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Your Journey to First-Year Success: A K-State First Companion Textbook

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YOUR JOURNEY TO FIRST-YEAR SUCCESS

A K-STATE FIRST COMPANION TEXTBOOK
Your Journey to First-Year Success
A K-State First Companion Textbook

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INTRODUCTION
HOW TO USE THIS TEXTBOOK
As you are just starting your college journey, you will encounter many types of teaching and learning. We want to talk about how to use this online textbook.

Reflect as you read
This textbook incorporates numerous reflection activities throughout each chapter, designed to keep you focused on the reading and thinking about what you’re learning. You can complete each of these activities in your printed Activity Guide.

Engage with the textbook
In Chapter 15, we will provide strategies for engaging with your reading assignments. Before you get there, however, we want to make sure you find a strategy that works for you to engage with this textbook. You can print off chapters, take notes on a separate sheet of paper, or use software that allows you to take notes right on your computer or electronic device. The key here is to do more than just read the material. Instead, you want to actively engage with it. You’re going to learn so much more that way!

Ask questions as they arise
If you have questions about the material as you read, don’t be afraid to ask your instructor, learning assistant, or your peers. You learn more when you ask questions, so speak up if there’s something you don’t understand.
SECTION 1:
INTRODUCING THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY
Welcome to K-State! Every K-Stater is excited for you to start your transformative journey and we can’t wait for you to get involved in all that we have to offer. As you begin this journey, we want to share with you the rich histories and traditions that make K-State the university we know and love today. In learning more about where we come from, we can understand where we are and can help shape the future of K-State.

As you read this chapter, you will:

- Learn the history of K-State and our traditions
- Understand our legacy as a land-grant institution
- Develop your place in the K-State family, through participation in traditions, organizations, and more

In the first part of the chapter, you’ll learn a lot about the history of K-State. After reading, write a couple sentences that reflect on what you learned. Consider answering the following questions:

1. What surprised you about the history of K-State?
2. What is your favorite part of K-State’s history?
3. What would you like to learn more about? You can explore this more during your time at K-State!
K-State: your first history lesson

Our university began as Bluemont Central College and opened to its first students in 1860. Settlers in the area valued education and felt that a college was an important addition. Serving first as a primary and preparatory school for students underprepared for college, Bluemont College was privately run until 1863. At that time, Kansas had already become a state (January 29, 1861—be ready to celebrate Kansas Day!) and had accepted the Morrill Act, which allotted each state 30,000 acres of land for each member of the House and Senate. The land, or proceeds from selling the land, could be used to start a college. With 90,000 acres, the state of Kansas was ready to establish its first college, following the provisions set forth by the Morrill Act:

“…the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the states may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.”

To put it in everyday terms, the Morrill Act aimed to create colleges that focused on agriculture, engineering, and military training, while not excluding other foundational areas of study that had long been the focus for higher education. The goal was to offer educational opportunities to a wider variety of students. These democratic ideals set the stage for the culture and feel of K-State then and now.

At the time, Bluemont College was experiencing financial difficulties. Its board offered 100 acres, a building, and library volumes to the State of Kansas. The State accepted on February 16, 1863—K-State’s official Founder’s Day. On March 3rd of the same year, the legislature passed an act establishing Kansas State Agricultural College.

Because of the land “granted” to the state through the Morrill Act, KSAC became a “land grant college”. The first class of 52 students was exactly 50% male, 50% female, and included studies in mental and moral sciences, mathematics and natural sciences, and music. From the beginning, our university was dedicated to being a co-educational institution ready to serve all students.

KSAC became Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science in 1931, and Kansas State University of Agriculture and Applied Science in 1959. Buildings have been added, razed, burned, and rebuilt. Our mascot started out as a black Labrador named Boscoe (no relation to our current Vice President for Student Life, Dr. Pat Bosco, but what a coincidence!). Later, K-State used a real wildcat named Touchdown, and, finally, adopted Willie in 1947. Willie has also changed significantly.

Throughout the many changes that K-State has seen throughout the years, there are a few things that remain the same. From our days as Bluemont College to the present, K-State has been committed to educating and including all students. We have also developed many traditions that honor our history and will continue to shape our future.
At K-State, we do FRIENDLY
Can’t find the building where you have class starting in t-minus two minutes? Ask that person walking by you on the sidewalk. We have all needed help, and our friendliness and willingness to help is part of The Wildcat Way.

K-Staters are known for their friendly demeanor. Open a door for a fellow classmate or professor. Direct a visiting family fumbling with a map. Walk the group of new first-year students, standing in the quad with a bewildered look, to the building they need, then sprint to your own class. Extraordinary? Nope, just The Wildcat Way!

At K-State, we do PURPLE
Purple Pride ice cream at Call Hall dairy bar. One of 30-plus flavors, all made by students!

Join more than 20,000 students, alumni, and fans at Purple Power Play at the Park for food, fireworks and more at the pep rally held the Thursday and Friday evenings before our first home football game. The Purple Masque Theatre, home to student-directed performances, is housed in the renovated West Stadium.

Purple! Purple shirts, purple shoes, purple bags, purple water bottles, purple pens. If it can be made in purple, you will find it here. Wear your purple with pride!

At K-State, we do the WABASH
After a fire in the 1960’s left the music department with only one piece of music, “The Wabash Cannonball” has become an easily recognizable tune that rouses any K-State crowd. Stand up, clap your hands, and get ready to WABASH.

Another great tradition occurs at basketball games. Students at men’s basketball games tear up newspapers into tiny bits, throwing them into the air at the introduction of the home team. (Forward to 1:20 if you want to go straight to the paper toss).

At K-State, we are FAMILY
Invite your family to join you for our annual K-State Family Day to participate in activities designed to welcome families to K-State and to introduce them to our history and traditions.

The Parent and Family Association helps families of K-State students feel connected to the University. Access to a hotline and invitations to family events on campus help our extended family stay close wherever they are.

Bill Snyder Family Stadium has been home to the K-State football team since 1968, and was re-named in 2005 to honor Coach Bill Snyder. The stadium is at the center of a growing athletic complex that includes Bramlage Coliseum, Tointon Family Stadium for baseball, the Ice Family basketball practice facility, a soccer complex, and more.

Many of our facilities throughout the university include the word “family” to recognize those who have generously given
of their talent and treasure to K-State, including the new Berney Family Welcome Center that houses New Student Services and the Career Center. These families have given generously to advance our university, and it is the community that is formed within those buildings—attending athletic events, concerts, guest speakers and graduations together—that truly make us K-State.

At K-State, we do COMMUNITY
The Principles of Community were developed in 2017 and endorsed by administrators, students, faculty and staff. We will explore these principles and how practicing them helps us accomplish our land-grant mission in Chapter 5.

CAT (Connecting Across Topics) Communities provide the opportunity for small groups of students to learn together while taking three courses focused around an area of study or a shared interest. CAT Communities offer mentoring from a professor and an advanced undergraduate Learning Assistant who shares the students’ interests. They are an ideal place for students to meet each other and to study together.

You have the opportunity to impact our community here at K-State, through your shared experiences with others. Whether it be through a love of sports, a passion for social justice, an appreciation of the arts, a desire to learn about cultures—or a combination—you can contribute to our community that is open and welcoming, inclusive of all people.

At K-State, we do GREAT FOOD
Remember that Call Hall ice cream? You can also get your fill of fresh-made cinnamon rolls and hot cocoa (among other mouthwatering goodies) at The Bakery in the lobby of Derby Dining Center and Cornerstone Coffee and Bakery, just off the lobby of Wefald Hall. Each Wednesday during the school year, the Bakery Science Club hosts a bake sale where you can stock up on fresh baked bread, monster cookies, brownies and more. The chocolate milk at the residence hall dining centers is also a student favorite.

Off-campus, you will find Varsity Donuts, Radina’s Coffeehouse, and Taco Lucha, as well as many other local eateries and shopping, in nearby Aggieville.

At K-State, we do OPEN HOUSE
Every year, for one Saturday in April, the entire campus throws open the doors and welcomes over 20,000 visitors to see all of the cool projects students and faculty have been working on all year. See robots in action, watch a glassblowing experiment, ride a weed-eater powered bicycle and enjoy free food throughout campus. Open House will be held on a Saturday in early April. Look for opportunities to get involved in your department and student organizations.

At K-State we CELEBRATE STUDENTS
Check in with #kstate, @KState on Twitter and the K-State Today emailed directly to your inbox daily to see what accolades your fellow students are earning.

Become part of the action by getting involved in research, taking leadership in one of our 500-plus student organizations, or serving your residence hall, scholarship house, sorority or fraternity through committee work.
At K-State, we LEARN TOGETHER
In your K-State First course, gone are the days of lecture after lecture. K-State First courses engage in co-curricular activities—activities outside of the classroom that support learning and community building. From rappelling down a cliff and walking the history of the Overland Trail, to participating in a challenge course side-by-side with your professor and classmates, everyone is engaged in academic endeavors.

Each year, a committee of students, faculty, and staff choose a common book for the campus. This year, you received your own copy of this year’s common book. People all over campus have read it, and you will be hearing more about it in your classes, at campus-wide activities, and during our main event each year. Some years you will even have the opportunity to hear from the author in a live, on-campus event!

Research opportunities are plentiful for undergraduates, and it’s not just for scientists. Collaborate with a professor to study sustainable energy, work with preschoolers at the Hoefflin Stone House Child Care Center, or dream big in the Electronics Design Laboratory. In fact, K-State is working towards being a Top 50 Research Institute by 2025.

Take advantage of the numerous other opportunities for co-curricular learning offered throughout campus. Whether it is a Landon Lecture, a class field trip, or a comedy act sponsored by UPC (see the UPC line-up of presentations, concerts, and more at www.k-state.edu/upc) you will learn just as much outside of the classroom as you will in it—though it is still necessary to attend class!

At K-State, we SERVE
K-State Proud, a student-led fundraising campaign, has raised more than $1.1 million in its first eleven years to help fellow students in need. Students raise money through selling t-shirts to wear at a specified home basketball game and through student donations. That money is used to help fellow students who are facing a hardship and need financial help in order to stay enrolled at K-State.

Students help students, and students help others. HandsOn Kansas State places students in many service and volunteer opportunities around campus and in the community. Student Program Coordinators are available to help you find opportunities connected to your interests and provide service-learning training when necessary. If you are a service-minded individual, add joining HandsOn K-State to your bucket list this first semester.

Join a Staley School of Leadership Studies International Service Team to serve abroad. You can master a language, gain leadership experience, and develop cultural appreciation during a summer of service.

Extend your leadership beyond campus through involvement in the Manhattan Good Neighbor program. Partnering with the City of Manhattan, Riley County Police Department, USD 383, Manhattan Housing Authority and others, you can help maintain safe, clean and welcoming neighborhoods for university students.
At K-State, we INCLUDE
From our first days as KSAC, inclusion has been the K-State way. Throughout our history, we have maintained a near 50/50 enrollment of men and women. Our first black alum graduated in 1899, and presently one of every five students is black, Asian, Hispanic, American Indian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or multiracial.

Military men and women are part of our K-State family. Our Army ROTC program earned K-State a designation as a Top 30 College for Military Students in Military Advanced Education Magazine. The Air Force ROTC program continues to commission excellent officers, and the campus building which houses military sciences has been renamed General Richard B. Myers Hall after one of AFROTC’s distinguished alums and current university president.

Every year, military men, women and families are honored at various sporting events on campus. Many K-Staters have received the Outstanding Civilian Service Award, including Jon Wefald, former K-State President; Briana Nelson-Goff, professor of family studies and human services and director of the Institute for the Health and Security of Military Families; and Todd Holmberg, Executive Director of McCain Auditorium.

We are excited that you are among the newest members of the K-State Family! We hope that by participating in these and other campus traditions, you can find your place in the K-State Family.

Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

✓ Show knowledge of the history of Kansas State University
✓ Understand that being a family means caring for each and every person at K-State—even when you disagree
✓ Identify a K-State tradition that you can participate in as you find your place in the K-State Family!
We hope you are enjoying your first days and weeks as a K-State student! Hopefully you have explored some of the histories and traditions of our university and have found a few opportunities to start finding your fit in the K-State Family. As you start exploring those opportunities, like doing *The Wabash Cannonball*, heading to the *Rec*, joining an amazing *club or organization*, getting connected with faculty-lead *research*, or setting yourself up for *academic success*, there’s a couple of things you should know.

Kansas State University is a land-grant institution, and a public, 4-year, R1, university.

So: what does that mean and why does it matter?

That’s a good question! Knowing what kind of university you’re attending can help you understand what kind of priorities faculty will have, the types of learning that will occur, what resources will be available, and more importantly, how you can engage in your college experience. These factors will help you to leverage opportunities so that you have the best possible experience while you’re here.

So let’s break down the basics:

**Land-grant**

K-State was actually the first public institution of higher learning in the state of Kansas when it opened in 1863. Land-grants were created to provide access to “practical arts” education to help citizens live full, professional, and civic lives. As you learned in Chapter 1, this is an important part of K-State’s tradition, and K-Staters are passionate about the land-grant mission. Faculty, staff, and community outreach offices come together every day
to support the work to advance the land-grant mission of access and excellence.

**Public, 4-year**
Historically, as a public university, K-State received much of its funding from the State of Kansas. Over time, state funding has declined, and we rely heavily on student tuition, grants, and private dollars to support the day-to-day operations of the university. As a 4-year institution, we confer baccalaureate degrees, a degree that signifies the completion of undergraduate learning.

**R1 or Research 1**
This classification is given by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education and demonstrates that K-State has a substantial level of research activity. This means that many of your professors are working constantly to produce new knowledge both to advance K-State and enhance and contribute to their academic fields.

Understanding what kind of university you’re attending is important, but it is by no means the end of learning about your university. As a student, you can continue to explore in order to understand the organizational structures and many ways to navigate university life. Checking out public resources like the Kansas State University organizational chart can further help you understand how we break down this big system. On the chart, you can see a thousand-foot view of how the university works, which areas do what for students, and how all K-State staff—including the president, professors, advisors, student life professionals, and more—fit in to the university structure.

**REFLECTION ACTIVITY**

We’ve just talked through how our university is structured. Within that structure, we have faculty members, administrators, graduate teaching assistants, undergraduate peer educators—such as a Resident Assistant (RA) or a Learning Assistant (LA)—and students. Without investigating these various positions, it might be tricky to know what different positions require of their employees.

Before your next class period, choose either a K-State faculty member or a K-State student employee. To learn more about what they do, please complete the following:

Faculty/staff or student employee name:

Job title:

1. What are the stated requirements of your position?
2. What ‘hidden’ requirements also exist?
3. What is your favorite part of your job?
4. What challenges do you encounter with your work?

Reflect on the answers you received, using the following questions:

1. What surprised you?
2. Where might this person fit in the university organizational chart?
3. How does this person and their job relate to you as a student?
Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

✓ Define what a land-grant, public, 4-year, RI university is
✓ Know what your professors or student worker peers do for their jobs
There are many ways to be a successful student at K-State, and we’ll examine these strategies in upcoming chapters (such as using your strengths or exploring a major). As you get started, it’s important to take time to think about how to engage with your courses—both in and out of the classroom.

Before we explore how to maximize your K-State experience, understand that K-State has many resources to help you succeed. From free tutoring to financial counseling, K-State has someone to help you with any situation. To see all of the resources K-State offers, check out the One Stop Shop for Student Success.

In this chapter, we will discuss three key strategies for making the most of your academic pursuit: engaging with your faculty member, understanding K-State’s online platforms, and practicing effective email communication.

**Engaging with your faculty members**
A first step is learning about the people teaching your courses as they may approach your class in different ways. The people who teach your classes might be tenure-track faculty who have research, teaching, and service expectations of their appointment; instructional faculty whose main focus is to teach courses, or graduate students that are completing post-undergraduate degrees at K-State. When you meet with an instructor for the first time, you might ask, “Tell me more about your role in the university,” or “What are your research interests?” Both of these questions will help you get to know the person teaching your course, what they value and love about working at a university, and how they might approach teaching your class.

Getting to know your professors and instructors will also help you understand
the expectations that they have for you in the classroom and as a student in their course. Students that maximize all that the K-State experience has to offer also increase their learning by utilizing faculty office hours, engaging in classroom discussions and asking questions, and generally demonstrating interest in learning.

Your faculty members also expect you to uphold academic integrity. K-State’s Honor Code states:

On my honor, as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work.

Let’s break this down:
- “On my honor, as a student…” – It’s up to you to make sure you know if what you’re doing is cheating or not. When in doubt, talk to your faculty member!
- “…I have neither given nor received” – It’s equally unethical to cheat or to help someone cheat.
- “…unauthorized aid” – You cannot receive assistance that you’re not allowed to have. For instance, you likely cannot complete an online exam in groups. However, if your faculty member tells you to work in a group, then completing the exam in a group would then be considered authorized (allowed) aid.
- “…on this academic work” – Any exam, essay, or other type of academic assignment you complete for class.

Understanding K-State’s online platforms
It is also important to know about the primary modes of communication and the platforms that you’ll be expected to use as a K-State student. Understanding which platform to use when, and how to use it to maximize your time, will set you on a pathway for success right from the start.

KSIS
KSIS is K-State’s internal system. This is what you’ll access to view your student records, see your class schedule and advisor information, and enroll in classes. Here’s an example of a student’s KSIS page:

When you’re ready to discover who your advisor is, enroll for a new semester, or apply for graduation, you can find detailed information about how to navigate KSIS.
K-State Online, powered by Canvas

K-State Online, also known as Canvas, is the platform that K-State uses to provide online access to your coursework. Each semester, your K-State Online will populate with your new classes. Professors and instructors each utilize the course pages differently, but you will likely be able to find syllabi information, grades, assignment guidelines, and more.

Before starting any class, access to your class Canvas page and make sure you know what is available. As a small note, faculty members have a report of who has accessed the Canvas page (with specific dates and times). That’s one reason it’s important to actively use this resource, as it will establish a positive relationship between you and your faculty member.

Practicing effective email communication

Communicating with your professors and instructors can seem like a daunting task, but it doesn’t have to be. K-State professors and instructors are dedicated to your success. They want to see you engaged in the class, staying curious about the coursework, and learning to push and experiment with new ideas. They want to walk alongside you to support your academic success. Sending an email will likely be the best way to communicate with your instructors outside of class time and office hours. Sending an effective email will ensure a timely response that helps you make progress on your goals.

When emailing, it’s crucial to always keep your audience and their needs in mind. If you’re emailing your faculty member, then they are your audience, or the intended recipient of the email. If you’re not sure what your audience needs, you can ask yourself “What does my audience already know? What does my audience need to know?” For example, your faculty member will know the purpose of the course you’re in, so you wouldn’t need to remind them of that. However, they would likely need to know why you’re writing the email. Is it to ask a question about class? To set up a meeting? Whatever the purpose is, clearly state it in the email.

Faculty members tend to respond well to concision and clarity in their emails. What does this mean? It means that if you can say something in one sentence or one paragraph, choose to say it in one sentence. This means that your email will be more to-the-point (concise) and your audience will have a better chance of following your ideas.

In terms of clarity, think through how your audience might perceive your content and
take the time to proofread anything you send. Also, consider having someone else read your email draft before you send it—especially if it’s an email you’re worried about sending.

Finally, consider what tone you use in your email. Emailing is different than texting a friend. When you text, there’s no need for punctuation, full sentences, etc., because you tend to have a closer relationship with your audience. Think about erring on the side of being more formal in an email if that helps.

**Structuring an effective email**
While each email is different, there’s a general structure you can use to send an effective email.

