of information do you think the article will provide?
- What value do you think the article will have in relation to your own research needs?
- What do you think is the purpose of the article?
- Who do you think is the intended audience for the article?
- What do you think the writer wants you to do or believe?

Reading Texts—

“10 Rules for Going to College When Nobody Really Expected You To”

“Not Going to College is a Viable Option”

“Why Go to College?”

“The 10 Most Common Excuses for Not Going to College and Why They’re All Wrong”

Activity 15: Reading for Understanding **Packet Item**

Read the four texts and complete the following writing assignment (One page per article; total of four pages):

1. A brief summary of the document’s argument (One paragraph)
2. Important quotes or information the writer provides (2-3 quotes)
3. An explanation of what you think is important about the document. (1-2 sentences)

Once you have completed your reading and notes on the text, be prepared to share your information about the article with the class.

Postreading

Activity 16: Summarizing and Responding (Orally)

After all groups report their findings, spend some time writing about whether it is best to go to college right away or move into work. This should generate some comments about what you are carrying away from the discussion and how it relates to your sense of what you want to do next.

Texts—

“Web Site Resources”

“FAQ Guide for College or Work”

Prereading

Activity 17: Making Predictions and Asking Questions **Packet Item**

Read “Web Site Resources,” and **generate questions you believe can be answered by a Web site** (this will be the rough draft for a FAQ for your next step after high school).

Now consider which sites seem like they may provide information about some of the questions you have raised and list them in your notes, or mark them on the “Web Site Resources” article.

Sample Questions:

What are the deadlines for applying to my college(s)?
Do all colleges require a personal application essay?
How do I know what is offered at a particular college?
Where can I find out about financial aid?
How should I choose a major?

Career Questions:

How much money will I make as a _____?
What do I need to know if I want to be a _____?
What skills are best if I want to be a _____?
Do I need college if I want to be a _____?
What kinds of jobs fit my interests?

Reading

Activity 18: Considering the Structure of a Web Site

Explore the following web sites for relevant information to begin your research for your Senior Culminating Project:

California Colleges.edu: <http://californiacolleges.edu>

California Careers Zone: <http://www.cacareerzone.org>

Let's say you are interested in figuring out where CSU campuses are located in California:

- Go to <https://californiacolleges.edu>.
- Scroll down and select the CSU logo.
- If you click "Map of CSU Campus Locations," students may be interested to see where many colleges are and what they may offer in terms of life around the school.
- Choose a college you want to know more about—San Marcos.
- Go to the top of the page, and select "Explore Colleges."
- From the Explore Colleges page, select "Campus Facts."
- Select "C" at the top of the page.
- When a list of colleges appears, scroll down and select CSU San Marcos.
- This should lead you to a site devoted to San Marcos. At this point, look up topics you are interested in; selecting "Undergraduate Studies home page" leads to an abundance of information about attending San Marcos. Another demonstration may focus on the application process:
- Go to <http://californiacolleges.edu/california-state-university.asp>.
- Select "How to Apply," which links to several resources listed in the lefthand column.
- Select "Freshman Admission Requirements."
- Then select "High School Course Requirements," where students will find a list of required courses for entrance into the CSU. This will probably not be new information for many students, but it will send a message that there are requirements and that getting admitted is not automatic.

- Return to the “Freshman Admissions Requirements” page, and select “Apply for Admission” in the left-hand box.
- Then select “Apply for Admission to California State University (CSU) School.”
- Now select the online application available on the CSUMentor Web site (one of the sites on the Web resources handout).

Activity 19: Reading for Understanding and Collecting Information

Review the “FAQ Guide for College or Work,” and select four topics for research.

Now select sites that seem to offer the best chance of providing the information you need. As you research questions or issues that are important to you, the personal FAQ you develop will help you know as much as you can about getting the job you want or getting into the college you want.

