



## Abstract

*The abstract is the part of the lab report that draws information from all other sections of the lab report and although it comes in the beginning, it most often is written last.*

I am and always have been a math person. Math is easy and organized; it is just formulas and plugging in numbers. English, however, never came as easily. There is no exact answer; a story can be written and interpreted a thousand different ways. For this reason, I have always struggled with reading and writing and have avoided English classes at all costs.

Despite my best attempts to pick a major that required absolutely zero of these courses, I was required to take English 1101 at UGA and ended up finding that writing was not as complicated as I initially thought. I realized that English actually is like math; there are formulas and methods to every aspect of a paper. As a result of this discovery, English is no longer a burden and I greatly improved my writing skills, producing several compositions that I am very pleased with.

For our first essay, we were required to write a narrative about something with significant meaning in our lives and explain its impact. I wrote about a playing card my dad gave me and the reasons it was so important to me. This was the first real assignment I wrote in college, so my initial draft was very poorly written. I compiled all of my thoughts without putting any effort into the structure or order of my sentences. In order to fix this, I essentially made a list of all of my sentences and made improvements by changing the diction or by combining them. Once I had a set of decent sentences, I grouped them into similar sections and added a few more details where needed and then made these sections into paragraphs. To make my paper unified and more creative, I incorporated the idea of a storm throughout its entirety and connected each idea to it and to my thesis. I first introduced the idea of the storm in my claim statement, saying the card helped me during “one of the roughest and most overwhelming **storms** of my life.”

The first two body paragraphs were about how the image on the card held a very significant meaning to me because of my dad and my close relationship (an idea mentioned in my thesis), and I incorporated the storm theme by saying it gave me the “refuge I needed in the midst of the chaos”. In the rest of the paper I mentioned “solace” and how I was “battered with constant worry,” referring to the sun after heavy rain that the message on the card “helped clear the fog” and gave me “clarity,” yet another way to connect it to a storm. I related each of these sentences to my claim statement and concluded with “the storm of confusion and fear ended as the sun peaked through the clouds again, and I knew I had something that would give me the comfort I needed until I saw my dad again”. I felt my conclusion really tied the whole thing together because it mentioned the main idea of each section and mentioned the storm theme. I ended up putting more work and thought into this essay than I ever had on a written assignment before; it was the first time I really paid attention to so many small details and I was very proud of the result, which is why I included it in this portfolio.

I used the writing process that I developed in the first essay throughout the entire class and found it very useful. For our final essay, we had to write a research paper on a topic related

to our major, and since I am one of the few female engineering majors, I wrote mine on the lack of women in the field. I started out by researching the topic and, a technique I found successful with my first essay, I made a list of points that I wanted to potentially include, revised them where needed, and then grouped them into related sections. I then put these sections into paragraphs and gave each one a topic sentence that connected to my thesis and included and explained evidence that supported these topic sentences.

This ability to apply a formula to structure my paragraphs is one of the strengths I developed the most in this class and my final essay is proof of this successful fact. My thesis for this paper was: ". . . so in a field with an increasing demand and a shortage of supply, why is an entire gender so underrepresented? The engineering industry needs to do more to increase the number of women in the field in order to introduce new perspectives and to help remedy the skills shortage" and each of my topic sentences throughout the paper tied back to it. The first two paragraphs explain different reasons for the lack of female engineers, which ties to the idea in the thesis that says females are "so underrepresented," and the second two paragraphs focus on two major problems associated with this shortage, the lack of new perspectives, and the skills shortage, and the rest talks about ways to "increase the number of women in the field," all of which are mentioned explicitly in my thesis. These examples show how much thought I put into connecting my topic sentences to my thesis and I believe I was very successful in doing so.

The hardest part of this paper was connecting the paragraphs to each other and making them flow well. After my peer reviewer went over my paper, she highlighted the places I needed to improve, and I added simple transitions such as "in addition", "that is" and "in other words", which helped make my paper cohesive and unified. I included this essay in my portfolio because I believe it is the best paper I have written so far, and the research I did for it ended up showing me just how unfair the industry is, making it a very passionate and personal topic for me.