**Address**
An address is how you begin an email. This determines the reader’s first impression of you. To be successful here, you can research the title of the person you’re emailing and use an opening phrase like “Dear Dr. Smith,” or “Good afternoon Dr. Smith.” For instance, does your professor have an advanced degree, such as a Ph.D or Ed.D? If so, make sure to use Dr. unless they explicitly say otherwise. Have a conversation with your professor or instructor to find out how they prefer to be addressed. Some faculty may want you to use more formal approaches by addressing them as “professor” or “Dr.” Some faculty might invite you to use their first name. It’s important to ask them.

**Message**
The message is the bulk of your email, where you describe your purpose for emailing the reader. You can first introduce yourself (if your reader doesn’t know who you are), and then quickly convey why you’re writing to them. Professors will notice that you’ve taken initiative if you use more formal language in your email and provide appropriate information, context, or timelines. If necessary, you can use a bulleted list to convey a lot of information in an accessible format.

**Close**
The close is end of an email. Using a send-off like “Sincerely,” “Thank you,” or “Best wishes,” ends your email with a sense of good will for the person you’re writing to. Emails without a close can seem unfinished or signal to your audience that you don’t respect them.

Let’s take a look at an example of a successful email from a student to Dr. Willie Wildcat:

---
To: K-State First
Cc:

Subject: Office Hour Appointment

Dear Dr. Wildcat,

My name is Kai Kansas and I'm in your MW section of Introduction to K-State Culture. I saw your office hours are Tuesdays at 10:30 am. Would I be able to schedule an appointment for that time to discuss our first assignment?

Thank you,

Kai
---
Let’s break down what is effective about this email:

- The email has an address (“Dear Dr. Wildcat”), and it is specific and professional. Rather than saying “Hi,” or “Yo Wildcat,” the writer takes the time to look up his title (Dr.) and uses that when addressing him. Additionally, the use of “Dear” establishes an effective tone for a faculty audience.

- The body text is specific and gets to the point after a quick introduction. As a faculty member, you would read that email and immediately know who you’re talking to and what need that person has. Additionally, the tone of the message is more formal, which maintains a positive relationship between the reader and the writer.

- The email has a closing (“Thank you, Kal”) and it is formal in tone. “Thank you” is effective because it thanks Dr. Wildcat for taking the time to read the email.

As a quick sum-up of what we learned: when in doubt, err on the side of formality, and always keep the needs of your audience in mind.

**REFLECTION ACTIVITY**

An undergraduate student, Brad, is writing an email to his faculty member, Dr. Lea Sarfati. Here’s the email he sent:

Leah, Hey so I’m not going to class tomorrow. Tell me what I miss so I don’t get behind okay – Brad

Equipped with the knowledge you gained this chapter, please answer the following questions:

1. What is currently working well in this email?

2. If you wanted to help Brad improve his email, what revision suggestions would you provide?

3. Draft a revised email that Brad could use.

4. After drafting this email, reflect on what you’ve learned about email etiquette. What information was new to you? What do you think is most important to remember?
Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define what academic integrity means
- Navigate K-State’s online resources
- Write an effective email to a faculty member
“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”
~Audre Lorde

What does diversity mean?
What is diversity? It is a word you might hear a lot, but how can we define it in a meaningful way, and how can we integrate it into our lives so we’re not just checking off the “diversity” box?

Diversity, in its most basic definition, is simply a group of people with different social and cultural identities working, learning, playing, and living together. You might hear the term diversity together with interculturalism. Here at K-State, and in most university settings, interculturalism means we actively work together to foster respect and understanding of varying social groups, races, religions, ethnicities, sexualities, and cultures. We also act on this respect and understanding by engaging with each other in meaningful ways.

Highlighted below are definitions for diversity, inclusion, equity, and intercultural learning, so you can begin to see the ways they connect and are incorporated into a college campus like K-State.

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued.

A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender — the groups that most often come to mind when the term “diversity” is used — but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation,
socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves
different ideas, perspectives, and values.1

**Inclusion** is active, intentional and ongoing engagement with diversity—inside and outside your
classes and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might
connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication and empathic
understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.2

**Equity** is the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable
power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.3

**Intercultural learning** is about strengthening your awareness of self, awareness of others, and response,
behavior, and reflection when around people like you or different from you. Intercultural learning is not
about changing who we are or what we value. It is about being able to work successfully in community
with others who are different than us both in
the classroom, professionally, and personally.

When thinking in terms of diversity, inclusion, equity, and intercultural learning, you should not simply
be surrounding yourself with, or “collecting”, people who are different from you, but engaging with
them to understand knowledge and ideas from varying perspectives. This means going beyond checking
off boxes of people in your life, such as “I have a black friend”, or “I have a friend who is gay” and
leaving it at that. We need to be having conversations about what those identities might mean to them or
how it affects their lives.

It is also important to understand your own identity in terms of race, gender, sexuality, etc. Once you
appreciate your identity, you can use that to explore various cultures that you belong to as well. Culture
encompasses the beliefs, arts, and ways of thinking or behavior of a particular group. For example, part
of the culture of K-State is that we are a family.

Some of the forms and categories that we use when discussing identity, culture, and diversity include:

- Race/Ethnicity
- Sex/Gender
- Gender Identity or Expression
- Sexual Orientation
- Mental/Physical Ability
- Age
- National Origin
- Socioeconomic Class
- Religion
- Political Affiliation

A good way to begin understanding these categories is to explore ways in which they connect to your
own life. Throughout this chapter you will have questions that you can answer to help jump start your
exploration. Take time to reflect and answer when prompted to do so.

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1 UC Berkeley Center for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity, Glossary of Terms.


Look in before reaching out
Oftentimes when we think of diversity our minds immediately go to others, and how they are different from us. However, an important first step is to look inwards and examine our own culture, identities, beliefs, and biases before engaging with someone else.

Who are you? While this question seems short and simple, the answer can be difficult to work through. There are a variety of different identity categories that influence the ways that we shape ourselves. These categories can also inform our actions in the world and how we respond to those that differ from us. These include, but aren’t limited to, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical/mental ability, age, class, region, and religion. Try to think critically about the personal values and beliefs you hold.

Free write about the different sources that influence your understandings of yourself and of others. Some examples might include:

- Parents
- Peers
- Media (television, movies, social media, advertising, etc.)
- Personal experiences

If you’re not sure of where to start, consider the following questions:

1. What are some of your favorite movies, books, or television shows? How have they helped you to understand yourself and others?

2. Do you see share values with a particular comic or film hero?

3. Have you read or seen the story of someone completely different from you? Are these messages positive, negative, or a complicated mixture of both?

4. What areas of your life do these sources impact? What do you think might happen if you challenged the thinking of one of these sources?
Another way to explore your own culture and identity is through creative storytelling. The “I Am From Project,” created by George Ella Lyon and based on her original poem, Where I’m From, will help you to not only understand some of the things, people, and institutions that have shaped you, but will also help you connect to others in your classroom and community.

Before you write your own poem, check out sample I Am From poems to see what they look like.

Visit the I Am From Project website to explore other stories and ways to engage in diversity. On the site it emphasizes why these stories and our ability to interact with one-another are so important, not only as students, but as citizens:

“Our deepest hope is to open a way for We the People to express who this country really is, what our values are, and how they unite rather than divide us. America’s embrace is wide enough to include all of us if we put our minds and money to our common welfare.”

Use the following template to draft your poem, and then write a final draft to share on blank paper.

I Am From...

I am from ____________ (specific ordinary item)
From ____________ (product name) and ____________ (product name)
I am from the ____________ (home description)
___________ (adjective), ____________ (adjective), ____________ (sensory detail)
I am from ____________, (plant, flower, natural item) ____________ description of above item)
I’m from ____________ (family tradition) and ____________ (family trait)
From ____________ (name of family member) and ____________ (another family name)
I’m from the ____________ (description of family tendency) and ____________ (another one)
From ____________ (something you were told as a child) and ____________ (another)
I’m from ____________ (representation of religion or lack of), ____________ (further description)
I’m from ____________ (place of birth and family ancestry) ____________ (a food item that represents your family), ____________ (another one)
From the ____________ (specific family story about a specific person and detail)
The ____________ (another detail of another family member) ____________ (location of family pictures, mementos, archives)
__________ (line explaining the importance of family items)

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Try to keep in mind that mere tolerance should not be your end goal. Go beyond tolerance and begin to respect and celebrate the differences among people. Enhance your understanding, and the ways in which you learn. Remember that you are not an individual learning in the vast vacuum of space; rather you are part of a larger community, and other people will help to shape you and the culture you engage with.

**Why is diversity and inclusion important for me?**

While you’re at K-State, the other students, staff, and faculty are your community. We all have different backgrounds, but we are working together with the common goal of furthering our education and continually engaging in critical thinking. This is an easier task when working respectfully with a group of people. Part of being an educated person is knowing about others and working effectively with people who are different from you--college is a great place to gain practice for your future professional work and your place in diverse communities.

While the overall goal is to have communities that are equitable and allow us all to thrive in the world, research demonstrates that engaging with diversity has direct positive effects on you as an individual as well.

Some of these benefits include broadening your interests and building social self-confidence by adapting to unfamiliar social situations, accelerating and deepening your learning by helping you to step outside of your comfort zone through interaction and collaboration with more people that are different than you, strengthening your critical thinking skills by seeking out a variety of perspectives to see all sides of an issue, stimulating creative thinking by generating ideas with others who have diverse perspectives, and enhancing your career success to prepare you for a global society where you can solve problems and collaborate with diverse co-workers, customers, and clients.5

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In a 2013 study, researchers found that frequent diversity interactions fostered considerable growth for individuals in their leadership skills, psychological well-being, intellectual engagement, and intercultural effectiveness.⁶

Some of the specific ways that diversity and intercultural interactions can benefit you are highlighted below:

**Leadership skills**
- Consciousness of self – awareness of values, emotions, and attitudes that motivate one to take action
- Congruence – actions are consistent with one’s most deeply held beliefs and convictions
- Commitment – energy that motivates one to serve and drives the collective effort
- Collaboration – working effectively with others in a common effort
- Common Purpose – working with shared goals and values to achieve the task at hand
- Controversy with Civility – recognition that viewpoint differences are inevitable and that these differences must be aired with respect
- Citizenship – responsibility for and connections with the community and society
- Change – ability to adapt to environments and situations that are constantly evolving

**Psychological well-being**
- Autonomy – sense of self-determination and independence
- Environmental mastery – capacity to effectively manage one’s life and surrounding world
- Personal growth – sense of continued growth and development as a person
- Positive relations with others – quality interpersonal relationships
- Purpose in life – identifying and working toward a particular life purpose
- Self-acceptance – positive evaluation of self and one’s own attributes

**Intercultural effectiveness**
- Relativistic Appreciation – cognizance of both similarities and differences across people and groups
- Comfort with Differences – level of comfort with diverse individuals
- Diversity of Contact – interest and intent to participate in diverse cultural and social activities

Whether you are wanting to be a great leader, do well in your classes, or just get to know those around you a bit better, interacting in meaningful ways with people who are different than you can help you grow. Additionally, this growth happens not when you have one or two interactions with diverse individuals and groups, but when you have consistent intergroup interactions.

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Reflect on the skills from the list on the previous page that you find important or the ones you feel you would like to continue to develop while here at K-State.

After you’ve created a list of important skills you use and want to explore, consider the following questions:

1. Which of the skills do you feel like you already have good practice with, and how might you maximize your use of these skills?

2. For the skills you would like to develop, what steps could you take to make progress on them?

Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define diversity and intercultural learning
- Recognize how your personal identity can impact your perspective and relationships
- Discuss a plan to further develop skills that will increase your intercultural appreciation
CHAPTER 5
EXPLORING DIVERSITY TOGETHER

“I entered the classroom with the conviction that it was crucial for me and every other student to be an active participant, not a passive consumer... education as the practice of freedom.... education that connects the will to know with the will to become. Learning is a place where paradise can be created.”
- bell hooks

How to seek and celebrate diversity
While it may seem a bit daunting to interact with people who are different than you, the great news is that being in college offers you a unique and amazing opportunity to explore diversity in various ways.

While reading this chapter, you will:

- Become familiar with the K-State Principles of Community
- Explore additional opportunities to keep the learning going
- Develop ideas for how to have courageous conversations

Kansas State University is committed to celebrating diversity and inclusion. This is part of the Wildcat Way and is emphasized in our Principles of Community.

Read through the Principles of Community on the next page, and then free write with these questions in mind:

1. What does this principle mean to you?
2. How do you see it being explored, lived, or examined at K-State?
K-State Principles of Community

Kansas State University is a land-grant, public research university committed to teaching and learning, research, and service to the people of Kansas, the nation, and the world. Our collective mission is best accomplished when every member of the university community acknowledges and practices the following principles:

We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain an atmosphere of justice based on respect for each other.

We affirm the value of human diversity and inclusion for community. We stand united against all forms of discrimination.

We affirm the right of each person to freely express thoughts and opinions in a spirit of civility and decency. We believe that diversity of views enriches our learning environment, and we promote open expression within a climate of courtesy, sensitivity, and mutual respect.

We affirm the value of honesty and integrity. We will operate with honesty in all professional endeavors and expect the same from our colleagues.

We acknowledge that we are a part of multiple communities, and we have an obligation to be engaged in a positive way with our civic partners.

We recognize our individual obligations to the university community and to the principles that sustain it. We will each strive to contribute to a positive spirit that affirms learning and growth for all members of the community.

These principles have been endorsed by the following university governance bodies:

- Student Governing Association
- Graduate Student Council
- Graduate Council
- Faculty Senate
- University Support Staff Senate

Gen. Richard B. Myers
President

April C. Mason
Provost & Senior Vice President

Where do I start?

In the classroom, through student groups, or at events, we have the chance to explore our common humanity and the ways we can work together to create meaning and shape our culture while also exploring our differences.

Classes

Within the university you have a unique opportunity for engaged learning. At K-State, many different people from varying backgrounds surround you. A world of difference is at your fingertips. Actively seek out any chance you can to learn from those around you.

When focusing on learning within the classroom, K-State has an inclusive curriculum and many opportunities for you to explore.

The K-State 8 general education program helps students widen their perspectives, explore relationships among subjects and build critical and analytical thinking skills. K-State 8 exposes students to a broad range of knowledge in different academic areas. The program shapes well-rounded thinkers and helps prepare students for careers, graduate school and other post-graduate experiences.

One of the 8 Areas is Human Diversity within the U.S., in which many classes focus on diverse perspectives. When deciding on your class schedule with your advisor you can actively seek out classes that fall into this category.

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When working with others in your classes, you can use the following strategies to learn cooperatively and engage with a diverse group of peers in a meaningful way:

- Intentionally form groups that include students from diverse cultural backgrounds
- Assign interdependent roles to each member to ensure everyone has equal status and equal opportunity to participate
- Pursue a shared common goal through collaboration rather than competition

Group work like this can help you and the other members to not only complete tasks and reach your goals, but a chance to have positive interactions that can reduce prejudice and promote friendships.

**Co-Curricular Events and K-State 360**

Your education does not end once you walk out of those classroom doors. Attending events outside of the classroom can have a major impact on your ability to navigate difference as well. Check out some of the various events and activities that are happening on campus on the university calendar.

After attending an event, lecture, workshop, or meeting, take the opportunity to reflect on the experience. If you attended with a group of peers, get together and process the ideas and cross-cultural experience. You can focus on the similarities and differences in your own and your group members’ experience afterward. Some questions you may ask yourselves:

1. What major differences in perspectives did you detect among group members during your discussion?
2. Were differences discussed sensitively and constructively?
3. What major similarities in viewpoints or background experiences did all group members share?
4. Were there particular topics or issues raised during your discussion that proved important or relevant for all members of your group?

You also have the opportunity to track some of the events you attend throughout your college career through the K-State 360 program.

**K-State 360** is a program designed to provide students with a well-rounded experience of co-curricular programs with the ultimate goal of helping students stand out to future employers or graduate and professional schools. Out-of-classroom activities are often as important as in-class experiences.

K-State 360 helps navigate involvement while tracking progress, transforming students into well-rounded individuals. Activities are placed into a series of categories, guiding students toward an inclusive K-State experience and a developed skillset that will give students an edge.

Once students complete all the category requirements, students will gain the K-State 360 designation to share with potential employers and graduate schools. Students learn to communicate involvement and raise their potential through K-State 360.

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Objectives
K-State 360 will…

• Increase student success through exposure to a wide range of experiences.
• Encourage meaningful engagement through practical applications of skills.
• Prepare students for their post-undergraduate objectives.
• Provide connections within the community and decrease feelings of marginality.
• Further the overall mission of Kansas State University.10

Student organizations
Consider joining or going to meetings and events held by different student groups and organizations. This is a chance for you to get involved and meet new people!

Examples of student organizations at K-State:

• Sexuality and Gender Alliance
• BSU (Black Student Union)
• Asian American Student Union
• HALO (Hispanic and Latino Organization)
• Hillel (Jewish Student Organization)
• Christian Challenge
• International Buddies

K-State has hundreds of student groups that you can get involved with. There will be one that is a good fit for you!

Preventing and responding to discrimination and prejudice
Hate crimes and discrimination are not to be ignored or tolerated. But if you see this happening on campus, what actions can you take? Again, we ask that you look inward and examine your thoughts and feelings on the matter. How might you respond to discrimination? What if it doesn’t affect you directly? Have you ever witnessed harassment? What can you, as a bystander, do to prevent or intercede?

First off, you should know that the institution supports all individuals at the university, and K-State has a very inclusive nondiscrimination policy:

Kansas State University is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, ancestry, disability, military status, veteran status, or other non-merit reasons, in admissions, educational programs or activities and employment, including employment of disabled veterans and veterans of the Vietnam Era, as required by applicable laws and regulations.11

While any instance of discrimination is unacceptable and might reflect poorly on your experience at K-State, these instances also allow you the opportunity to unite with students, faculty, staff, and administrators to create a positive impact on your community. Some steps you can take might be to attend diverse events, training sessions, workshops, symposiums, movies, guest speakers, etc.

Also keep in mind that there are many campus resources available to help you or anyone else that has had to deal with discrimination or harassment, including the Office of Institutional Equality, the Office of Student Life, the Center for Advocacy Response and Education (CARE), the LGBT Resource Center, and the Campus Police.

**Courageous conversations**

Some issues might be solved or addressed through conversations. It can be tough to start exploring difference or addressing misunderstandings through these courageous conversations though. You might be in class, with your roommate, or at a workshop, and a subject comes up that is causing you anxiety. You might not have had the chance to interact with someone whose perspective and/or culture is so different from your own before. Or maybe it’s a subject that you feel very strongly about but you don’t want to get hurt or inadvertently hurt others.

Perhaps your stomach is tight, your heart is racing, and you’re feeling hot. Is it the flu? Maybe. It could also be your body’s reaction to having to talk about something that makes you uncomfortable. Ugh, why is it so hard to talk about certain things? We can’t make some of these conversations easier, but we do have tips for making them more productive.

**Steps to a productive courageous conversation**

- Identify what you want out of the conversation. If the answer is “I don’t know”, it’s a sure bet that you’ll look a hot mess when you try to talk about it. And it will probably be hard for others to follow what you are saying.

- Make it safe to talk. Be mindful of the mental, emotional, and physical safety of you and the person you are talking to. This means picking a location where the person you are talking to has the freedom to express themselves without judgement or humiliation. You don’t tell your boo that they are a bad kisser in front of their friends. And if the person you need to talk to is scary or makes you feel unsafe, you have that conversation in a public place around other people and not a small car parked in a dark lot.