Postreading

Activity 20: Summarizing Research Findings Packet Item

In this activity, you will be writing a personal FAQ for your portfolio. The FAQs will be fairly simple. You will list at least 10 questions about your college or career choice and provide simple answers to the questions. We are also going to read one another's FAQs. So you will need to make your answers to your questions accurate, helpful, clear, and concise. Remember, FAQs are resources that help people understand problems and gather information that helps solve problems.

Example FAQ

When is the deadline for applying for the CSU?

- All CSUs have the same application deadline for freshman. For the fall term, the application deadline is _____. Go to csumentor.edu for up-to-date information.

How much money will I make if I want to be an auto mechanic?

- In 2011, the average salary for an auto mechanic was \$43,050.00, but that was not what new mechanics made. The starting salary was around \$23,000 for full-time work. And as far as getting a job is concerned, it looks like the next year will bring about 530 job openings due to growth and about 1,440 replacement jobs.

Once you have finished writing your FAQ, you will need to bring two copies to class. In our next class, we are going to do a “read-around,” in which we read one another's FAQs. You will need to bring a hard copy to class. Make sure whatever you bring is legible and ready for someone else to read.

Activity 21: Reflecting on Your Research Findings—Reading One Another’s Findings

We will circulate the FAQs through class, so you will have the opportunity to read what others have discovered about entering the work world or college. During the read around, keep a separate sheet of paper handy to write down any helpful information you find on someone else’s FAQ. Also, write down the name of the writer so you can meet with him or her later to see if he or she has more information you might find useful.

Connecting Reading to Writing

Discovering What You Think

Activity 22: Considering the Writing Task

During the past few weeks, you have read about different aspects of career and college life, done some reflection and writing about your own goals and plans, and participated in research about your personal vision for the future. The final expression of all this reading, research, and writing will be the development of a letter or essay you will use to apply for acceptance into the community you wish to enter.

1. If you believe you are more inclined to pursue a career or enter the work force, write a “letter of introduction” to the work community or job that you wish to pursue.

OR

2. If you plan on entering college, write a personal essay for your college application.

Remember the final letter or essay needs to be around 1,000 words, typed, proofread, and ready to send out to either a school or employer.

Consider the following questions as you begin to plan your writing.

1. What do you think is your job in this assignment?
2. What do you think may be most difficult about writing this piece?
3. Who is the audience for this writing?

Activity 23: Taking a Stance—Elements of the Rhetorical Framework

1. **PURPOSE:** Identifying the purpose of your writing means that you are able to say what you are trying to do to an audience through your writing. What effect do you want your writing to have on the reader?

Here are some questions you can use to figure out your purpose:

- What are you trying to accomplish in this essay?
- What do you want your readers to experience when they read your essay?
- What do you want this audience to understand as a result of reading your writing?

Here is some important information to remember about purpose:

- Sometimes purpose isn't clear until after you have done some writing.
- Purpose is always related to your sense of audience.
- Sometimes analyzing audience in detail helps you figure out purpose.
- Sometimes writing about purpose before you draft your response can help you find a thesis, or a structure, or a plan.
- Your sense of purpose can change as you move toward your final draft and understand more about what you are writing.

2. **AUDIENCE:** Identifying and analyzing audience help you develop a clearer understanding of your purpose. Your knowledge about your audience functions as an important guide for you when you are trying to decide what to put in your essay and how you are going to sequence your information.

Here are some questions to ask about audience:

- What do they know about your topic?
- What do you want them to know about your topic and your message?
- What interests do they have in your topic?
- Why do they need to read your writing?
- What does your audience believe about the topic?
- What makes your audience a group or a community?

Here is some important information to remember about audience analysis:

- Be specific as you take inventory of their interests, their knowledge, their sources, their agenda, and their worldview.
 - Try to summarize their argument or the ideas they contribute to the conversation about your topic
 - Be aware of the language and knowledge the audience favors: what kind of facts they like, what sort of values they insist upon, what their expectations are?
 - Remember that your writing moves from a kind of internal focus (where you are writing more to yourself) out to a specific focus on audience (where you are focused on how your writing affects the reader). How is your writing supporting a shared understanding of what you want to communicate?
3. **SITUATION:** Understanding the situation in which you are producing writing helps you understand the kind of rules you need to follow or the genre conventions that are most important to your writing. We always write in a specific context; understanding how the writing takes place in a particular context helps you understand what you need to show through your writing. For example, you may write to simply summarize a reading for yourself, or you may write to prove to the teacher that you have read something well; these two scenarios constitute two different writing situations and call for different processes and different products. Thus, the context, or situation, of the writing will influence the way you perform the writing.