Although I am very pleased with the quality of all of my essays, they definitely did not begin this well, and every single section went through significant improvement to get to my final product. For my revised sections, I chose one section from my first paper (object narrative) and two from my second (analyzing an advertisement). The first review I included was of the first draft I wrote, so I was able to apply many new techniques I was learning in class. I chose to include it in my portfolio because it is one of the most extreme reviews I did; I took a weak couple of sentences and added much detail and background information to make it a much more descriptive section. The most noteworthy change I made was expanding on why my dad and I have a "simple" relationship and the significance of it.

The second and third sections I revised are from our second paper, which required us to analyze an advertisement, and I chose one from the World Wildlife Fund (Figure 5.2). My first draft was all over the place because I was not exactly sure what points I wanted to emphasize. After a class activity where we had to write and present a mini-group analysis on different ads, I was able to identify the most important rhetoric devices used in the ad and to explain their effects. Since I wanted to emphasize to my reader that this ad used contrast and pathos to display a clear message, I made the sections on these rhetorical devices a lot more descriptive. I also struggled with some awkward diction and put considerable thought into how I restructured these sections. I included the revisions of the second paper in my portfolio because I really like the

way I improved the diction and I think it is a very strong representative of how I improved as a writer.

Throughout this semester, I mastered the ability to write a claim statement and the ability to give each paragraph a topic sentence that not only introduced and summarized the paragraph, but tied back to my claim statement. After I learned how to apply these skills to my own papers, I was able to help others with their own work. I reviewed Jessica Rideout's third essay after she told me that she wasn't pleased with how it sounded and that she was especially having trouble with her topic sentences. I went through her paper and found a few places that weren't relevant and didn't add anything to her paper and suggested that she remove them in order to make her paper more concise. In my opinion, the most helpful thing I did was telling her to change her claim statement to expand on the "package of benefits" that she mentioned because it would help tie her body paragraphs (which talked about these benefits) back to the claim statement.

I also think I helped a lot with her first body paragraph because I told her how to change the order of the sentences in a way that made more sense. I highlighted places she could expand or places that didn't make sense and needed rewording. One of her original paragraphs started out by stating "small businesses are the backbone of the American economy," which was very vague and neither connected to her claim statement nor introduced the ideas in the paragraph. I highlighted a sentence in her paragraph that summarized it well and suggested that she move it to the front and make it her topic sentence. By going over her paper and noticing many small parts that could be fixed, I was able to see just how much I had improved as a writer throughout this semester.

Before this semester, I would never have written anything that was not required for a class. I didn't understand writing and therefore never did it by choice. After I got really into writing some of my essays, I realized I actually do enjoy writing. I wrote my wild card about a day where I got lost on the way to an engineering class and ended up walking around campus reflecting on my life. It is more informal than the rest of my essays and I included it in my portfolio because it gives me a chance to show off a different aspect of my voice as an author.

The theme for my portfolio came from my interest in engineering, and the way it impacts my life. I focused my biography on the traits that I got from each of my parents, nerdy-ness and imagination, both of which are qualities that are important for engineering and I talked about the aspects of my childhood that led to this interest. To connect to this theme and tie the whole portfolio together, I set up my report as if it were a formal lab report for a science class. This is evident in the way I made my titles all different aspects of a formal lab report (Abstract, Materials & Methods, Results, Discussion, Acknowledgements and Data/Observations) and then put them in the correct order and a different font than the rest of the papers. In order to further connect to my theme, I wrote introductions to each section as if they were part of an experiment by including a report title page, hypotheses, materials, acknowledgments and a data table and I also labeled all images throughout the portfolio with "figure." I spent a lot of time researching the format of a formal lab report and deciding what aspects I wanted to include, and I am very happy with and proud of how it turned out.

Overall, this class taught me several important skills such as how to structure and write a

superior essay, important techniques on revising a rough draft based off of peer and teacher comments, how to make an essay unified and how to develop my own authorial voice, all of which are skills presented in this portfolio. The most important thing that I gained this semester, however, was a general understanding and appreciation for the writing process, something that will not only help me for future English classes, but also in other classes and potentially future careers.