- Ask simple, unbiased, open ended questions (and give people time to answer them). A good question is, “What do you think of my roommate?” A bad question is, “Why do you hate my roommate? Is it because they’re gay?” If a conversation is really difficult, folks may need time to take a breath and think things through so don’t rush them if it takes a while for them to respond.

- Use I statements. Saying, “You act like...” is an accusation that can put people on edge and turn them off. “I feel uncomfortable when…” avoids blaming someone and keeps communication moving forward.
Listen. Stop talking, put down your phone (for real, put it down), face the speaker, and truly hear their words. Listen to them the way you want them to listen to you. Every once in a while, give a nonverbal signal to let people know you are listening. Better yet, summarize what you heard to make sure you’re on track. “Ok, so what I hear you saying is...”

Three-F Method
When we are confronted with an insensitive comment (e.g. someone makes a homophobic comment), it can be tricky to navigate the conversation. However, you can use the “Three-F Method” to shape the conversation and make it clear that there are ways to grow and change.

Here is the Three-F Method:

1. I felt (in the past) – At this stage, you can build rapport with the person you’re talking to by explaining a time when you had misinformation. If that time doesn’t exist, you can always
2. I found (out) – During this step, you can provide information about the subject.
3. I feel (now) – At the last stage, you can tell them why their comment might be perceived as offensive.

Let’s talk through an example. If someone makes a homophobic comment, for instance, you could proceed as follows:

1. I felt…that way (or have heard that said) when I was younger.
2. But then I found…out that 29% of LGB youth had attempted suicide at least once in 2015 compared to 6% of heterosexual youth.
3. Now I feel…that I have to speak up so no one feels unwelcome or unsafe in our community.

Continue exploring on your own
There are a lot of tools and resources available online to help introduce you to certain topics that you might be unfamiliar with. However, the deepest learning happens when you are interacting with others, so while this is a good step, it shouldn’t be your only step into diversity exploration.

Using the tools, resources, and strategies within this chapter can help you to meaningfully engage with a diverse range of people while you’re at K-State. Developing these skills will positively impact you beyond college and into your career and your community once you leave campus.
REFLECTION ACTIVITY

We have compiled a few videos that might help you get started as you explore further. Some are more lecture-based, others are stand-up comics describing their experiences, some are more news-oriented. This is by no means an extensive list, but we hope it’s a fun and interesting place to start!

General
- The Danger of a Single Story
- A Class Divided
- Cultural Diversity Examples: Avoid Stereotypes While Communicating
- Do One Thing For Diversity and Inclusion
- If the World Were 100 People
- The European Refugee Crisis and Syria Explained
- Generation Gap
- Defying Definitions: Exploring Identity, Stereotypes & Diversity
- Diversity: Overcoming Stereotypes
- Holding to Purpose: “Overcoming Stereotypes”

Race
- What Kind of Asian Are You?
- Margaret Cho – Racism
- Wanda Sykes – Dignified Black People
- Dave Chappelle – Racism
- Last Week Tonight with John Oliver – Dressing Up As Other Races (How Is This Still a Thing?)
- Kids React to Controversial Cheerios Commercial
- Race on the Oprah Show: A Twenty-Five Year Look Back

Sexuality and Gender Identity
- Wanda Sykes – Gay vs Black
- Key and Peele – Gay Wedding Advice
- National Equality March Rally: Staceyann Chin
- The Trans Panic Epidemic: The Daily Show
- Love Has No Labels
- Conversion Therapy – ImFromDriftwood.com
- When Did You Choose To Be Straight?
- Sex & Gender Identity: An Intro
- Zach Wahls Speaks About Family

Gender
- Miss Representation
- Tony Porter – A Call to Men
- SNL – Welcome to Hell
- SNL – The Handmaid’s Tale

Ability/disability
- Daily Mail – The Department of Ability: Comic Book Challenges Disability
- Maysoon Zayid – I Got 99 Problems… Palsy is Just One
- Stella Young – I’m not your inspiration, thank you very much
- The Daily Dot - 7 reasons you should be watching disabled comedians on YouTube

Use the following questions to reflect on what you choose to watch:

1. What perspectives are being shown?
2. Do you identify with one or more of the people/characters?
3. Do you have any personal experiences similar to what is being discussed? How do your experiences differ?
4. What is the central issue being explored? What seems to be the root of the problem?
5. How might this issue be solved or addressed in a meaningful way?
6. If the issue isn’t addressed, what are the future consequences?
Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss the K-State Principles of Community and how you see the principles in action.
- Identify a class, a co-curricular activity, and a student organization that would connect you with another culture
- Feel more prepared to engage in courageous conversations
SECTION 2: FINDING YOUR PURPOSE
If you ask yourself what you’re doing in college, your reasons could include one of the following:

- Earn a degree
- Get a job
- Make friends
- Explore new ideas and careers

These reasons (and more) are all wonderful—but they are not enough to motivate you to get through the next four or so years of college.

If you ask yourself why you’re in college, does your answer change?

For example, why do you want to earn a degree? Perhaps you are the first person in your family to go to college and you want to make your family proud. Maybe you want to be a doctor so that you can help others, just like the doctor who took care of a sick family member when you were younger.

There are many reasons that people choose to be at K-State. Two students could have the same goal of earning a degree but have very different reasons as to why that is important to them. On the other hand, it is entirely possible that you don’t know yours yet—and that’s okay! College provides a great opportunity to explore different ideas and experiences.

A secret to college-level success is a process called finding your why. Finding your why is discovering what drives you, what makes you feel alive, or what inspires you to keep moving forward. For example, why you want to receive a degree, why you want a particular job, why you want to make friends here. When we work to find our why, we surface values, perspectives, and ways of being that motivate us and show us what is important. This internal, values-driven motivation is
also known as intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is when you motivate yourself based on internal goals. This form of motivation keeps you moving toward and making progress on your goals even when you’re stressed out, losing focus, or just tired. Knowing your why can help you find sustaining motivation to accomplish your biggest dreams. Once you dig deeper and know what motivates you, you are able to set specific, achievable goals and make your college experience much more satisfying and worthwhile.

Take a look at the following two student examples. When reading, observe what Dan and Haley consider to be their purpose and also why this is their purpose:

“I came to college to open myself up to opportunities and enhance my future success. I was eager to learn both material in the classroom and the lessons it had to offer outside, something that you can only attain by attending a university. Personally, my passion has been teaching. I have a desire to learn and by getting my teaching degree hopefully I’ll be able to achieve that by learning from my students each day. I also enjoy helping others, specifically assisting them to reach their highest intellectual potential. If everything goes according to plan, I’ll be graduating with a Bachelor of Science dual degree in History and Secondary Education next spring.”

– Dan Geist

“When deciding what I wanted to pursue in college, I realized there were three themes I was unwaveringly committed to: creativity, culture, and compassion. I sought a place where I could live out these values alongside other passionate people who desired to solve problems creatively, engage with culture curiously, and serve their communities selflessly. At K-State, I found this community in the residence halls, in the classroom, and in the studios alongside upperclassmen, professors and classmates who are dedicated to each other’s welfare and growth.”

– Haley Weinberg

Now that you’ve read student examples, it’s your turn to explore your own purpose.
Using the chart below as an example, think through reasons that you are here in college. Then (and this is the important step), explain why this reason is important to you. This is the process of finding your why. If you’re unsure what your why might be, you can refer back to the student examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason You’re at K-State</th>
<th>Your Why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I need a degree.</td>
<td>I need a degree because I want to help make positive changes to support youth in the city where I grew up. A position that I could potentially apply for requires a degree.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the next part of the activity, choose one of the reasons you listed that is the most important to you—keeping your why in mind—and write a strategic goal that you can accomplish. You can use the chart below as a guide for your reflection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason You’re at K-State</th>
<th>Your Why</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I need a degree</td>
<td>I need a degree because I want to help make positive changes to support youth in the city where I grew up. A position that I could potentially apply for requires a degree.</td>
<td>By joining student government, I can get experiences advocating and learning about government process. It will also help me get connected at K-State.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

✓ Describe how college success is dependent on knowing your purpose
✓ Begin to explore your why and find your purpose
✓ Set goals that are fueled by your why
Picture this scenario: Everyone in Jenae’s group project is competitive and goal-oriented. To complete the group project, they develop a list of ten things that each group member has to do to contribute to stay on task and ask everyone to compete to see who can complete all their tasks first. Jenae, on the other hand, is not motivated by checking tasks off a to-do list and would rather work at her own pace. By trying to adjust her work preference to check off the items on the list like everyone else, she realizes that she is getting behind and can’t seem to find time to work on the project.

However, Jenae is also an empathetic person. Instead of checking off her list, she decides to think about the project from her group’s perspective by deploying her empathy. When she begins to empathize with the group, she understands why the project is important and realizes she doesn’t want to let her friends down. By finding motivation in empathizing with the group, she can focus on the task at hand and makes it through the list. You can think of this as being people-oriented rather than task-oriented.

This example demonstrates the philosophy that is the premise of the strengths-based approach to learning. CliftonStrengths® for Students is a self-reflection assessment that determines 5 strengths that are uniquely yours. The basic premise of this approach is that by focusing on what you’re good at, you can maximize your success and perhaps compensate for other areas.¹

Some people might view Jenae’s non-competitive nature as a deficit, but we can actually see this as an advantage. In the group work example, Jenae focused on the strength

of empathy rather than worrying about the lack of achiever. Utilizing the strength of a natural talent rather than spending energy elsewhere helps to accomplish the same goal more efficiently. This process is a strengths-based approach.

Let’s take organizational strategies as another example of using your personal strengths. If you’re someone who likes to plan ahead and organize information, an arranger, using lists or a planner could be a good way to maximize this strength. However, waiting until the last minute would not be a successful strategy for you. Alternately, if adaptability is one of your strengths, you may find a general timeline to be more useful. Learning how to use your strengths to accomplish tasks and overcome challenges will help you in all areas of life, including helping you to be well-received in an interview, navigating a challenge with roommates, or meeting a tight deadline at work.

K-State provides access to the CliftonStrengths® for Students for every first-year student because we believe in the power in knowing ourselves and our talents. Learning about your strengths is a first step in maximizing them to accomplish the goals you’ve outlined for college, completing tasks, and finding lasting intrinsic motivation. Knowing your strengths helps you enact your why.

Are you ready to find out YOUR strengths?

Please follow these steps to find your access code and take the assessment prior to your next class period (these steps are also available at the K-State CliftonStrengths® for Students website, which includes screenshots to help you visualize the process):

1. Sign in using KSIS.

2. From the navigation bar, select: self-service – student success – StrengthsQuest.

3. Highlight and copy your StrengthsFinder access code from KSIS.

4. Navigate to Gallup’s website.

5. Paste your access code and discover your strengths!
Reflected Activity

Right after taking the assessment, list out your top five strengths. Additionally, reflect upon how accurate you think the strength is. You can use the chart below as a guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Initial Impression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achiever</td>
<td>I’m not sure if this describes me because I don’t check things off a to-do list.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After you finished the assessment, you received a report that described each of your top five strengths in detail. Read through this report carefully, and write a definition of each strength in your own words and how you see it applying to your life. Consider how you interact with your friends, family, coworkers, professors, etc. so you have a wide range of contexts in this application question. You can use the chart below to formulate your answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Your Definition</th>
<th>How it Applies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achiever</td>
<td>Someone with the achiever strength might be really organized and driven by finishing projects.</td>
<td>In my daily life, I’m hyper-organized with everything I do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Take one of the goals you identified last chapter. Then, write how you would use each of your strengths to achieve that goal. Below, we provide an example of what this reflection might look like.

Goal: By joining student government, I can get experiences advocating and learning about government process. It will also help me get connected at K-State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>How you would use this strength to achieve your goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achiever</td>
<td>I can use my achiever strength to create a check-list of membership responsibilities for joining SGA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Describe the CliftonStrengths for Students philosophy
- Take the CliftonStrengths for Students assessment
- Know how to leverage your strengths to reach your goals
CHAPTER 8
DEFINING SELF-CONCEPT, SELF-EFFICACY, SELF-TALK, AND SELF-Agency

When you think about your success at K-State, what are the words or images that come to mind? Does your vision include:

- academic performance in your coursework or area of study
- making friends and memories
- overall happiness and satisfaction with your time here?

All three are logical conclusions, and the three are closely related.

How often do you consider that your ways of thinking—your behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes—contribute immensely to overall success and emotional wellbeing?

Starting at the university is a completely new experience. Within a handful of weeks of arriving at K-State, everything from the way you live and share space with others, to the way you learn, is completely turned on its head. And yet, no one teaches you “how to go to college.”

Many of us, for better or worse, learn how to go to college through trial and error, which sometimes includes poor grades or even failure during the first semester. From those experiences, you adjust your approach. You might change up your class attendance, how you study and manage time, or even the major you chose upon entry.

The next two chapters are dedicated to the question of what it means to be a successful student. We won’t be as concerned with the technical details about what this looks like in a given class. Instead, we will focus on student behaviors and attitudes. Specifically, we will discuss self-concept, self-efficacy, self-talk, and self-advocacy, and in the next chapter, metacognition. If you don’t understand what these terms mean...
right now—that’s okay! We’ll explore their meaning together throughout this chapter.

**Student behaviors and attitudes**

Ultimately, the goal of this chapter seeks to demystify the behaviors of a successful college student to one simple truth: Your success isn’t based on your natural abilities, but how you equip yourself with the right tools for your success based on the question or challenge in front of you. This idea compliments what you just learned in the last chapter about your top five strengths, but focuses on the behavioral practices mentioned above.

**Self-concept**

The first semester of college may carry a unique set of bumps and bruises, namely to our self-concept, or how we view ourselves—built from the beliefs one holds about oneself and the responses of others. In this new learning environment (college), we invariably take on some risk through our choices. For instance, we have a set of expectations as to what studying and time management might look like, but in practice, we have no idea if it will work here in this new setting.

**Self-efficacy**

The first set of mid-term or quiz grades can often be the most brutal, even if you are used to seeing fairly good scores next to your name. But with all the “newness”, there is a lot of room for missteps. The reason someone might miss the mark could be personal (priority was not on coursework and skipped some classes), or it could be academic (they simply did not know how much studying would be required to demonstrate understanding of the material on the test).

In these hypothetical scenarios, you have a couple of choices in how to make sense of this information. It might cross your mind that you are not “engineering” or “ag” or even “college” material and throw your hands in the air. With this choice, you confirm all the worst conclusions about yourself and what this experience entails. When things get tough, it may be easy to begin to doubt things like intelligence and ability in the face of adversity. Choosing to view obstacles as failures makes you lose your sense of self-efficacy, or the ability to believe we have what it takes to attain our goals, both large and small.

Or you could place this small experience within the grander scope of going to college. You could analyze what has gone wrong, and

**Reflection Activity**

As you read this chapter, come up with a definition for the following terms in your own words. You’ll know the definition is right if you can easily explain what it means to someone who hasn’t heard of it before!

1. Self-concept:
2. Self-efficacy:
3. Self-talk:
4. Self-advocacy:
what might need to change. Surely, you are not the first student ever to do poorly on a Chemistry quiz. What can you do? And does this thing that needs changing start with you and your personal behaviors or with the complexity of the material and how you learn it?

Self-talk
In this latter instance, a student employs self-talk practices, an internal conversation for encouragement or motivation, to maximize possibility. Despite what you may think, failure is not final; instead, it is the pathway of development and growth. A bad grade doesn’t need to be the end for someone who focuses on developing their inner capacity for self-efficacy. People with this ability to believe in themselves look outward and inward for solutions, because a specific combination may be needed to move forward. For example, students with high self-efficacy would gather information about their study habits, the time spent studying, and maybe visit with fellow classmates or a tutor to gauge if it was a personal behavior or the actual material that is the root problem. This serves as an opportunity to challenge existing assumptions and behaviors and then make the necessary adjustments to attain a desired outcome.

Self-advocacy
Enter self-advocacy, or the ability to affect our life circumstances or stand up for yourself. Once you have reminded yourself that you are not the first human to flub formatting a paper during the first year of college, you may have to do some damage control.

When you make a mistake in this new environment, it may feel unfamiliar or uneasy reaching out for help. Up until now, you have spent 12 years of schooling with a very different expectation for support. In high school classrooms, teachers adjust their instructional methods when they observe there is confusion amongst their students. In the university environment, you are responsible for diagnosing confusion. In order to correctly diagnose this confusion, you may want to reach out to those people on campus who can best help you clarify your learning: professors, TAs (Teaching Assistants), LAs (Learning Assistants), or tutors.

It isn’t always possible to erase the error—in some cases, this won’t even be a possibility based on a professor’s grading expectations for a course. However, in some instances, simply reaching out and seeking clarity may offer some insight into how the error occurred in the first place. Similarly, learning where you got off track can add a whole host of solutions to your repertoire on how to adjust or correct your understanding and preparation.

This information has been pretty hypothetical. Let’s explore some common first-year scenarios on the next page.
This chapter has required some critical thinking. Let’s break down these ideas into lived practice. After reading each of the scenarios, write a couple of sentences in response to the questions we pose.

**Scenario 1**
You are taking Geology 103 (lab) and you show up on the third week having printed the incorrect materials for today’s lab. Your professor sends you to Hale Library to print the right one. This takes nearly 40 minutes roundtrip, leaving you with insufficient time to complete the activity.

1. What do you do?

2. Where can you get answers?

3. What are your options?

**Scenario 2**
You are enrolled in Expository Writing 1. You are fairly confident in your reading and writing abilities. You attend all of the classes and engage in discussion. You begin your first paper a couple of days before it is due. You are rushing the night before to make content and copy edits in order to turn in a well-written essay. You receive a C as your first grade.

1. What do you do?

2. Where can you get answers?

3. What are your options?

Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define self-concept, self-advocacy, self-talk and self-efficacy.
- Look at academic failures as learning opportunities
- Use feedback to develop strategies for future improvement
Up until this point in your educational career, you have been asked to perform in the role of a very specific type of student. In high school, whether it was for AP Language, Government, Biology or Freshman English, your ‘job’ was fairly clear cut—attend to what is happening in class, be engaged with the unit, listen and problem solve with your teacher/others, and perform well on assignments and exams.

Metacognition

Very seldom in this type of learning environment were you asked to think about your own thinking, or practice what experts call metacognition, regarding your learning practices. This was baked into the cake. Your teachers were grade-level content specialists and knew a thing or two about pedagogy, the practices of teaching. Thinking was built into the processes and practices of skill development that enabled you to be a successful student.

This has all been turned on its head in college, especially in the notorious lecture course. Now you are in the driver’s seat of managing your learning and knowledge—and it is coming at you fast.

As you read this chapter, you will:

- Learn what it means to think metacognitively
- Learn ways to practice metacognition

REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Let’s pause for a second and reflect about thinking—or practice metacognition.

1. When you look back to your high school experiences, what expectations were placed on you?

2. By contrast, what expectations have you noticed during your first semester of college that have differed from your high school experience?
Students often describe their first couple of weeks of college coursework as surreal. Even if they were high-performing students in high school, they now have to sift through large amounts of reading, synthesize lectures and online materials, and devise a method for how to take abstract, theoretical concepts and apply them on their own through problem sets or extensive formal essay writing.

While in high school, your teacher likely introduced a concept, walked you through how to apply the concept, and provided repeated opportunities to practice application, whether through homework, worksheets, or practice essays. This process also included opportunities for feedback and corrections. College-level learning requires you to fill in many of those in-between steps on your own. A professor may introduce a concept, work through a few problems in class as a road map, and then move on. The practice and seeking opportunities for feedback and corrections are now your responsibility.