Here are some questions that will help you analyze the writing situation:

- What does this writing have to do with your current situation as a writer/student?
- How does your writing relate to what others have written?
- How does your writing relate to the curriculum in your class?
- How does your writing relate to other work in the class?
- For whom are you writing?
- Are you supposed to demonstrate anything through this writing?
- What in this situation has prompted you to choose your topic?

Here is some important information to remember about the value of analyzing situation:

- Understanding situation helps you develop a clearer sense of purpose.
- Knowing the context for your writing helps you develop better ideas for the writing, allowing you to write in relation to some

other ideas; it helps with topic selection, research, composing, and revision. You need information about the writing situation to be able to make key decisions about both the content and the sequence of information you choose.

- Analyzing audience helps you understand the influence situation has on your writing choices.

4. **PERSONA/ETHOS:** This simply refers to the way you are representing yourself in the writing. As people who write, we have lots of ways of presenting ourselves: as experts on family, as experts on law, as someone searching for truth. There is an infinite number of ways we present our identity through writing. Ethos refers to the way you build credibility through your writing. It is the way you represent yourself in the writing to gain trust from the reader.

Here are some questions to ask about ethos:

- What impression do you want to make on the reader?
- What tone of voice do you want to use?
- Who are you speaking for when you write?
- Are you part of a larger community when you write?
- How can you let the reader experience your competence?

Here is some information to remember about ethos:

- Readers will pay attention to the language you use in making a judgment about your credibility.
- Readers will notice the kind of examples you use as those examples say something about your level of engagement with the topic, about your expertise, or about the amount of research you have done.
- Readers will notice how well you explain things. Your ideas find their clearest expression in your explanations. The more developed your explanations about the truth-value of your claims, the more credibility you have with the reader.
- Readers will detect inaccuracy or lack of engagement with a topic

5. **MESSAGE:** In its most elemental form, message consists of what you want to say about a particular topic, event, or idea. It is the controlling idea of the essay. Message is the product of your thinking about purpose and audience; it is what you want to say to the reader or the point you want to get across. It is your most dominant claim.

Here are some questions to ask about message:

- Can you summarize the main point of your essay in a short paragraph?
- Does your message support the purpose of your writing?
- Do all the evidence and explanations you use in your writing relate to your message?
- Does the audience need to hear your message?
- Is your message meaningful?
- Is your message self-evident?
- What happens when you apply the “So what?” question to your writing?

Here is some important information to remember about message:

- Remember to ask the age-old question about your writing: So what?
- Message is often not discovered until after you have done quite a bit of writing
- Another way to think of message is as the largest claim of the writing.
- Remember that we pass along a lot of messages in our writing, but in academic writing, one message seems to prevail as the most important.

Now that you have considered the “rhetorical framework” for your writing, develop a set of instructions for yourself about how you will use this information in your first draft.

Writing Rhetorically

Entering the Conversation

Activity 24: Composing a Draft

Today you are going to write a first draft. You have two choices for how to proceed, but you have one responsibility—you must bring a first draft of your writing to class tomorrow.

Option 1: Just start writing. In this option, your plan is to just write and then figure out, once you have written, what your structure and organization is going to be. Writers who take this route should feel like they are ready to write, which means you have done plenty of thinking and have a good sense of how you want your letter/essay to develop. Writers who take this route should be able to describe their paper to another person, telling them what the paper is going to say and what it is going to do to the reader.