In college, faculty serve a different role in learning. Additionally, college requires a different set of expectations for what learning looks like and the role students play in their own knowledge and sense-making process.

You have now become the manager of your own learning. This is a perfect point to begin to ask the million-dollar question: “What is being asked of me?”

Each discipline you study has its own unique set of knowledge, questions, and tools for creating understanding. As a successful metacognitive learner, your job is to figure out how to embrace the thinking of the discipline you are learning and use those unique skills and tools to make meaning, solve problems, or whatever task is asked of you.

Whoa! That’s a lot to digest. Let’s look at an example.

In high school history, you likely learned information that was transmitted by your teacher. In particular, you made sense of a historical moment, for example the Civil War, by learning about what happened, who was involved, and what events had a significant impact on the course of history. You often did some reading and memorized important dates. Then you demonstrated that you knew the information about the Civil War on a standard, multiple choice exam. You may have gone farther and complicated the ways people ‘remembered’ the Civil War by reading contrasting viewpoints or historical accounts. All in all, you worked with others, including your teacher, to create meaning and understanding.

In your college US History class, your teacher functions less as the container of knowledge and more as a guide. Here you must build from the ground up, forming a broader idea of “What is the Civil War?” This might require you to think, like a historian, about the social, economic, and political conditions that shaped peoples’ experiences and choices during that time. You may be given multiple, competing readings that do not create a clear picture of what was going on. You will have lectures, notes, and prompts on how to make sense of all that you have learned, but ultimately the thinking is your own. You could still see the familiar multiple-choice exam, but there is a lot of variation in how faculty choose to have you demonstrate your understanding. You may be asked to complete oral exams, presentations, essays, and group projects during your time at K-State.
Metacognitive learners, no matter the situation, use questioning and reflection to piece together what is happening in front of them, and their own internal sense-making process.

**Metacognitive practices**
This sense-making process will be context and content dependent. However, some common behaviors among successful metacognitive learners are:

- Making a plan on how to learn
  - Note-taking strategies
  - Synthesizing material across learning environments
- Monitoring learning
  - Questioning/find confusion
  - Seeking outside assistance to clarify understanding
- Evaluating what was learned
  - Making connections

The management of one’s learning is time-dependent as well. This is happening at each interaction with the content: reading independently, listening and taking notes in class, and studying for finals. Rather than cramming understanding or finding meaning at the end of a given set of concepts, the learning is spread out over time through the successful student’s interaction with the material. This often leads to deeper meaning-making, and increased confidence when it comes to testing.

In the past two chapters, you have explored some of the important tools of the successful student, namely self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and the complementary metacognitive practices that support learning. As you have likely concluded, acquiring these ways of thinking, and the accompanying skills and behaviors, has little to do with your specific coursework, or the questions being asked by your professor on an assignment. Being a successful college student has everything to do with how you manage yourself and the material from your classes in this new challenge called “going to college.”

Consider yourself a scientist in the experiment of life as a college student. Over the next 4 years, you will be collecting information on how to do a vast number of unfamiliar things—living with hundreds of people, managing your time to study for numerous classes, gauging which information your professors will highlight on mid-terms and how you will be asked to demonstrate your understanding. In each instance, you will have a hypothesis of what this might look like and you will test it. “I study like this for Introduction to Biology.” “I plan an essay for Expository Writing using these resources.”

After some time, you will begin to build up some information about yourself and this system. This information will confirm that you are indeed onto something—that your thinking, skills, and behaviors are confirming what you thought was needed in Introduction to Psychology or Physics 1. Other data will indicate that you need a different, improved hypothesis—a different combination of thinking, skills, and behaviors.

You may feel like you have failed when your data indicates you need a different hypothesis. Failure, missing the mark, getting more data—whatever you want to call it—is an opportunity to reflect on all the parts that go into being a successful student, and make the necessary adjustments. Given that no one has ever taught us how to “do college”, this experimental approach allows each one of us the space, flexibility, and time needed to grow, and that’s all learning really is—growing into a stronger, more knowledgeable, capable human.
Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define and explain what metacognition is
- Practice using metacognition in your college experience

REFLECTION ACTIVITY

To reflect on this chapter, consider what information you have taken in throughout your first semester.

1. What do you enjoy doing? Where have you succeeded?
2. On the other hand, what has been challenging? Where do you have room to grow?
Finding a major that works for you
You may have a very clear vision for your future, or you may have no idea what you want, or you may be somewhere in between. All of those are totally normal! It’s also okay to change your mind. Honestly, there are an endless number of careers, and there’s many you’ve probably never heard of that would be a great fit for you. You might be surprised about the variety of majors that can lead you down your desired path. Did you know there are K-State graduates with English degrees who went to medical school and became doctors? Your college major does not lock you onto a single career track for your whole life, so find a good fit for your interests and strengths. Finding a major that interests you and capitalizes on your natural abilities will make it easier to find success.

The first step to finding your fit is considering who you are:
- What are you interested in (subjects, impacts, etc.)?
- What skills, abilities, or aptitudes do you have?
- What is important to you/what do you value (family, financial stability, freedom)?
- What do you not enjoy that you would like to avoid, if possible?

As you read this chapter, you will:
- Find a major that works for you—or confirm you are in the right major
- Develop a degree map to insure you take the necessary courses
- Consider extra-curricular activities as strategic benefits to your college and professional success
From this brief exploration, do you feel that you’re in the right major? Are there instances that a specific major isn’t required for your field? If you’re feeling uncertain about your major, use the Career Center’s Career Exploration resources. Through the Career Center you can:

• Take free career assessments
• Explore available majors and careers
• Attend Major, Minors, and More! – an annual exploration event, typically in October
• Enroll in EDCEP 120 – a career planning course
• Attend career counseling and workshops (to schedule, create a Handshake account)

These resources may or may not lead you to a precise major or career, but they will help you recognize some areas to explore.

If you find yourself overwhelmed by choosing your major and career because nothing seems like a fit—or everything does—you can also get support with this process through Counseling Services’ Career Development Services:

• Take a career assessment, followed by a scheduled interpretation ($31-$35)
• Attend Individual Career Counseling
• Enroll in EDCEP 202 – Career and Life Planning

Even if you’re confident you’ve already found your fit, explore career possibilities through the Career Center and your department. The world is full of diverse opportunities that may be new to you, and you might stumble upon something new that excites you. Go read the Career Center’s Ten Major and Career Myths to make sure you have all the information you need to proceed with your chosen major.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Go to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook. Use the search in the top right to find a specific job, or explore one of the occupation groups until you find a career that looks interesting. Once you’ve found a job, click through the tabs (especially Summary, What They Do, and Work Environment) to explore whether the job suits you. For this job, respond to the following questions:

1. Which of your skills, abilities, and aptitudes are used in the job?

2. How do you see your personal strengths applied in this job?

3. What skills are necessary for the job that you may need to develop?

4. Are there any job responsibilities that you feel opposed to performing?

5. Does the work environment appeal to you and fit the lifestyle you want? Write a paragraph explaining in what ways it fits and doesn’t fit your desired lifestyle. For example, if the job requires you to spend weeks traveling abroad, you might not be able to take care of the dog you’ve always wanted.

6. What does the Job Outlook tab indicate about the future of that career?

Now click on the How to Become One tab and write a short description of the pathway to the job. Specifically list at least three majors that can lead to that career path.
Your major is important to your college experience. It can have a big impact on how engaged you are in your college experience—both in and out of the classroom. The more engaged you are, the more successful you are likely to be in school, and the more you will learn and grow as a person. That growth can lead to a lot of professional success in any field. Finding a good fit that you enjoy instead of getting caught up in the myths will help you enjoy your college experience and lead to future success.

Maximizing your major
Once you find the right fit, make the best of your experience. Earning your degree is more than just completing required coursework. You should focus on how to develop yourself into the professional you want to be through the courses you choose, the activities you get involved in, and the employment opportunities you take.

The first step in making the best of your major is to create a degree map—a plan for what classes you’ll take during your entire time as a K-State student. Creating a plan helps you graduate on time and have the know-how to adapt your program of study to reflect changes in your goals as you progress through college. As you choose your courses, explore your interests, play to your strengths, and find opportunities for growth so that you’re fully prepared for all the future career possibilities that interest you.

To create a degree map, you’ll need the following:

- Your DARS Report from KSIS (learn how to access DARS and read DARS), to see your progress in your degree requirements.
- The Undergraduate Catalog, which documents your degree requirements, pre-requisites for classes, and course schedule specifics.
- Your academic advisor to help you understand DARS and the catalog, and to provide feedback on your plan.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY

After reading through the Ten Major and Career Myths, reflect on the following questions:

1. What was your reaction to reading the myths? Were you surprised? Or did they make sense to you?

2. Choose one of the myths you think is the most important to keep in mind. Explain why you think people might have this misconception or misunderstanding.
Below is an example of one semester of a degree map in list format. A list form degree map is the easiest format to design your own sequence and plan. This table will repeat for each semester you plan to be in school.

### Fall Freshman Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MATH</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>College Algebra</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>Principles of Biology</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHM</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>Chemistry I (requires lab)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHM</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>Chemistry I Recitation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMM</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>Public Speaking I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your program has a prescribed structure, such as engineering or physics, your college may provide you with a degree map to follow, often in a flowchart format. Below is a sample flowchart provided by the College of Engineering. The flowchart format clearly shows the prerequisites that lead up to later classes. If your program doesn’t provide you with a flowchart, you can use this model to generate your own.

**CHEMICAL ENGINEERING (128 hours)**

**Effective Fall 2018**
With a degree map in place, your next step is to get involved in extra-curricular activities that build your skills and knowledge towards your goals. You can:

- Attend campus events that broaden your perspective in productive ways.
- Join clubs that build skills and knowledge and demonstrate your commitment to important areas
- Find part-time jobs and internships that build relevant skills and knowledge

You can also find campus events and organizations that fit your goals:

- Read K-State Today for announcements of events and opportunities.
- Read emails, especially from your college and department.
- Create a K-State 360 account to find campus events and track your participation in on-campus activities. This is a great resource, and you can earn points for free things through your participation!
- Check out Orgsync to connect with groups, organizations and programs.
- Create a Handshake account to search for jobs and internships.

Participating in student groups and volunteer organizations can be especially important. Student groups are a great place to meet other individuals who share your passions and who can provide a support network. Department and volunteer activities can also build your skills and experiences so that you are more prepared for your professional future.

Another great way to get the most of out of your major is to form strong relationships with peers and professors:

- Take advantage of available mentor programs. A mentor can answer questions, offer advice, and make sure you’re aware of opportunities.
- Make friends with classmates so that you have a support network as you progress and are challenged to take on new experiences. Once you graduate, these friends may be the start of your professional network.
- Get to know your professors. Professors can connect you with interesting opportunities and may help you network with professionals. If you form positive relationships, they can write letters of reference when you apply for jobs or internships, and they may even nominate you for scholarships or awards. It’s a good habit to go to office hours early in the semester so that your professor can get to know you and you can impress upon them how invested you are in their class.

Through your extracurricular involvement you can apply things learned in your classes, build a network for support and connections to professional opportunities, and enhance your skills. There’s a lot to be gained from careful planning and active engagement in the full campus experience beyond the classroom.
Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Feel more comfortable with the major you have chosen or have narrowed your search for a major
- Provide your advisor with a degree map to guide your enrollment conversation
- Identify extra-curricular activities that will enhance your college experience and your professional success
Finding a job ad
Finding jobs and internships while in college is an important part of your professional development. Recognizing gaps in your essential skill sets and finding a job that allows you to develop one or more of those skill gaps can be a great opportunity for growth.

For example, if you know you want to lead a marketing team, one of the skills you’ll need to demonstrate is strong communication skills. You might look for an on-campus office job where you will be expected to answer phones, respond to emails, answer in-person questions, and produce departmental flyers and brochures. This work may not seem directly related to marketing, but it gives you an opportunity to practice some key skills and to put those skills on your résumé.

The Career Center recommends that you also keep in mind the following:

- Begin with fewer hours to allow adjustment to college and a new schedule.
- Put academics first and commit to work hours you know you can manage.
- Seek positions that will build references and professional contacts.
- Seek employers who offer flexible hours and will support your commitment to your academics.

Once you decide what kind of job you want to look for, use your Handshake account to search for on-campus and local work opportunities, as well as internships.
Handshake is a great resource provided by the K-State Career Center, through which you can:

- Find and apply for jobs and internships
- Schedule appointments with your career advisor
- Sign up for Career Center events, fairs, workshops, and interview and information sessions with employers.

The Career Center also has tips for finding part-time work on campus and in the community.

Some of your first-year courses may also encourage you to sign up for LinkedIn, a professional networking site. You can use this site, much like your Handshake account, to find potential jobs or connections.

You may find your department also has a jobs board, a web page, or communicates to students about opportunities via a departmental listserv or newsletter. Some departments maintain Facebook and Twitter accounts where they notify students and alumni of relevant employment. Staying connected to your department will allow you to stay up-to-date in many areas.

It’s also important to know that not all opportunities are communicated through job ads. Your peer and professor network may encourage you to contact someone they know. You may take the initiative to reach out to a professional about opportunities they may offer even though they haven’t expressed they are looking—your inquiry will show them you are ambitious. For example, if you know you’re interested in biomedical research, you might email a professor who is doing that type of research and ask if they have any openings in their lab. Even if they don’t, they may be willing to offer you a spot when one becomes available down the road or know of a similar position in another lab.

There are many ways to gain valuable work experience while going to school. Look at available jobs on Handshake, reach out to employers that interest you, and meet with your career advisor. You’ll find a wealth of opportunities to develop professionally while you’re in school.

**Analyzing a job ad**

When you find a job you’re interested in, you want to think critically about what’s important to the job so that you can tailor your applications materials to the position. If your résumé and application cover letter focus on things the employer has indicated are important, you make it easier for them to identify you as a good fit for their position.

Read through the job ad and make a list of necessary skills and responsibilities. Then reorganize your list by importance to the employer. You may recognize what’s most important by considering the following:

- key words that appear multiple times in the ad
- percent of work time that a skill may be used or a task performed
Finally, for each skill or responsibility, note an experience you’ve had that demonstrates you have the skills and experience to do the job. Relevant experiences can include:

- Previous jobs
- Classes you’ve taken
- Volunteer experiences
- Projects you’ve completed

Your list of important skills, requirements, and your relevant experiences can help you determine how to organize your résumé and to decide what to focus on in your application cover letter.

**REFLECTION ACTIVITY**

Read the following job ad and then answer the questions that follow.

Student office assistant
Educational Supportive Services is seeking a student office assistant to assist the Student Services Coordinator and Administrative Specialist with file management and program outreach and promotion.

The student office assistant is responsible for:

- Scanning student applications and managing electronic student files.
- Creating promotional materials: posters, bookmarks, brochures, etc.
- Managing social media presence on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.
- Analyzing student surveys to plan and schedule requested services, including workshops and community events.
- Representing the program at browsing fairs and other campus events.
- Other duties as assigned.

After reading the position description, answer the following questions:

1. Make a list of the actions/verbs that an applicant could use in their résumé.
2. What are the top three skills or tasks you think are most important? Why?
3. For each of the top three skills, can you think of an experience you’ve had that would demonstrate to an employer that you had that key skill?
**Researching the employer**

Another step that can help you focus your application content effectively and make meaningful connections is by researching the employer. If you demonstrate in your cover letter that you put in the work to learn about them and that you are genuinely excited about what they do, they will more easily grasp your enthusiasm for the position.

To research a potential employer:

- Go to the company/entity website to see if they have “Recent News” or “Press Releases” and read about recent things they have done.
- Google the company/entity to see if you can find any news articles from the past 6-months to a year that talk about positive things the company/entity is doing that impress you.
- Check out glassdoor.com to see what others are saying about the company/entity.
- Read industry journals, to see if there are any trends in the industry or field that you find interesting. Look for information on trends in the company’s business or trends in what your target department does. Don’t limit your research to the company name.

This research may help you learn about cutting-edge technology, shifts in necessary skills, and more. Demonstrating knowledge of the company and industry through your cover letter can give you a significant edge, but only after your résumé convinces them you have their essential qualifications.

**Reflection Activity**

For this reflection activity, you will practice the steps of seeking a job opportunity:

1. Create a Handshake account.
2. Through Handshake, find and print a job post for a local, part-time job you could work as a student.
3. Identify the top three skills needed for this job.
4. For each skill, describe one experience you’ve had that developed that skill (three total experiences).
5. Explain how this job helps you develop towards your long term professional goals (three or more sentences).
6. Research the employer (company or campus office), and write two sentences explaining what you like about them. Be specific and recognize an achievement or a unique quality they possess. For campus offices, the search tool on the k-state.edu website is a great place to start.
7. Keep track of this job post and your answers. You will refer back to them in later chapters.

After completing this activity, consider the following questions:

1. Through the activity, what did you learn about the job search?
2. What part of the process was more difficult, or what questions do you still have about finding a job or internship?
Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

✓ Find and analyze a job ad to see if your skills, knowledge and experiences are a good fit
✓ Identify the important skills and knowledge necessary for a job and communicate how you are a good fit for the job
✓ Research an employer to show your interest in the organization
A traditional print résumé is a document that highlights your relevant work history, education, and community engagement in a format that can be quickly scanned for relevance. A well-designed résumé presents you as a professional and detail-oriented individual.

If you’re not sure where to start with your résumé, start with the list of skills that are important to the job. A template may be appealing with a well-balanced layout and nice font choices. However, templates limit your control of the organization of your content, and how you organize your résumé will have a huge impact on how you are perceived.

**Organizing your résumé**

There are three typical organizational patterns for a résumé:

- Standard or (Reverse) Chronological
- Functional or Skills-based
- Combination

You should choose a résumé structure that emphasizes your key skillsets or experiences by organizing them into sections that make it easy for the employer to see that you’re qualified. On the initial review of candidates, most employers spend seconds looking at a résumé to decide if the candidate is worth further review. To make it past the initial skim, you need to stand out. The best way to move beyond the application and get invited for an interview is to create a dominant impression with your content.

The standard or chronological résumé organizes your experience in reverse time order and emphasizes your work history. Many résumé templates are based on this type, but it’s not usually an ideal structure for college students because their work history is
unlikely to create a clear cumulative effect or dominant impression.

You can find examples of chronological résumés on pages 11, 13, 29, and 31 of the Career Center’s Résumé and Interview Guide. Melissa Jones’s résumé on page 29 is a great example of chronological résumé structure working well. Because all of Melissa’s listed experience is in schools working with kids, it emphasizes her preparedness for a teaching position. If your work history doesn’t similarly make obvious your qualification, try one of the other structures.

Look at John Q. Jones résumé on page 11 as another example. He states that his objective is to get an internship in banking. Typical internships in banking usually ask for the following skills:

- Prepare credit spreads for loan requests
- Assist with preparing loan documentation.
- Understand cash management tools.
- Maintain confidentiality of customer information and records.
- Conduct sales visits and customer calls.
- Identify opportunities for sales.
- Learn compliance policies and regulations.

In a quick few seconds, bank staff will see that John was a “Farm Worker” and a “Clerk,” which may not connect strongly with the banking internship. However, if they review the details of John’s work experience, they will notice that John has some similar experiences and skills. John might be more successful with another résumé structure.

The functional or skills-based résumé structure organizes your experience around key skills. Your job ad analysis can be extremely helpful here. If you can think of 2-3 categories of skills that are important to the job, those categories can be used as the major sections for your résumé, and you can list experiences from work, volunteering, class projects or units, and even hobbies as evidence of your relevant skills. This is a great structure to use when your work history doesn’t demonstrate your qualifications well.

Michael H. Katzen’s résumé on Page 24 of the Career Center’s Résumé and Interview Guide is a great example. Michael identified the key skills needed for the job: communication, organization, and leadership. He made those the major sections of his résumé, and under each he provided experience from work and volunteering.

The last résumé structure is the combination résumé. It combines the strengths of the previous two. It is part chronological experience and part skills emphasis. Most of the examples in the Résumé and Interview Guide are combination résumés because that structure works very well for most college students. Combining the structures works when you have several experiences that support your qualification for a job but you need to demonstrate additional skills or don’t have enough related experiences to fill out the page.

Don’t forget to consider other sections necessary to show your qualifications: certifications, computer skills, and more. Create the sections you need to highlight the essential skills, just like Sam Flyerman’s
résumé on page 23 of the Résumé and Interview Guide. For example, you might include an objective or professional summary. An objective or summary is useful for résumés dropped at career fairs, but it may not be helpful when responding to a job ad because it can sound generic when your goal is the same as every other candidate: to get that specific job.

Overall, you control the dominant impression your résumé creates through how you frame the content. Additionally, your résumé may control the conversation you have with employers at career fairs and interviews. When you select your content, make sure your details are things you can discuss in more depth. If you can’t, it’s best to leave that detail off the résumé.

**Writing and designing your résumé**

When you’re ready to generate content to develop the résumé framework you’ve selected, consult the Résumé and Interview Guide. You’ll find the following sections helpful:

- Inventory your skills, select relevant details, and communicate them clearly, pages 5-8.
- A list of action verbs to describe your skills and responsibilities, pages 9-10
- Example résumés—be sure to read the note boxes on each for helpful tips—pages 11-35.
- A checklist of essential details and formatting requirements—pages 3-4. For a quick list of the absolute essentials, you must have the following details:
  - Contact information: your name, one address, one phone number, and one email—an email that you check at least daily, preferably with an appropriate address.
  - Education: University, major(s), minor(s), expected graduation date; GPA is optional.
  - Work history: level of detail depends on relevance.
  - Engagement: volunteer, affiliations, honors, scholarships, etc.
  - Note: after your first year of college, remove anything from high school unless it is highly relevant. This is why getting involved during your first year of college is so important!

If you need ideas for designing your résumé, the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) has some great basic Résumé Design guidelines that will help you balance your content across your page, maintain consistent alignment, and select effective texts.

Once you have a solid draft of your résumé, it’s always a good idea to get feedback. Schedule a meeting with your career advisor using Handshake or make an appointment at the Writing Center. Both locations can offer great feedback to improve your résumé.

When you’re all done, save your résumé as a PDF, keeping a copy in another format for future editing. Unless asked to submit as a Word document or other option, PDF is the best format for maintaining your design and layout—other formats can be distorted in transfer from one version of software to another.
Refer to the job post and engagement activity responses you developed for Chapter 11, and respond to the following questions:

1. Which résumé structure do you think would best represent your qualification for that job? Why?

2. Create an outline of that résumé, including the major sections and the subsections. For example, in a skills-based résumé, your major sections would be skills and the subsections could be relevant experiences:
   
   **Communication**
   - Journalism Club
   - Public Speaking Project
   - Cashier at Pizza Hut

3. Review the job post. What key words can you incorporate into your résumé? If the job post is vague, reference the action verbs on pages 9-10 of the Résumé and Interview Guide, and find at least five verbs that you could use in your résumé to show you have relevant skills. Use these verbs to describe your experiences:
   
   **Journalism Club**
   - Composed “Citizen of the Month” columns, featuring exemplary students who contributed to the community.
   - Contacted area businesses seeking sponsorship.
   - Promoted the club at recruitment and outreach events.

4. Create a résumé, or edit your existing one, that you could use to apply for the position you found.

5. Print it, and bring it to class.

Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify and utilize a résumé organizational format that fits your needs
- Write and design an effective résumé
- Make adjustments to your résumé for greater impact
Cover letters are an introductory letter that introduces you as a candidate for a professional position. You may have applied for jobs that didn’t require a cover letter, but as you start looking for more career-specific internships and jobs, cover letters will likely be required.

Cover letters are your opportunity to emphasize your key strengths to a potential employer and to help them view you as a memorable and unique candidate. It might help to think of a résumé as the big picture view of your experiences and the cover letter as the street view. A good cover letter zooms in to give a detailed view of the most important parts of your professional history.

Read over Willie the Wildcat’s example cover letter on page 48 of the Career Center’s Résumé and Interview Guide. This letter is well-organized and easy to read. One of its strengths is that it uses numbers to quantify experiences so that readers can get a sense of scope and scale of the work he did. That’s great in both résumés and cover letters. Unfortunately, instead of using body paragraphs, it lists items much like you would on a résumé. It misses an opportunity to add depth.

Now read the cover letter on page 46 of the Résumé and Interview Guide. Jacob Gellar is descriptive about his work experiences so that Ms. Kearns can develop a clearer picture of Jacob’s abilities. When he writes, “I consistently exceeded my sales goal and was named ‘Employee of the Week’ on several occasions,” Jacob becomes a more memorable candidate because he has shared something very specific and unique that also highlights his strength as an employee. That’s the goal.
Many people find cover letters challenging because they hate writing about themselves, but they’re much more manageable when you break them down into their key parts.

**Parts of a cover letter**
While each cover letter is different, below we describe the sections of an effective cover letter.

**Header**
- Your address: use your résumé header across the top to create stylistic cohesion between the résumé and cover letter.
- The date: leave a line space above and below the date, separating it from the address information.
- The recipient’s address: insert a line space below to separate it from your greeting.
- An effective greeting: use the recipient’s name if possible (e.g. “Dear John Doe:”). If you can’t identify the recipient’s name, try something like “Dear Selection Committee,” being as specific as possible. Avoid overly generic greetings such as “To Whom It May Concern,” which can sound stuffy and outdated.

**Introductory paragraph**
- Open by mentioning the specific position you’re applying for and how you heard about it.
- Share a 1-2 sentence summary stating who you are, and why you’re interested and a good fit.
- Connect to the company by noting in one sentence why you’d want to work for them, how you’d benefit them, or how you’re invested in the field. This is a great place to share details from your research on the company or industry. When you’re claiming to be enthusiastic about a job, specificity reads as sincerity. Don’t be generic.
  - Weak example: I’m really excited about the opportunity to work for Birchwood Paper Products.
  - Stronger example: I’m really excited to contribute my knowledge of supply chain management to source environmentally friendly materials for Birchwood Industries. My experience will help move Birchwood from 5th to 1st most environmentally friendly company in Kansas.

**Body paragraphs**
Write 2-3 body paragraphs. While in school, you might focus the first paragraph on academic accomplishments and the second on employment experiences. Only use a third paragraph if you need to do so to fill the page. For each paragraph:

- Open by declaring that you have an essential skillset or qualification they want.
- Share a specific, concrete example that illustrates that skillset. The specific story will help the employer to remember you as a unique individual.
  - Weak example: “I have completed numerous projects using Excel in both my coursework and my internship at Pencil Industries. Many of the projects used formulas, and I had to analyze the data to make business recommendations for case studies in class and at the internship.”
o Stronger example: “In my internship at Pencil Industries, I organized five years of invoice records into Excel, and set up fields and formulas that helped the team to identify and evaluate trends in client turnover. The data sorting capabilities assisted us in creating an incentive plan to retain clients, which resulted in a 5% increase in profits over the next six-month period.”

• Tell the employer how your skills and experience will benefit them. Be as specific as possible.

Concluding paragraph
• In a single sentence, remind them of your enthusiasm for the position and/or your qualification. This can be another great place to share a bit of your research on the company.
• Tell them how they can most easily reach you and when.
• Thank them for their time and energy with a statement of appreciation.

Closing/salutation
• Sincerely / Appreciatively / Very respectfully, etc.
• Create a gap of 3 line spaces before typing your name. This large space is for your signature. If you really want to demonstrate that you know the formalities of a letter, print, sign, and scan the letter, or add an image file of your signature to this space.
• Type your full name after the space.

You can find example cover letters on pages 46-48 of the Career Center’s Résumé and Interview Guide. Once you have your content in place, make sure your formatting is professional.

Additionally, it’s always a good idea to have someone review your cover letter to make sure it creates the impression you want. If you’ve formed strong relationships with faculty or professionals, ask them if they’ll read it over and give you feedback. Use the support of your network to put forth your best foot.

Formatting your cover letter
Aim for stylistic cohesion with your résumé, by doing the following:

• Single space your letter and use a line space between paragraphs. (This format is known as block format.)
• Use the same body font you used in your résumé.
• Keep the letter margins the same size as your résumé.
• Use the header from your résumé as the address header for your cover letter if possible.
• Submit the letter to employers in PDF, unless directed to do otherwise, to avoid formatting incompatibility.
Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Write your own cover letter
- Identify weak areas in a cover letter and edit accordingly
- Format your cover letter to reflect the style of your résumé

**REFLECTION ACTIVITY**

Refer back to the job post you found for Chapter 11. As you read about the parts of the cover letter, write your own letter applying for the position.
SECTION 3: PRACTICING STUDENT SUCCESS SKILLS
In college, your teachers will likely talk about thinking and reading critically. It’s not just in college that these skills are important; top companies seek them as well. For example, Laszlo Bock, former Senior Vice President of People Operations at Google, said that one of the top four traits the company seeks is “general cognitive ability . . . Not just raw [intelligence] but the ability to absorb information.” This ability to absorb information, and respond to it with action, is part of critical thinking. In response to a national survey of business leaders, 93% said that “a demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than [a candidate’s] undergraduate major.” Another survey of 371 global business leaders found that next to creativity (#1), critical thinking (#2) would be the most valued workforce skill by 2020. The following chapters cover critical thinking and critical reading skills.

Critical thinking is the practice of taking an analytical, deep look at material, whether that material is a passage in a novel, a mathematical theorem, or a science lab practice. To think critically is to wrestle with something’s meaning and implications—in a sense, to hold it under a microscope for closer inspection. Knowing what it means to think critically doesn’t make the process easy, but with practice the process does get easier over time.

Here’s an example: in class, a teacher might talk about their policy on absences and might express a preference for a student to communicate openly about the reason for the absence. This teacher has likely spent time thinking about the policy and its ramifications for students, and a good teacher

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1 https://www.fastcompany.com/3061237/the-skills-it-takes-to-get-hired-at-google-facebook-amazon-and-more
will explain their reasoning and justification. When the teacher explains the policy and its implications to students, they are thinking critically about their teaching practices. If the students hear the policy and the discussion ends, they might not themselves think critically about the policy. Rather, they might take it at face value.

However, let’s say a student in the class wants to engage in a discussion of whether it is right for students to have to communicate openly about their absences. This student points out that students have a right to privacy; if they do not care if their absences are “excused,” why should they have to tell the teacher why they are absent? Or, this student might point out that there are many reasons for being absent that one might not want to disclose, such as a death in the family, an illness, or a family vacation. This student, in providing these examples and illustrations, is thinking critically about this teacher’s policy on absences.

An important note on critical thinking is that the word “critical” can sound negative, because of the definition of critical: “given to judging; esp. given to adverse or unfavorable criticism; fault-finding; censorious.”

And in one of the examples used above, critical thinking is associated with asking a teacher stimulating and perhaps even challenging questions about their absence policy. However, when teachers ask you to think critically, they are not asking you to think judgmentally, negatively, or in a disrespectful way. Rather, they are drawing on other meanings of the word “critical,” such as “important,” “decisive,” and “crucial.” To think critically is to think in careful, measured, important ways about class material or practices, and you can be kind, respectful, and thoughtful as you think critically.

**REFLECTION ACTIVITY**

In this activity, you are going to get to practice your critical thinking skills! Select a song that you really enjoy listening to and listen to it a couple times. Reflect on the following questions as you listen:

1. What is the message of the song?
2. What might be an alternative interpretation of the message?
3. Choose one word you think is most significant in the song. Why is this word the most significant for the song you chose?

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3 Oxford English Dictionary.
Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

✓ Define critical thinking
✓ Acknowledge that critical thinking is important in college and beyond
✓ Apply critical thinking to your life
CHAPTER 15
ENGAGING WITH YOUR READING

As you read this chapter, you will:

- Learn the purpose of scholarly texts and how to know what information is most important
- Identify four strategies that will help you read critically

As with any skill, the more a person practices good reading habits, and the more a person reads, the easier it is to understand challenging texts. What might not be obvious at first is that the way you interact with a text can have a significant impact on how well you understand it. This chapter emphasizes concrete reading strategies that will help you improve your critical reading skills, or the ability to think critically about something you read.

In college, you will encounter a variety of texts: scholarly texts, textbooks, literary texts, non-fiction, syllabi, writing assignments, lab reports, and more. We’ll focus here on scientific and social science writing, since this type of reading is expected in many courses at K-State and can be the hardest to understand. However, the skills discussed in this chapter are applicable to any sort of reading you’ll do in college and beyond. Take note on how you can apply these strategies to whatever type of reading you do for your major or future career.

In order to understand how to read academic or scholarly texts, meaning articles, books, or other publications produced by those who teach and produce research at a university, it is important to know why they are produced. The majority of scholarly texts are written by professors who are on what is called the “tenure track.” Tenure is a system that provides some measure of job security after approximately six years, during which time professors publish significant research and writing in their fields. Tenure requirements vary by institution, and it is difficult for professors to achieve tenure.

The vast majority of the knowledge that you encounter when surfing on Facebook or reading the news on your favorite application is research that is re-published by news
outlets after academics publish it in major journals. Journalists learn about this research and distill it in simpler, more accessible language for the public.

Why is this information important for you to know as you read scholarly texts? Because as a university student, you are joining your professors in scholarly conversation. You are expected to dive right into academic conversations and to read difficult texts that help you to understand the knowledge shared by professors in your chosen major or discipline. It can be helpful to think of this scholarly conversation as a current, like an oceanic current or a wave tunnel a surfer rides. The ocean’s current was there before you entered it and will remain after you’re gone. If you jump into a strong current, you fight it and may get overwhelmed by it. But when you’re an experienced swimmer, you learn how to work with the current, as a surfer learns to ride a wave tunnel. Scholarly conversations similarly existed before you entered them and will continue after you graduate, but you become a part of them when you enter college.

**Critical reading strategies**

Below are some reading strategies that will help you to make sense of this scholarly conversation.

**Read difficult texts twice**

Think about a movie you are very familiar with or that you’re attached to. How many times have you watched it? If you’ve watched your chosen film several times, you’ve likely experienced how much deeper your knowledge is of the movie with each viewing. You can probably quote the film and notice new details each time you watch it.

Reading is no different. You cannot expect to completely understand an article or text the first pass through. Even if reading comprehension is easy for you, the first time you read a text, you discern its ‘plot’ as you would a movie. With a second reading you notice other details, such as language choice, style, the author’s argument, etc. Giving yourself time to read challenging texts more than once is important.

**Mark up your texts**

It is much harder to understand or remember the information you’ve read without marking up your texts.

What should you mark? Especially when you are reading scholarly articles, it is important to note the rhetorical moves, or the written moves related to argumentation and persuasion. Many rhetorical moves are common across academic texts, and some vary from discipline to discipline. It’s a good practice to use the margin of your texts to leave yourself notes and comments that will help you study, discuss the texts in class, and easily find information.

Here are some common rhetorical moves authors make:

- **Gap in the Research**: Close to the start of the article, authors state the gap in the research their article or text is attempting to fill. Often, the gap is expressed with statements such as “while other scholars have written about x, my research does y.” Scholars, then, are expected to show what in their research is new or important. They identify what other scholars have said about a topic, thereby demonstrating their understanding and familiarity with the research in their field.
(their position in the scholarly current, in other words), and at the same time, they demonstrate what their research is contributing to this conversation. Next to each of these instances, in the margins of your text, you could write “gap.”

- **Thesis Statement**: Scholars also generally tell you the main point or argument they’re making; sometimes, this is expressed in a thesis statement near the start of the article or up to a few pages in. When you find this statement of the article’s main idea, write “argument” or “thesis” in the margins. A good way to double-check your sense of the main argument is to look to the conclusion, where the author will generally re-state the argument. Often, the thesis is easy to discern, as a writer might state, “in this paper we argue that . . .” Sometimes, the statement of the argument is not as clear.

- **The So-What**: Scholars identify the so-what of their research, why it matters and why people should read it. For example, a scholar might say that a research project on the impact of differences in American and Italian processing of wheat on rates of Celiac disease in both countries is important because it could lead to changes in American wheat processing that could lower the incidence of Celiac. When you encounter the author’s stated so-what(s), write “so-what” in the margins.

- **Literature Review**: Scholars in many science fields will include a literature review. This is a fancy way of describing a section in which the writer reviews scholarly articles in the field related to the topic at hand. For example, given a paper on Celiac disease, the writer will summarize the research in the field related to Celiac. This is part of how a researcher proves that they have done their homework and that they can be trusted to research the topic at hand. At the start of the literature review, write “lit review” in the margins.

- **Theoretical Framework**: Sometimes, a scholar will identify one or two other scholars whose work they are using as a theoretical framework. They might say, for instance, “in this paper we use Latour’s actor-network theory (ANT) to inform our reading of our campus’ science labs.” In this case, they are using ANT as a lens through which to observe or analyze a certain phenomenon (how campus science labs are structured or operated). A theoretical framework provides a way of investigating or understanding data, and each theoretical framework will likely cause writers to analyze and comprehend phenomena in unique and different ways. It is important to note, in the margins, when writers call out specific theories or thinkers.

- **Key Terms**: Scholars define key terms, and when you encounter these terms and definitions, note the term and write “def” in the margins. In the paragraph above, for instance, you could write “Def. theoretical framework” in the margins.

It is important to note that taking notes in the margins isn’t enough; you must also take notes on the material. What is the best way to take notes? Research demonstrates that handwritten notes lead to greater retention than taking notes digitally, even though doing the latter often makes it easier to file and retrieve notes.
When you finish reading an academic article, text, or textbook, it’s an important practice to re-state the main idea or argument in your own words. Write this argument on the first page of the article or at the top of your notes. Next, go through the article and note the important features you wrote in the margins—the thesis, the gap, the so-what, etc.

What else should you write in the margins and take notes on? Each time the author makes a claim, or an argument, it’s a good idea to write “claim” (or a shorthand such as “c”) in the margins and to highlight this claim. This is the support that the author is providing for the thesis. Some people call these claims “sub-arguments” or “sub-theses,” and often are the first lines of paragraphs, or topic sentences. These claims or arguments are the way that writers prove that their main argument or thesis is true. Writing down major claims or arguments will not only help to you retain the material, but will assist you during class discussions and help you when you write papers on the material.

Beyond this, you can highlight, circle, or mark ideas that are important to you, that frustrate you, that are interesting, or that you think are important to your instructor. Let’s say you’re supposed to write a response to a literary text, and you’re not sure what you want to write about. On page three of the text you’re reading, you see that the author is writing about issues related to gender, and this interests you. You might highlight the material and write “gender” in the margins. At each new reference to issues of gender, you do the same; in this way, you build a visible index related to that topic. When you start writing your paper, you can quickly move through the article, noting each time gender came up. You can also include these references to gender in your notes; don’t forget to include a page number and some indication of where you found the quote (for example, page 4, third paragraph).