After you have completed your draft, you should be able to fill out the organizational planning chart we are using to identify what you want to write about in each section of your paper and what effect you want that section to have on the reader

Option 2: In this option, you take a little time, maybe 20 minutes, to sketch out your paper using the planning chart provided below. This option is good for writers who have a sense of what they want to say but may need a little rehearsal for their paper by getting some ideas down before they begin composing. Using the chart below, think about the different sections of your paper and write to yourself about what each section is going to say and what effect you want each section to have on your reader. Filling out this chart should help you reach a point where you can describe what you think your paper is going to say after you have completed your first draft.

Planning Chart

What I will write about in this section...	The effect this section will have on the reader...
What I will write about in this section...	The effect this section will have on the reader...
What I will write about in this section...	The effect this section will have on the reader...

What I will write about in this section...	The effect this section will have on the reader...
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Activity 25: Considering Structure—Read Around Activity

In today's class, we are going to do a Read Around. A Read Around is an activity during which we read, very quickly, each essay in the class. If we don't read all the essays, that is okay, but we will run at least four cycles of reads to get a good sense of what our writing looks like. After we have finished our reading, we will develop a list of the best qualities we saw in the writing, identifying what we are doing well. Then we will make a list of things we need to work on, and perhaps provide some advice about what to do to improve our writing.

As you read papers, give some attention to the effectiveness of beginnings, middles, and ends of the paper. Making observations about how these sections of your writing are working may lead to more specific advice about improving your writing.

Follow these steps:

1. Organize into groups of four or five and face your desks together.
2. Get out your paper.
3. Cross out your name, and write a four-digit number above it (for example: 5577).
4. Elect a table leader.
5. The table leader collects the papers.
6. The table leader passes papers to the group on the teacher's left.
7. The table leader hands out the papers to his or her own group.
8. On the signal, read the paper quickly with no marking.
9. Once the teacher stops the reading, pass the paper to the left.
10. Start reading when the teacher tells you to.

11. Repeat last two steps until your group has read all the papers.
12. Discuss which paper is best; the table leader takes notes on your reasons that paper is best in the group.
13. The table leader writes down the number of the best paper.
14. Table leader collects papers and passes them to the next group.
15. Repeat steps 7-14.

The key here is to read fast, read for content, and then make sure you have good reasons for choosing the best paper in each grouping. During the discussion of the writing, take notes on the information you need to improve your own writing, paying particular attention to beginnings, middles, and ends of the writing.

Qualities of the papers that work	What I need to work on
Beginnings	
Middles	
Ends	

Revising and Editing

Activity 26: Revising Rhetorically

Today the class will work in small groups to assess the openings to your writing. We are going to look for two key elements as you evaluate the effectiveness of your openers:

1. How introductions invite the reader to get to know you

2. How effectively your introduction will help your readers distinguish you from the rest of the letters or applications they are reading

Homework: Revise your draft and bring a hard copy to class.

Activity 27: Editing

Editing is different from revising. When you edit, you are paying attention to sentence level concerns in the writing. That does not mean you ignore any content or organizational issues that surface, like problems with continuity between sentences or the development of ideas.

We are going to edit our papers for two important elements:

- Spelling and word choice
- Sentence variety

Activity 28: Reflecting on Your Writing Process

Now that you have completed your writing, having improved it as much as you could over the past few weeks, it is time to put the final touch on your portfolio. After you have assembled your portfolio, take 15 minutes or so to discuss with a partner what you have learned during this unit about some of the following ideas:

1. What are some things that good writers do as they prepare, generate, draft, and revise writing?
2. What have you learned about being an effective reader?
3. What have you learned about using writing to discover what you think?
4. What have you learned about writing as a process of decision- making?
5. What have you learned about reading and its relationship to effective writing?

Once you have discussed some of these questions in small groups, compose your own “cover letter” for your portfolio in which you explain what you have learned about reading and writing during this module. Answering any or all of these questions will not only provide your teacher with an understanding of the learning you are carrying away from this module but also give you the opportunity to say what you are learning and keep a record of the strategies and assumptions that shape the habits of effective readers and writers.