Often, because of financial reasons, you’ll want to check out a library book instead of purchasing it. Students often ask about strategies for marking up library books or rentals that they have to give back. Taking notes in a notebook or journal is one good method. Another is to buy large packs of sticky notes and cut them down to smaller sizes (it’s cheaper to do this than to purchase small sticky notes). You can place a note next to ideas you want to mark and then write notes on them. Then, if you want to keep important sections, you can photocopy the material and your sticky notes will be included. Don’t forget to remove the sticky notes when you return the book so that the library or next reader doesn’t have to do this work for you!

When reading an academic text, it’s always a good idea to note the author’s name, the year the article was published, and the journal it was published in. Why does year matter? The sciences value currency—ideas that were published recently, typically in the past five years. Sometimes, your professors will assign older, foundational works. These could include articles that have historically been important to the field or that perform some groundwork that current research builds on. You won’t be able to place an article in the scholarly current without knowing when it was published.

Why does it matter which journal published the research? Sometimes it doesn’t; good research is published in a field’s top journals and also in journals that are not the most prominent in a field. But when an article is published in a field’s top journal, say Nature if you’re a biologist or The Journal of the American Medical Association if you’re a doctor, you know that the top experts in the field have consulted on the quality of that research.
You’ll likely have other questions about reading and marking up strategies as you proceed through your K-State First course or other classes. Ask your instructor and classmates, as they likely have developed their own strategies that will help you to become a strong reader and processor of complex texts.

**REFLECTION ACTIVITY**

After learning strategies for engaging with your reading assignments, now think about your process for reading this chapter, using the following questions:

1. What did you do to engage with the chapter? Did you take notes? Write down key phrases? Conduct research on topics you didn’t understand?

2. Based upon what you did or did not do, how might you improve your ability to read critically?

Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify and understand what makes a text scholarly
- Utilize several strategies for reading critically
Writing for college-level courses is a common cause of nervousness. When we write, we often share our innermost thoughts, feelings, and opinions with others. And when we write for professors, there’s an added dimension—evaluation—which can make us even more hesitant to share, even when it’s requested or even demanded. This chapter explores ideas to help make writing less scary, or at least to give you some foundational tools to help you more confidently navigate the writing that’s requested of you at the university.

There is a discipline called Writing Studies (also known as Composition and Rhetoric) that studies all aspects of the writing process: what writing is, the different processes and materials writers use to write, how writing should be taught, how literacy (reading/writing) skills are developed in college, how socioeconomics impact adolescent and adult literacy development, how people persuade each other through writing, and basically any other topic you can think of that relates to writing. Writing Studies, as a field, has come to some agreement on best practices in writing that we’ll share with you in this chapter. Many of these ideas are based on two recently published books that gather scholarship on this topic from the field’s most prominent or emergent scholars: *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies* and *Bad Ideas about Writing*. 

As you read this chapter, you will:

- Consider your current writing practices and how they affect your writing
- Learn about linear versus recursive forms of writing
- Understand how audience and context shape your writing
Writing is a practice you develop over time

Whether you consider yourself a writer or not, you become one when you write for class. Whether you’re a developing writer or a seasoned one, it’s important to cultivate an effective writing practice, one that assists rather than thwarts your productivity. Many students have the misconception that they are either a writer or they’re not; there’s no in-between. What Writing Studies knows through more than a century of research is that this idea is simply not true. Writing is a skill that is practiced over time, and even those who think they are terrible can develop a positive practice by dedicating time and attention to writing. Malcolm Gladwell says that it takes 10,000 hours to become an expert at something (being an athlete, a musician, or an accountant, for example). A professional musician spends ten thousand hours plus practicing at their instrument. For some reason, people find it difficult to apply this principle to writing, but frankly, it’s the same: if you put in the hours, your writing will improve, and there is no professional writer who has not honed their practice over time.

Throughout this semester, think about your writing practice while you produce every piece of writing (even emails!). When you get a satisfying grade, think about what habits contributed to your success. When you get an unsatisfying grade, think about what habits you might change to increase your success on the next project. Sometimes, we do well when our practices are bad, but one thing is certainly true: as writing projects and tasks get more complicated, you will be less and less able to produce successful, meaningful writing if your practices and habits are bad.
Writing is a process
A common myth about the writing process is that it looks like this:

BRAINSTORMING/PREWRITING ► DRAFTING ► REVISIONS ► PUBLISHING

What’s wrong with this linear depiction of writing? Through research, scholars have come to understand that writing is not linear, but recursive. This means that writing doesn’t happen in neat stages as suggested above. Rather, writers revise while they draft, brainstorm while they revise, and revise at the beginning. “Publishing” may seem like the natural end of a process, but as writers know, when they submit writing to publishers, revisions are requested, often sending them back to brainstorming and other stages.

Writing processes look different for all writers. Some writers talk about their process as vomiting onto the page. They don’t censor themselves much in the drafting process. Other writers talk about reading an assignment sheet and composing in their head for weeks before they sit down to write; when they write, their ideas spill out at once, and they spend a lot of time later organizing, adding, deleting, and revising. These examples illustrate that there are many processes writers follow, and that different “stages” of the writing process are recursive, in that they overlap and press in on each other throughout a writing project.

Writing is social and collaborative
It’s easy to understand why many people have the idea that writing is solitary, the product of one individual mind. The image of a genius man (think Hemingway) pounding away at a typewriter in a garret is so pervasive in our culture that it is hard to escape this idea. In reality, writing is both social, in that our ideas are based on the world and culture around us, and collaborative, in that along the way to a piece of writing, we share ideas, talk with friends, read texts that influence our thinking, and are affected in ways we aren’t even conscious of by many other sources.

To share a related example, think about how you communicate when talking with friends. The words you use are likely different in significant ways to the one you use with your family or with faculty members. Your writing style develops a distinct communication style, too, that can vary based on the context in which you are writing.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Before class, find a classmate, friend, roommate, family member, etc..
Together, discuss the features of your communication and writing styles that are unique to the geographic location in which you grew up, to your family, to your friends, to your school, and so on.

If you’re not sure what to talk about, consider:

1. Are there any unique words or expressions that you and your friend group use? What about you and your family members?

2. Do you hide certain expressions or words when around family?

3. How would you describe the difference between how you speak and how you write?
Recognizing that writing is social and collaborative is important to your writing practice. It’s critical for you to share your ideas with others in the early stages, to ask questions when you don’t understand an assignment or material, and to get feedback on your writing (from the Writing Center at K-State, from instructors, and from friends).

The social and collaborative nature of writing can have some friction with another important concept: academic honesty. We have discussed academic honesty earlier in this textbook, but we’d like to remind you of a good policy: “When in doubt, ask.” If you aren’t sure what constitutes unauthorized aid, talk with your instructor about it. They likely do not want you to take a midterm exam to the Writing Center, for example, as you’re supposed to be the sole author of that document, but some faculty make exceptions!

**Understand your audience**
If you are taking expository writing, there’s a good chance you’ve learned about the rhetorical triangle. Rhetoric is the art of persuasion; rhetorical in this case means involving the persuasive act. The rhetorical triangle helps us visualize that every time you communicate, in writing or verbally, you (one corner of the triangle) are sending a message (another corner) to an audience (the third corner). In the chart we’ve included below, you’ll see that this triangle is embedded in a context. This means that when you write, there are several factors that play into how you shape your message.

![Rhetorical Triangle Diagram](image)

Let’s break this down through the example of an email, since you’ll be writing a lot of those both at K-State and in your future career. When you send an email, you follow certain rules (that’s the genre part of the image). For example, as you’ve learned in Chapter 3, each email should include a greeting, a body, and a closing. But the language or style you use to construct emails shifts depending on whether you’re sending to a friend, your family, or an instructor. You will tailor your writing to the person receiving your message.
One last consideration about audience: When you are writing for class, it is tempting to imagine that your only reader is your professor and that there’s no broader audience for your work. After all, you are generally submitting your work for a grade. However, imagining this sole audience is a problem for your writing. Yes, it’s true that it’s important to read an assignment sheet and tailor your writing to the assignment you’ve been given. Through your writing assignments, whether they are lab reports or literary analyses, your instructors are communicating important customs of your field of study and the associated writing type. By practicing, you are becoming knowledgeable in those genres as well.

However, writing should also 1) be meaningful to you and 2) be pursued as if there is an audience beyond your instructor who might read it. Regarding the latter, this is more possible than you think. Instructors often submit their students’ work for department, university, national, and international awards and scholarships (or encourage students to submit their work). In addition, undergraduate and graduate programs, campus organizations, internships and externships, fellowships, and jobs often request to see writing you’ve produced for a course as part of the application process. For these reasons, all of your projects should be written imagining this future audience.

Writing should also be important to you. Class writing assignments can sometimes feel contrived, silly, designed to meet a class outcome, and even irrelevant. If you feel this way about a writing assignment, you may consider respectfully talking with your professor. Ask questions in class about the assignment’s goals or purpose so that you can better understand why you’re writing the assignment. Professors may also be open to negotiating the terms of an assignment so that you can write on an alternative topic that is meaningful and relevant to you.

In the case of the lab report, it’s likely not possible to provide an alternative assignment. However, asking the professor why lab reports are critical and how relevant they are in the professor’s life or in the workplace will help you to understand the importance in the classroom. In the case of the literary analysis or history paper, your professor wants to read exciting, passionate, well-crafted work and will likely be thrilled that you took the time to come to their office and find a way to make the assignment meet both your goals and the class expectations.

The most important skill to be gained in talking with your professor is advocating for yourself in college (and beyond). It can feel scary, but the ability to explain your needs and thoughts to an instructor in order to be more productive and make assignments or projects meaningful is a critical skill to learn. Self-advocacy, as discussed in Chapter 8, will help you navigate your college writing assignments and negotiate the many difficult situations life will throw your way. Advocating for yourself respectfully can help you refute a wrong fee charged by your phone or utility company, approach a boss who promised you a raise and didn’t deliver, leave a great impression with the Dean of Admissions who makes scholarship recommendations or when you’re having a conflict with a roommate and you need to achieve a desired outcome—fast.
Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Assess your current writing practices and identify potential obstacles
- See recursive writing emerge in your writing process
- Shape your writing for the intended audience within a given context
HOCs and LOCs
Some of your professors, in their instruction, on their assignment sheets, and in their grading are going to focus on lower-order concerns, or LOCs. LOCs include typos, minor grammatical mistakes, and other surface-level errors that generally do not interfere with understanding a writer’s meaning. Higher-order concerns (HOCs), such as meeting the assignment or genre requirements, organization, paragraphing, voice, argumentation, and overall writing effectiveness often suffer because of the focus on LOCs.

We have all been conditioned by the grammatical drills that were likely impressed upon us in grade school. Because of this practice, many of us have the impression that LOCs are the most important part of writing. Yet over 100 years of research has demonstrated that humans, as long as they are around other speaking humans, will naturally acquire both language and the grammar of the language they’re immersed in by early adolescence, around the age of 12 or 13.

One example of this phenomenon is from a well-known author on this topic, Patrick Hartwell. Hartwell asserts that most seven-year-olds, without the benefit of grammar drills and without knowing the accompanying rule (there is a rule!), can put the following words in their expected order according to English grammar: Four girls the French young.

As you were just able to do in your head, the expected order is: The Four Young French Girls.

Without looking up the rule, can you state it? Most of us are not able to. This is because children learn grammar through trial and error.
at a very young age, and they don’t need drills or rules to do it.

The point here is that some professors and employers will read typos and other surface-level errors as signs of lack of attention or care. However, the research shows that such error-production is not only natural, and typical of faculty writing too, but is also common when writing tasks are hard and when working memory is challenged by a stressful, new, or challenging assignment.

While surface-level errors are distracting or noticeable, it’s far more important that your writing is well-articulated, well-argued, and well-organized. The rule in Writing Studies is that instructors should focus on LOCs over HOCs only when meaning is impaired or when they cannot understand the intentions or ideas in a piece of work.

Many students may feel the frustration of having projects returned with an emphasis on LOCs when what they want is to know how to better revise according to HOCs. This situation can be particularly frustrating for international students, who are eloquent in their native languages and often come to the university speaking three or more languages. These students struggle to learn some principles of English (such as article use) that are known to be some of the hardest of any language. Experts say it takes about seven years, with intensive study and fastidious reading and interacting with texts, for language learners to acquire a new language, and rules such as article use will continue to frustrate language learners beyond those seven years.

For that reason, emphasizing those rules through grammar drills or focusing on such rules at the expense of HOCs is detrimental to your writing practice. These techniques have been widely shown to be ineffective for learning.

What does this all mean for you? Typos and other grammatical errors are important. However, we need to determine when to prioritize the attention to this part of the writing and revision process (we will cover revision in the next section).

In order to make the most of your writing process, avoid getting bogged down in the LOCs early in the process. Try as hard as you can to stay focused on HOCs. Here’s why: let’s say you give a friend a paper to give you feedback, and they give you HOCs to work on and also correct all of your typos. A good writer will then revise the paper, attending to the LOCs. Then, one or two drafts later, they’ll write many of those typos or errors back into the paper. This makes your friend’s focus on LOCs less helpful.

The best thing to do is to take your work to the Writing Center, read it out loud to yourself, and get feedback on HOCs from friends. Every writer needs a reader who’s willing to assist with the very final draft. When you think the content is ready to turn in, ask a friend to help with LOCs and revise accordingly.

**Revision**

Research in the field of Writing Studies has demonstrated that revision is more difficult for inexperienced writers. This difficulty is multi-faceted: instructors and inexperienced writers often do not share the same terminology regarding writing (What is “grammar” or “flow,” for instance?). What’s natural about revision to instructors is often not for inexperienced writers, and therefore it’s hard for
instructors to communicate expectations about writing in ways that are understandable to students; and because experience with writing is what makes experienced writers able to understand how to develop a text effectively. The research demonstrates that inexperienced writers will often focus on LOCs, such as fixing typos and word choice, while experienced writers are able to focus on HOCs such as developing their ideas or argumentation in order to answer reader questions, or re-organizing a paper so that readers’ needs are met better.

Inexperienced writers may also be confused about how to prioritize different instructor feedback and to know which comments are more or less important. For example, if an instructor highlights 30 typos and leaves 2 comments about paragraph organization, the student might get the message that fixing the typos takes priority and is more significant, since the instructor spent the most time highlighting those and they take up more visual space. In reality, the organization is likely the more important concern (unless the 30 typos interfere with the instructor’s ability to understand the student’s meaning).

As mentioned earlier, it is important to prioritize when revisions should take place. The linear model (brainstorm/pre-write, draft, revise, publish) makes it seem like revision should take place only after drafting and that it only happens once. As the research shows and as we explored last chapter, the writing process is recursive, not linear. After you brainstorm, you might take your project to the Writing Center or to your instructor’s office to talk through your ideas, and then you might revise after those meetings. After you write a first draft, that’s a good time to revise again!

**Concluding thoughts on writing**
As K-State English professor Abby Knoblauch says, “There’s no one way to write well.” This is a conclusion shared by most Writing Studies scholars. Through this chapter, we hope we’ve emphasized this idea, as well as debunked some common myths about writing. Instead, you should now know:

- Writing is a practice that can be developed over time;
- The writing process is recursive;
- Writing is a collaborative process;
- Your instructor isn’t your only audience;
- You should emphasize HOCs over LOCs in the revision process and
- Revision is recursive and often difficult (but you can do it!).

In the Additional Resources section of this textbook, you will find Additional Resources for K-State Writers. There, you can find some information about writing resources that will help you throughout your K-State studies.
Now that you’ve read two chapters on writing, think back to your initial reflection on writing advice.

1. What advice was most helpful to your development as a writer?

2. What advice would you give to a friend about writing?

Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

✓ Define the difference between LOCs and HOCs
✓ Decide when to focus on each category of order of concern
✓ Develop your writing through a recursive, rather than linear, form of revision
College research assignments may differ from what you have done before. In college, just googling information won’t be adequate for research assignments, because Google does not always provide the most accurate or relevant information. As a college student, you will need to develop research skills to help you navigate research assignments and the vast amount of information in the world. As such, this chapter will guide you through research strategies to help you be successful.

The research process
The research process, just like the writing process, is recursive, as we learned in Chapter 16. This process means that you won’t move smoothly from one step to the next. Instead, you will likely return to earlier steps as you progress before moving on to the next step. Additionally, different research projects will require different types of research. This chapter focuses on library research, rather than experimental research. However, there are many online resources that you can use when engaging in experimental research, many of which can be found on university websites. K-State’s Research page, for example, provides information about undergraduate research opportunities, campus resources available, the importance of research compliance, and much more.

Select topic and research background information
The first step in research is to pick a general topic. To do this, think about a topic that affects you personally, that interests you, or that you have heard about in the news. It is helpful to choose a topic that interests you, as you will enjoy the research project more and are more likely to be successful. Additionally, it is important to remember that your topic

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will be tied to the objectives of the assignment, so try to balance your interests with the assignment requirements.

Once you have chosen a general topic, you will want to conduct some background information searches to help you narrow your topic. If you are already well-informed on your general topic, you might skip to the next step. However, if you need to do some research to find background information, try browsing your textbook, online searches, or read recent newspaper articles.\(^5\)

**Develop and narrow topic**

To narrow your topic, think about issues surrounding your general topic or consider a consequence-based question, such as “What are the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on minority populations in the United States?” Another way to narrow your topic would be to create a concept map, like the one below. You can also [ask a librarian](http://cotr.libguides.com/researchstrategies) for help or visit the Writing Center on campus.

One way to see if your topic is narrow enough is to fill in the blanks of the following statement:\(^6\)

> I am researching ___________________ (topic) because I want to find out ___________________ (issue/question) in order to ___________________ (application: this is the “so what” question—or why does this information matter?)

Using the HIV/AIDS topic above as an example, your topic statement might look as follows:

I am researching the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on minority populations in the United States because I want to find out how minority populations are impacted differently from white, upper-class populations in order to propose ways to combat the additional challenges minority populations face.

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6 “Step-by-Step.”; “The 7 Steps.”
Once you have narrowed your topic, you will likely begin researching. Here are three common problems you might encounter while researching:7

- Too much information: If there is too much information for you to sift through, your topic is likely too broad and you may need to narrow it even further.
- Not enough information: If you can’t find any information on your topic, or you can’t find enough, your topic is likely too narrow and you might need to broaden the scope of your project.
- Many results, but nothing in library databases: If this happens, then your topic is likely too new and there hasn’t been time for people to develop scholarly sources on the topic. In this case, you may want to find a new focus for your research or explore alternative methods of presenting your information.

Find research materials
Finding sources can be easy when you know where and how to look. The first thing to keep in mind is the type of research you’re conducting. Some research projects will require less scholarly sources, in which case newspaper articles may be appropriate. Some research projects will require online web pages, personal interviews, company mission statements, or a variety of other sources. Other projects will require you to utilize only scholarly sources. If you aren’t sure which type of sources you need, ask your professor.

For scholarly research, you can conduct searches in a variety of ways. Google Scholar may provide sources you won’t find in other databases. Additionally, the library’s website has a catalogue search function and access to numerous databases. If you select your subject area, the library’s website will provide the different databases that will likely be useful to you.

For example, if you are conducting research for a biology course, and you select the subject “biology,” the library’s website will provide sixteen different databases that you may find useful. Each database will have a brief description, so that you can consider which databases will be most useful for your needs. Try a number of different databases, as you will find different results with each one.

If you find an article or a book that you would like to use that the library does not have access to, you can request it through interlibrary loan. When you request an article or book through interlibrary loan, the K-State Library will reach out to other libraries to find a copy of the item you request. That item will be delivered to you either electronically or via mail. Any texts delivered via mail will be available for pick up at Hale Library’s Help Desk. An electronic article or book chapter is usually sent within 2-5 days, but often sooner. Any print sources that need to be shipped usually arrive in 3-10 days.

To search, come up with a list of keywords. Take your topic and break it into different concepts. What are the main ideas of your topic? Then, for each concept, create a list of synonyms.8 On the next page is an example of a keyword chart that you could use for searching.

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7 “The 7 Steps.”
8 Ibid.
**Research Question:** What is the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on minority populations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword One</th>
<th>Keyword Two</th>
<th>Keyword Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Minority Populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Effects</td>
<td>African Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Hispanics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexually transmitted diseases</td>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Asian Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexually transmitted infections</td>
<td></td>
<td>Native Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STDs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STIs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use quotation marks around words to get results with the same exact phrasing. Use an asterisk (*) to utilize truncation. Truncation means “to shorten by cutting off a part of” or “to cut short” and allows you to search for multiple words that start with the same letters, but end differently, rather than having to search the words separately. For example, a search of child* would provide results for childhood, children, and any other words that begin with child.

Boolean phrase searches “allow you to combine words and phrases using the words AND, OR, or NOT (known as Boolean operators) to limit, broaden, or define your search.” Using “AND” only presents results that have both terms. Using “OR” will provide results with either of the terms. Using “NOT” will remove results that include the second term.

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9 Dictionary.com
11 Ibid.
REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Changing your Boolean operators can provide a wide variety of results. Try some out to see how they can vary. Using your research question, create a short list of key words. Combine these key words in various ways using Boolean operators, to see how the results may vary. For example, some key words for the research question “What is the impact of violent television on teenagers?” include “violence” and “television.” For this activity, you might try searching “violence” AND “television.” Then you might try “violence” OR “television.” Finally, you could search “violence on television.”

Once you’ve explored the usage of Boolean operators, answer the following questions:

1. How did the Boolean operators affect your search?

2. How might they limit, or broaden, your research?

In addition to online sources, print sources can provide diversity and depth to your research. Books can provide more detailed information on a topic than an article can. Additionally, books have extensive bibliographies that can provide more sources for your research. The orange “cited by” button on the Library’s search engine will show you where the source has been previously cited, which may help you find more recent information on the topic. Some sources will also have an orange “citations” button, which will show you what sources that article has cited. The screen shot below illustrates where to find these buttons.

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12 “Step-by-Step.”
Additionally, the library allows you to put books on hold, so you don’t have to search the stacks yourself. To place a hold, click on the “Find it at the Library” tab. Under the tab, there should be an option to click “Request Retrieval,” as noted in the screenshot below.

Evaluate credibility

Once you have found sources, evaluate their credibility to make sure that the source will work for your research. Evaluating source credibility not only helps to ensure that your sources will meet the requirements of the assignment, but also that your source material is accurate and relevant to your topic. Below are the Big 5 criteria\(^\text{13}\) to help you evaluate your sources.

- **Authority:** What are the author’s credentials? Someone who has a Ph.D. in the topic will have more authority than someone who wrote an opinion piece in the newspaper and does not have a degree in the subject area.
- **Accuracy:** Does the author cite their sources? If they don’t cite their sources, the article may not be credible. If they do cite their sources, where are they getting their information? Is it from other credible sources?
- **Objectivity:** What is the author’s purpose in writing? If the author is writing to persuade, the piece may be biased. While all sources have some sort of bias attached, those that are attempting to persuade will likely have a more distinct bias. Depending on your research goals, a source that is more informative rather than persuasive might be more useful.
- **Coverage:** Is the source information thorough? Are there topics that the source seems to neglect? It is also important to establish whether or not the source information is supported by evidence. If the author makes claims with no evidence, the information may not be accurate.
- **Currency:** How recent is this information? A source that is over twenty years old may not be relevant anymore. Unless told otherwise, it is generally good practice to only use sources that were published within the last ten years. However, there are some exceptions to this rule. A pivotal research study, for example, despite having been published more than ten years prior, may be necessary for your work.

Organizing and managing your sources
There are a number of different types of sources that are useful for different types of research. The following links provide some useful summaries on the different types of sources you might encounter: Purdue Owl, SUNY Empire State College, and New Mexico State University.

It is a good idea to keep all your sources in one place using a citation manager. A citation manager can help you to keep track of your sources and can make it easier to cite them when you begin writing. K-State has access to RefWorks, where you can create an account for free and continue to use it after you graduate. While there are other citation managers available, they have many of the same functions. Other citation managers you might consider using are Endnote, Zotero, and Mendeley.

If you don’t use a citation manager, it can be useful to create all of your citations before writing. For citation guidelines for APA, MLA, and Chicago, you can look at the Purdue Owl website. The K-State Library also has links to various style guides.

Group research
When conducting group research, there are things you can do to help your group be successful, such as delegating roles and communicating effectively. For example, if your topic has multiple sub-points, you could assign each group member a sub-point to research. Try to let each member offer what talents, interests, and knowledge they can bring to the group. People are more likely to follow through if they have a role they choose. In Chapter 7, you learned about your top five Strengths. You can use these Strengths to help each member realize where they may be most effective, to help maximize your group’s productivity.

Also, avoid assigning roles that are based off of timelines. Assigning all the research to one group member and all of the writing to another isn’t an effective distribution of work. The purpose of group projects is to help you manage the work more effectively, and simply breaking the work up chronologically will not effectively solve this problem.

In addition to assigning roles, your group may want to have weekly meetings. At these meetings, discuss what has been accomplished and what still needs to be done. This can help keep group members accountable while also keeping the project on track. Encourage your group to set your next

**Reflection Activity**
Check out the following sources: source 1, source 2, and source 3. Use the Big 5 Criteria above to evaluate the credibility of these sources. Compare and contrast the sources using the following questions:

1. Which of these sources would be useful for an academic research paper?
2. Which might be useful for a persuasive essay?
3. Which of these sources would you not want to use for a research assignment?
meeting at the conclusion of the current one, with each member leaving with a specific set of goals to accomplish in the meantime.

Most importantly, make sure that you communicate. Lack of communication is one of the biggest reasons group projects fail. You may want to exchange phone numbers or set up a GroupMe, so you can communicate more easily than with email. In addition to these suggestions, the general research strategies listed below can be utilized or adapted for the group work setting.

Now that you’ve read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Develop research topics and find appropriate sources
- Coordinate group projects effectively
You will likely have to present your research many times throughout college. To help you become more comfortable with presenting, this chapter will provide strategies for creating an effective presentation and for the presentation itself. With these strategies and suggestions, you will have the tools necessary to create a successful presentation and to fight potential presentation nerves.

**Creating effective PowerPoint presentations**

How many times have you almost fallen asleep during a PowerPoint presentation? It is important to carefully construct the PowerPoint to engage your audience. While the following guidelines are merely suggestions, they should help you prepare a PowerPoint that keeps your audience engaged, effectively delivers the information, and is easy for viewers to understand.

**Determine objectives**

Before creating your PowerPoint, have some objectives in mind. What do you want the audience to take away from your presentation? Consider what information the audience may already have, so you don’t waste time explaining topics they already know. Key points that were introduced during the presentation and reviewed in a summary statement can help your audience remember your main ideas.

Avoid stock templates and use few colors
Avoid using the stock templates that PowerPoint provides as they are overused. Instead, think about what kind of color scheme or design would enhance your

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presentation’s main point. Create the first slide and save it as a template that you can use throughout. Using lots of colors can be distracting, so consider choosing 2-3 colors.\textsuperscript{17} If the template looks like it might be distracting, try using fewer colors.

Researchers have even explored which colors work best for different types of presentations. For example, the color blue is calming and conveys a sense of trust. Blue backgrounds are often used in professional or business settings. You can find more information about how to use colors in your PowerPoints from Presentation Process and Think Outside the Slide.

\textbf{Text font, size, and color}

The text that you use should be easy to read for all audience members. Use a sans serif font, such as Arial or Helvetica, as they are easier to read.\textsuperscript{18} Make sure that the font is large enough so that people at the back of the room can read the text. At a minimum, use 18pt. font for text and 34pt. font for the title.\textsuperscript{19} There needs to be enough color contrast between the text and the background.\textsuperscript{20} If you find that the text is hard to read from a distance, then you may need to change the color of the text. These strategies for text will ensure that your audience, even those sitting in the back, can easily read your slides.

\textbf{Content}

When preparing the content for your PowerPoint, lead with ideas. Tell your audience what matters and give supporting information to back it up. Following are some suggestions for how to organize the content of your PowerPoint so that the audience can easily digest your information.

Reading directly from your slides prevents audience members from engaging with you and your presentation.\textsuperscript{21} Having too many words on a slide causes audience to focus on reading, instead of what you are saying. Try to focus on 2-3 main points overall, which will make it easier for audiences to remember your message.\textsuperscript{22} These main points can then be broken down into subpoints. If you are having a hard time narrowing your focus to a few main points, talk it out with a friend or visit the Writing Center.

Put only one main idea on each slide.\textsuperscript{23} This will make the information more easily digestible. Try to avoid using bullet points, as bullet points can make it easy to put too many ideas onto one slide.\textsuperscript{24} If you want to use bullet points, try to keep them to a minimum. Recommendations for text length vary, from 6-10 words per slide\textsuperscript{25} to no more than six lines of text\textsuperscript{26} to no more than thirty words. Regardless of this variation, check that your slides are not overwhelmed with information and that you are sticking to the main point. Asking a friend what they think can help you decide how much is too much to include on a slide.

\textsuperscript{18} French, “11 Design Tips.”; “Presentation Design 101.”
\textsuperscript{20} French, “11 Design Tips.”
\textsuperscript{21} Jacobs and Hyman, “15 Strategies.”
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} “Presentation Design 101.”; McCready, “108 Best Presentation Ideas.”
\textsuperscript{24} French, “11 Design Tips.”; Parr, “12 Proven Strategies.”
\textsuperscript{25} “Presentation Design 101.”
\textsuperscript{26} French, “11 Design Tips.”
It is best practice to have notes with you as a reminder of what you want to say. You can use notecards or the PowerPoint speaker note function. During the presentation, the speaker note function will let you, but not the audience, see the notes that you created. This can be a nice way to have notes for the presentation while keeping your hands free.

**Photos, graphs, and images**
Instead of using stock photography, which is overused and often looks staged, try finding photos from [Creative Commons](https://creativecommons.org). Use high-resolution images when possible, as they will look much better when enlarged on the screen for the presentation. No matter what kind of image or photo you use, make sure that it directly relates to your topic, so that it enhances your message.

Keep any charts or graphs simple, as they will be easier for viewers to read and understand. Avoid overwhelming people with too many numbers or charts. A multitude of numbers can be hard to visualize. If you have a lot of data, put a story with the numbers to make the information more digestible. Finally, only use one image, chart, or photo per slide, so your slides are easy to follow.

**Use handouts**
While PowerPoint is an incredibly useful tool for presentations, it does not guarantee that people will remember what they learned from your presentation. Whenever you present information, it is always useful to create a handout that summarizes your points to give to audience members after the presentation, especially since graphs and charts can sometimes be hard to read from a screen.

**Presentation strategies**
Creating a PowerPoint is only half of a successful presentation. You can be an effective presenter when using the following strategies.

**Practice your presentation**
To be most effective in delivering your presentation, you will want to practice—and practice again and again. The more you practice, the easier it will be to fight through any nerves when presenting, and it will likely make you feel more comfortable about presenting in general. Practicing your presentation gives you a chance to plan what you want to say without reading directly from the PowerPoint and will help you move smoothly from one point to the next. Practicing is also helpful if you have time constraints in which to work because it can help you figure out the necessary pacing for your presentation.

To practice, you might consider presenting to some friends or family members and ask them to provide constructive feedback. You might also consider recording yourself and then watching the recording to see how you present and improve your presentation skills. This will also provide you an opportunity...
to count your “ums.” People often say “um” or other filler sounds when they are thinking of what to say next, but this leaves you sounding unprepared. Instead, try replacing any “ums” with silence. Practicing your presentation can help you to feel comfortable with silence.

Effective presentation persona
An important aspect of your presentation persona is dressing appropriately for your presentation. This does not mean that you need to wear a business suit for every presentation, though in some instances it is the appropriate choice. Instead, go for slightly more formal than what your audience will be wearing. Consider wearing something neutral, such as subtle patterns or solid colors. If you are in need of business professional clothing, K-State has Cat’s Closet in the Career Center, where you can go to borrow the clothes you need.

Always arrive early for your presentation. While it can be tempting to start a presentation with an excuse, such as “I didn’t get much sleep last night” or “I am fighting off a cold” in case the presentation doesn’t go as planned, avoid making any excuses. Providing excuses just gives the audience license to distrust what you are about to say. Remain confident and don’t let the audience know if you only got two hours of sleep. If you have practiced your presentation, it should be easy to remain confident, because you know the material well.

While it is important to be professional, it is also important to be yourself. Let your personality come out. It can help the audience get to know you better and to engage more in your presentation. Being yourself, rather than trying to suppress your personality, can also help you to feel more comfortable with the presentation. Enthusiasm will also help the audience to engage with your presentation.

Fighting nerves
Public speaking can be stressful for many people. One of the best strategies you can use to fight nerves is to breathe. Take ten deep breaths, breathing in and out slowly. Breathing deeply and slowly helps to slow your heart rate and can help to reduce nervousness. Feeling confident in your presentation can also help you to feel more relaxed. If you have practiced your presentation numerous times, you are less likely to feel nervous. No matter how nervous you feel, try to appear relaxed, so your audience sees only your confidence.

Speak slowly
Speak slowly and clearly when you present. Presenters often speak so quickly that people cannot understand them. Feeling nervous often causes people to speak quickly, so taking deep breaths can help you to slow down during the presentation. It’s okay to take a moment and pause, especially if it will help you from speaking too quickly. If you are approaching your time limit, try dropping a point or briefly summarize the remaining information rather than speeding up. You can always address questions about the points you summarized after the presentation is complete.

Interact with the audience
Interacting directly with the audience can

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37 Ibid.
38 “Strategies for Successful Presentations.”
39 Ibid.
40 Parr, “12 Proven Strategies.”
41 “Strategies for Successful Presentations.”; Jacobs and Hyman, “15 Strategies.”
42 “Strategies for Successful Presentations.”
43 Ibid.
44 Parr, “12 Proven Strategies.”
45 Jacobs and Hyman, “15 Strategies.”
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
help to keep them engaged. On a basic level, this means making eye contact with members of the audience. You don’t have to make eye contact with every person; just pick a few people. Making eye contact helps you to keep the audience’s attention and allows you to watch the audience for their reactions. Watching for reactions can help you gauge how the audience feels about what you are saying, allowing you to adjust if necessary.

In addition, you might engage your audience by asking them questions, facilitating an activity, or finding other ways to get the audience directly active in the presentation. If you decide to engage your audience members by asking them questions, try using open ended questions instead of closed or “yes” or “no” questions. For example, instead of asking “Did you have a good break?,” you might ask “What did you do over break?” If you aren’t able to have the audience actively participate in the presentation, it is important to make them feel like you are actively speaking to them. This means speaking to your audience and not turning your back to them.

If you don’t have to read from your slides, but instead have notes to work from (and have practiced your presentation) then you will be able to remain facing your audience. Try stepping out from behind the podium and walking among the audience, or at least around the front of the room. This will help to keep the audience engaged as you are directly interacting with them.

Most importantly, remember how hard you have worked and how well you have prepared for this presentation. You know the material, so just take a few deep breaths and be confident. You’ve got this!

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48 Jacobs and Hyman, “15 Strategies.”; “Strategies for Successful Presentations.”
49 “Strategies for Successful Presentations.”
50 Ibid.
College courses move more rapidly than high school, and you will be asked to do much more independent reading and research than you are familiar with. Managing your time well from the beginning of a project will help you avoid scrambling to complete your work before the deadline. Here are some strategies for managing your time before and during the research process to help keep you on track.\(^1\)

**Make a to-do list and prioritize tasks**
Creating a To-Do List at the beginning of the research process helps you to organize and visualize the different tasks that you need to complete. Creating a prioritization chart, like the one below, can help you to prioritize your tasks, so you know which tasks need to be completed first and which can wait until later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Urgent</th>
<th>Not Urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do Right Away (first)</td>
<td>Plan to Do ASAP (second)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Complete biology homework due tomorrow</td>
<td>• Continue conducting research for paper due in one month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Oil change due</td>
<td>• Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>Schedule Later or Delegate (third)</td>
<td>Dump or Postpone (fourth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Schedule study abroad meeting</td>
<td>• Watch Netflix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Re-write club by-laws</td>
<td>• Play video games</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Set short-term and long-term goals**
Setting goals gives you something to work towards and can help you to know what kinds of tasks need to be on your To-Do-List. Setting manageable short-term goals can help make the long-term goals seem more achievable. Try setting different types of goals to see what works for you: daily, weekly, monthly, or even semester-long goals. Leave room for changes, in case things don’t go as planned.

**Break down tasks**
Break big tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks. This will help you to achieve your short- and long-term goals without getting overwhelmed. For example, if you are conducting research on the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on minority populations, the task “complete research” is too big and time-consuming to manage as one. Instead, break it into smaller steps, such as “search/identify three sources,” “read three sources,” and “synthesize the learning from the readings.”

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**Organize your time and create habits**

Organize your time by dedicating specific hours each week or day to a specific task. For example, for a big research project, you might dedicate an hour every day, ideally at the same time each day, to completing the different research tasks. Consider what your A Time and B Time are. A Time is the time(s) of the day in which you are most productive. B Time is when you are least productive. For example, some people find that they are most productive in the mornings. That would be their A Time.

Knowing what your A Time and B Time are can help you to determine when would be good times to dedicate to specific tasks.

Having a designated location as your work space can also help you to remain focused because your brain knows, “this is my work space, not my space to watch Netflix and scroll through Facebook.” There are many campus locations, in addition to places in your living space, that make for excellent work areas. Student favorites include the study alcoves in the upper floors of Hale Library, the Academic Resource Centers in Derby and Kramer Dining Centers, and quiet spaces in their departmental buildings. Try a few until you find a place that works best for you, keeping in mind the accessibility (is it easy to get to?), low-traffic to limit distractions, electrical outlets for charging phones and laptops, and any other necessities for you to be successful.

**Reflection Activity**

An Activity Log is a written record of how you use your time. Creating an Activity Log can help you evaluate how you spend your time and determine what your A Times and your B Times are. For an Activity Log to be effective, you will need to track your activities across several days.

To keep an Activity Log, document the date and time, activity description, how you feel, duration, and the value (high, medium, low, none). Log this information for each new activity, such as responding to emails, reading for class, or watching Netflix. After a few days of logging your activities, you can review the results using the following questions:

1. At what times of the day do you seem the most productive?
2. At what times of the day do you seem the least productive?

With this information, you can begin to create a schedule of tasks to maximize your productivity.

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1 https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_03.htm
Avoid procrastination by taking breaks
If you are finding it hard to focus and get work done, sometimes it is good to take a small break. Go for a walk, watch an episode of a TV show, or have a snack. Allowing your mind to take a break can help you to stay focused when you return to work. Don’t force yourself to work for hours until something is done. You will be more successful if you take regular breaks.

Commit to your goals
Tell your family or friends your goals for the week. Having to tell them that you didn’t complete your work can be undesirable, which can help to keep you from procrastinating. Or, if you feel your family and friends won’t be as motivating, ask a mentor to track your goals.

Review your progress
As you work, it can be helpful to periodically, perhaps every week, re-evaluate where you are and what still needs to be done. This will allow you to adjust your To-Do List, goals, and prioritization as needed.

Think about how you normally manage your time. What areas do you seem to struggle with? Being aware of the areas in which you struggle, can help you to determine which time management strategies will be most useful for you. Additionally, eating right, exercising, and getting plenty of sleep will keep you healthy. These habits make it much easier to remain focused when you are trying to complete tasks.
Below are resources—both on campus and online—to assist you in the process of becoming a successful college student at any point in your journey. Remember that successful students clarify confusion and manage their learning. Each of these on-site campus resources can help you in this process.

**Counseling Services and the College Learning Effectiveness Inventory (CLEI)**
The CLEI is the College Learning Effectiveness Inventory. It will provide you with individualized feedback on your personal “success factors,” such as academic self-efficacy, organization and attention to study, stress, college involvement, emotional satisfaction, and class communication.

**Academic Coaching in the Academic Achievement Center (AAC)**
Academic Coaching is a free service offered to all K-State students. Professional team members meet with students one-on-one to support them as they identify and reach academic goals, develop study and life skills, overcome challenges, and find motivation and purpose.

**Holtz Hall Tutoring Center in the Academic Achievement Center (AAC)**
Tutoring is a free service offered to all K-State students. Holtz Hall offers tutoring services for nearly 150 courses with peer tutors who have excelled in the course. They offer a wide variety of formats ranging from scheduled appointments to walk-in tutoring, in convenient locations including the residence halls.

**The Writing Center at K-State**
The Writing Center at K-State is a free resource to all students. The Writing Center has trained peer consultants that can discuss one-on-one at any stage of the writing process. In these appointments, you can discuss your project, your concerns, and any questions you may have. Consultants provide feedback through collaborative learning to help increase students’ confidence, proficiency, and ownership in writing. The Writing Center also offers online appointments, where you can upload your work (up to eight pages) and receive written feedback within 48 hours.

To make an in-person appointment with the Writing Center, go to the Writing Center’s home page and click “Make an Appointment” or go to this direct link. From there, you can log in and make an appointment, using the online portal. If you do not have an account yet, you will first need to create an account, by clicking on “Register for an account.” Once you have created an account, you can go to the schedule to find a time and consultant that works for you. Any of the white blocks on the schedule are open for you to make an appointment. Click on the block, fill out the required information, and click “Save Appointment.” You will receive a confirmation email once you have created an appointment. Pay attention to the location of your appointment, as not all appointments are located in the Writing Center (ECS 122D) and are rather in satellite locations across campus. Appointments can be modified once they
have been made by logging in and clicking on your already created appointment, which will now be an orange block. The Writing Center also offers walk-in appointments, as consultants are available.

**To make an online appointment**, select the online schedule from the menu at the top. The process for creating an online appointment is the same as an in-person appointment. Once you have created your online appointment, make sure to upload the file you would like the consultant to review.

If you have questions or need help creating an appointment, you are always welcome to stop in the Writing Center during normal hours and a peer consultant can help you. You can also contact the Writing Center via email at writing@k-state.edu or during normal hours by phone at (785) 532-0842.

**Purdue OWL**
Purdue OWL is an online resource that is incredibly useful for writing. Purdue OWL provides guides for APA, MLA, and The Chicago Manual of Style writing, including formatting, style, and citations. For the different styles, Purdue OWL will provide a description along with an example, which makes this resource easy to follow and easy to use. For example, if you have a question about how to cite a source with multiple authors, Purdue OWL will provide the specific directions and an example so that you can see how to use the style properly. Purdue OWL also provides sample papers for the different styles, with commentary throughout, so that you can see how the style works holistically.

Purdue OWL also provides a guide for grammar. The grammar page of Purdue OWL walks through numerous grammar rules, providing examples to illustrate how the rule works. If you have a question about grammar, the Purdue OWL grammar site may be a great place to start. In addition, Purdue OWL provides information about academic writing. Here, you can find information about establishing arguments, being concise, sentence variety, and much more.

While Purdue OWL may not answer every single question you have about specific writing styles or grammar, it does address many common questions and can be a great place to start looking when you have a question. For questions that are not answered on Purdue OWL, you may need to consult the official style handbook or another grammar resource. Information about the online handbooks for APA, MLA, and The Chicago Manual of Style (the three most common styles) are located below. If you have questions about a different style, your professor may know where you can find that information.

**APA online handbook**
The APA Style website provides an FAQ page where the most common APA style questions are answered. This page provides examples of how to cite a variety of sources. Unfortunately, some of the answers require you to have access to the official APA Handbook, so this online resource is not as comprehensive as Purdue OWL may be. If you need a physical handbook, you can request one from the K-State Library.
MLA online handbook
The MLA Style Center is another online resource. Because this information comes directly from MLA, it will have the most accurate and up-to-date information. However, their website is not as user-friendly, so it may be more useful to use Purdue OWL for more basic questions. The MLA Style Center, however, can be useful if you have very specific questions that are not answered on the Purdue OWL site. The MLA Style Center offers a quick Works Cited Guide and a practice template that you may find useful. The website also provides an FAQ page where you can see questions other users have had and ask your own questions. The FAQ page may be useful for specific questions that you have, as you can search the list of questions people have asked.

The Chicago Manual of Style online handbook
The Chicago Manual of Style provides a Citation Quick Guide and a Questions and Answers page that you may find useful. As with the MLA Style Center, The Chicago Manual of Style website is not as user-friendly as the Purdue OWL website, so you may find it easier to start with Purdue OWL.

K-State Library databases
K-State Libraries has numerous databases that you can use to assist with research when writing. Chapter 8, which discusses research strategies, provides more information on K-State Library databases and other strategies and resources that you can use.

Additional writing resources
There are numerous resources online that you can use to assist in the writing process. The Harvard Writing Center has extensive resources that may be useful, from understanding assignment guidelines to essay structure to brief guides for writing in specific disciplines. Amherst College’s Online Resources for Writers page also provides numerous links to resources and other sites that may have useful information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary Term</th>
<th>Definition, Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAC—Academic Achievement Center</td>
<td>Provides support services and resources to help students succeed, including student success courses, tutoring, supplemental instruction, and academic coaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Year</td>
<td>The school year running from fall to spring. Most U.S. universities’ academic year begins in August or September.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC—Assistant Community Coordinator</td>
<td>ACCs are graduate students who live in the residence halls and assist the full-time Community Coordinators. They help with the day-to-day operations of a residence hall. They often meet one-on-one with RLAs, act as mentors, and help RLAs with programming in the halls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>Person within your department or college that is available to help you make course enrollment decisions and plan for graduation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>The group of people that have previously graduated from the same college or university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s Degree</td>
<td>Degree awarded to students who graduate from community college, usually after two years of classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit</td>
<td>If an instructor allows you to audit their course, you will be able to attend the class and learn the material, but will not receive credit and will therefore not be graded. Requirements for auditing a course vary for professors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Degree awarded to students who graduate from a four-year college or university. Bachelor’s degrees are usually awarded after four years of classes, but can take up to five years depending on the degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canvas</td>
<td>Canvas is a learning management system, accessed through KSOL. On Canvas, you can view any files your professor has uploaded, view and submit assignments, email your classmates or professor, and much more. Online courses are taught primarily through Canvas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAT Cash</td>
<td>A pre-paid, declining balance debit account connected to your Wildcat ID card. Used only for purchases on the K-State campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAT—Connecting Across Topics</td>
<td>CAT Communities connect students with similar interests through two regular courses and a one-hour connections course. Four types: residential, interest-based, pre-professional, study abroad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC—Community Coordinator</strong></td>
<td>CCs are full-time professionals who live in the residence halls and oversee hall staff and day-to-day operations of the hall. They mentor RLAs and help with programming in the halls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Co-curricular/Extracurricular activities</strong></td>
<td>Lectures, field trips, out-of-classroom events. These can include field trips to the K-State Research farm, visiting a physical therapy office, attending a lecture as a class, or going to Call Hall to get ice cream and connect socially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commencement</strong></td>
<td>The official title of the graduation ceremony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connections Course</strong></td>
<td>The one-hour class that connects the two larger lecture courses in a CAT Community. Usually categorized as a DAS 195 class, but GENAG 200, BAE 101, and LEAD 195 are also used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counseling Services</strong></td>
<td>Counseling Services, currently located on the second floor of the English and Counseling Services building, provides counseling services to students for various needs. Students can receive decision-making, skill building, and mental health support. The first four visits to Counseling Services are free to all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Catalogue</strong></td>
<td>A catalogue or list of the courses offered by a university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Number</strong></td>
<td>The number associated with a specific course, such as History 101. This number will be needed in order to enroll in the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Policy Statement/Syllabus</strong></td>
<td>Course policy statement and syllabus are used interchangeably. This refers to the list of policies that guide the course, including attendance policies, expectations of the course, and the instructor’s office location and office hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credit Hour</strong></td>
<td>The number of hours assigned to a class, which often reflects how many hours you will spend in that course per week. The number of credit hours you take in a semester will determine whether you are a full-time or part-time student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cumulative</strong></td>
<td>Often used in terms of an exam. If an exam is cumulative, it will cover all of the material covered in the course up until the exam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dead Week</strong></td>
<td>The week before finals week. Referred to as “dead week” because some colleges and universities cancel all classes the week before finals so that students can study, essentially making campus “dead.” However, many colleges do not cancel classes during dead week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doctorate</strong></td>
<td>The highest degree available. Students must receive a Bachelor’s degree before they can earn a doctorate. Depending upon the field, students may or may not earn a Master’s Degree before they earn their doctorate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drop/Add</strong></td>
<td>During enrollment and the beginning of a new semester, many students add and drop classes. To add a class is to add a class to your schedule. Dropping a class removes a course from your schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ECS—English and Counseling Services</strong></td>
<td>Located west of Hale Library, ECS houses K-State’s English Department and Counseling Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>eID</strong></td>
<td>Your K-State username, used to access saved applications, enroll in classes, accept financial aid, sign into K-State email, view online paychecks, access student financial records, access Canvas, and much more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elective</strong></td>
<td>A course that you elect or choose to take, usually outside of your major. Electives are usually taken to fulfill general education requirements, to fill extra credit hours, or just for fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAFSA</strong></td>
<td>The Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The FAFSA must be completed each year in order to receive need-based aid from the government, such as the Pell Grant or work-study awards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Aid</strong></td>
<td>Money you receive for college tuition or college expenses. Some financial aid must be paid back, such as loans, while other forms of financial aid, such as grants or scholarships, do not need to be paid back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fraternity</strong></td>
<td>A social organization of men, often organized around a common interest, such as a major or a religion. Some fraternities are more general and function more as a group where you can get involved and meet new people. Fraternities often have philanthropies that they raise money for, in addition to participating in service, social, and academic activities. Some fraternities are co-ed (co-ed fraternities will likely not have a house to live in).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Freshman</strong></td>
<td>First-year college student. Some students start college with enough college credits to be considered Sophomores in their Freshman year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-Time Student</strong></td>
<td>Students enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours each semester. The number of credit hours required to be considered full-time may vary by university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FYS—First Year Seminar</strong></td>
<td>Large lecture classes are capped at 22 students. Professors who enjoy teaching first-year students use interactive learning techniques to teach content. All of the FYS classes fulfill K-State 8 requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Education (Gen Ed) Classes</strong></td>
<td>General Education courses are the courses outside of your major or minor that you are required to take in order to graduate. At K-State, these courses are referred to as the K-State 8. The K-State 8 areas include Aesthetic Interpretation, Empirical and Quantitative Reasoning, Ethical Reasoning and Responsibility, Global Issues and Perspectives, Historical Perspectives, Human Diversity within the U.S., Natural and Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GPS—Guide to Personal Success</strong></td>
<td>K-State First’s mentoring program. First-year students are matched with a professional at K-State (professors, grad students, staff members, etc.) and meet at least three times a semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade Point Average (GPA)</strong></td>
<td>On a four-point scale, the average of the grades you have received in all of the courses you have taken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grant</strong></td>
<td>A form of financial aid that does not need to be re-paid. Many grants come from the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greek</strong></td>
<td>Fraternities and Sororities. The use of “Greek” or “Greek System” is being phased out by many colleges and universities as the term is confusing for many international students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HDS—Housing and Dining Services</strong></td>
<td>HDS oversees all of the residence halls and dining centers on campus. While HDS works most closely with RLAs, HDS and K-State First work closely together to hire, train, and support all of the learning assistant staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HRIS</strong></td>
<td>If you have a campus job, this is the portal (through KSOL) where you can access information about your job, including your salary, and it is where you would record your hours for that job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internship</strong></td>
<td>A temporary job, paid or unpaid. Internships are often taken in your specific field or major. Some universities will allow you to receive college credit for your internship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intramurals</strong></td>
<td>A sport organized by the university that is not the official university team and does not play against other school teams. Intramural sports have different teams of students across campus who then play against each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J Lots</strong></td>
<td>Parking lots designated for Jardine Terrace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Junior</strong></td>
<td>A third-year college student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K Lots</strong></td>
<td>Parking lots designated for government/state vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KSBN—K-State Book Network</strong></td>
<td>The university common read program; every incoming freshman receives the same book and is to read it over the summer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KSF—K-State First</strong></td>
<td>The university’s first-year experience program that oversees CAT Communities, First-Year Seminars, GPS, and KSBN. Our office is in Holton Hall 014. Please come and see us!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KSIS</strong></td>
<td>The online portal, accessed through K-State Online (KSOL), where you can enroll in classes, view your student bill, apply for graduation, and complete other requirements.</td>
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<td><strong>KSOL—K-State Online</strong></td>
<td>The online platform through K-State that provides you access to KSIS, HRIS, Canvas, and your Webmail. To access KSOL, just go to the K-State homepage and click “sign in.”</td>
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<td><strong>LA—Learning Assistant</strong></td>
<td>An upper-level student who has already taken one of the larger lecture courses. They help students in and out of the classroom.</td>
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<td><strong>Loan</strong></td>
<td>Financial aid that must be re-paid. Loans can come from the government or from private banks.</td>
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<td><strong>Major</strong></td>
<td>The major concentration of your college career, the courses or degree you focus on. For example, if your major is biology, you will take more biology classes than other courses.</td>
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<td><strong>Master’s Degree</strong></td>
<td>A degree awarded to graduate students. This degree must be completed after the Bachelor’s degree and often requires a minimum of one year of study, often more.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minor</strong></td>
<td>The minor concentration of your college career. If you have a minor in history, you will take more history classes than other classes, but not as many as you would if you majored in history.</td>
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<td><strong>Non-Resident</strong></td>
<td>A student who is not an official resident of the state in which the public university is located. Tuition for resident students is cheaper at public universities than tuition for non-resident students. Sometimes called out-of-state.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>O Lots</strong></td>
<td>Parking lots designated for commuting students</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Office Hours</strong></td>
<td>The hours during the week that a professor will be available in their office to meet with students. Office hours vary for professors, but are generally considered walk-in, so it is not necessary to have an appointment to stop by. However, many professors are available outside of office hours, so long as you make an appointment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Old Stadium/Welcome Center</strong></td>
<td>The Berney Family Welcome Center is located in what is sometimes referred to as the Old Stadium, which is across the street from the parking garage. The Welcome Center houses the university’s New Student Services and the Career Center. Sometimes events or guest speakers will be located in the Welcome Center as well.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Classes</td>
<td>Courses taught primarily online through the University online system. K-State online courses are taught through Canvas.</td>
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<td>Part-Time Student</td>
<td>A student enrolled in fewer than 12 credit hours during the semester. Many non-traditional students and students who work full time, enroll as part-time students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Powercat Financial</td>
<td>Trained financial counselors, offered through K-State, who can provide free information and education to current enrolled K-State students. Topics include budgeting, credit use, student loan planning and repayment, saving, managing debt, transitioning to work after college, understanding job offers and employment benefits, and identity theft.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prerequisite</td>
<td>A course required before a secondary course may be taken. For example, Spanish I is a prerequisite for Spanish II (meaning you have to take Spanish I before you can take Spanish II).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private University</td>
<td>A university that is privately funded, often by alumni and donors. Tuition for private universities is the same for all students (before scholarships and grants).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public University</td>
<td>A public university is funded by the state government in which the university lives. Tuition is thus cheaper for students who are residents of that state.</td>
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<td>R Lots</td>
<td>Parking lots designated for residence halls</td>
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<td>RCC—Residential CAT Community</td>
<td>CAT Community where students live in the same hall or complex together as well as take classes together.</td>
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<td>Resident</td>
<td>A student who lives in the state where a public university is located. Requirements to qualify for residency vary by state, but often requires your permanent residence to be in the state for a minimum of a year (possibly more). Sometimes called in-state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholarship</td>
<td>A form of financial aid that does not need to be re-paid. Scholarships can be awarded based on a variety of criteria, including merit or financial need.</td>
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<td>Semester</td>
<td>A way to break up the academic year. Universities that have semesters often have a fifteen week fall semester and a fifteen week spring semester (in addition to a shorter summer term). Courses often run semester long, with new courses starting at the beginning of a new semester.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>A fourth-year college student</td>
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<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>A second-year college student</td>
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<td><strong>Sorority</strong></td>
<td>Similar to fraternities, sororities are a social organization of women, often organized around a common interest, such as a major or religion. Sororities also raise money for philanthropies and participate in service, social, and academic activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student Life</strong></td>
<td>Provides support services to students to help promote student success in the classroom and life. Support services include crisis assistance, critical incidence response team, student of concern services, campus safety, student code of conduct, student legal services, off campus housing support, and more.</td>
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<td><strong>T Lots</strong></td>
<td>Parking lots designated for faculty/staff and commuting students</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Assistant (TA)/Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)</strong></td>
<td>A Teaching Assistant, usually an undergraduate student who has taken the course previously, assists an instructor in a class. Responsibilities of a TA vary depending on the department and professor. Graduate Teaching Assistants are graduate students that also assist with a class. Some graduate students also teach courses on their own.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Term</strong></td>
<td>The length of time you take a class. Many universities use semesters for their term length. However, some use quarters, breaking up the academic year into fourths, while some use trimesters, breaking the academic year into thirds (excluding the summer term).</td>
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<td><strong>The Rec</strong></td>
<td>The Recreation Complex on campus, located north of the Jardine apartments next to the Tennis Stadium. The Rec offers various fitness services, including access to gym equipment, a pool, intramural sports, a climbing wall, group fitness classes, and much more.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transcript</strong></td>
<td>An official record of the courses you have taken, the grades you received, and the time you spent at a college or university.</td>
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<td><strong>W Lots</strong></td>
<td>Parking lots designated for faculty/staff</td>
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<td><strong>Webmail</strong></td>
<td>The K-State email portal, which can be accessed through KSOL.</td>
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<td><strong>Withdrawal</strong></td>
<td>Withdrawing from a course. There are deadlines for the university to withdraw from a course (stop taking the course) before a Withdrawal (W) will be placed on your transcript to designate that you started the class, but never finished. Withdrawal may also refer to withdrawing from the university, as in you stop attending classes and are no longer an enrolled student.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work-Study</td>
<td>Part-time work offered by the university as part of your financial aid package. Money earned goes towards tuition or other college expenses.</td>
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<td>Writing Center</td>
<td>The Writing Center collaborates with writers to help students become better writers. More information on the Writing Center can be found in section #.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y Lots</td>
<td>Parking lots designated as restricted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Z Lots</td>
<td>Parking lots designated for any valid KSU parking permit except for LR (Life and Rec)</td>
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