

1 Some people are trying to change the culture of consumerism in North America. For them, the most important day in their calendar is Buy Nothing Day. On this day, these anti-materialists congregate in shopping malls around the country. They take out their credit cards and cut them up. They wander through department stores in single file, often walking and acting like zombies. They push empty shopping carts and buy nothing. For twenty-four hours, they make a commitment to spend no money at all.

2 Buy Nothing Day is scheduled each year to take place in late November so that it coincides with the beginning of the busiest shopping period of the year in North America – the month leading up to Christmas day. The idea started in Vancouver, Canada, in 1992 and is now “celebrated” in more than 65 countries. Yet, despite the relative success of the movement, many question whether or not it has any effect whatsoever. They wonder whether it is more than just an empty gesture that makes those who celebrate it feel good about themselves, but has no effect at all on shoppers’ habits.

3 One of the organizers of Buy Nothing Day, Tyler Collins of Edmonton, Canada, is aware that “there’s a great deal of stigma<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>stigma: a strong feeling of disapproval that many people have about something



surrounding Buy Nothing Day with the average consumer.” In the minds of the general public, there is a widespread belief that proponents of Buy Nothing Day are trying to “crash the system” and trying to stop people from buying anything. So Collins has made it his goal to change that perception. His goal now is to use Buy Nothing Day as an opportunity to expose shoppers to an alternative way of thinking about shopping. He wants consumers to be forced to hesitate a moment and think about their buying habits.

4 Ironically, another anti-consumerism activist,<sup>2</sup> Michael Kalmanovitch, is the owner of a general store. He has celebrated every Buy Nothing Day since it started in

<sup>2</sup>activist: someone who tries to create social and political change

the situation in which too much attention is given to buying and owning things



1992. [He judges the success of Buy Nothing Day by seeing how much less money he makes in his store on that day.] When he first marked Buy Nothing Day, he kept the store open. When shoppers tried to buy something, he told them that there were to be no transactions on that day. He realizes now that this approach was counterproductive.<sup>3</sup> It just made shoppers unsympathetic to his cause because they did not enjoy being told what they could or could not buy. Now he keeps the store open, but when shoppers come in or want to make a purchase, he uses it as an opportunity to raise consciousness. His staff tell the shoppers, "Do you know it's Buy Nothing Day? We'd appreciate it if you didn't buy anything from our store or anywhere else for that matter, but we respect that it's your right or your decision to do whatever you feel is appropriate."

beginning of an organized activity

5 [Some activists feel that Buy Nothing Day does not go far enough to discourage excessive consumption.] They think

ITS

stopping people from shopping for just one day doesn't achieve much. It simply stops a few well-off individuals from shopping for a day, after which they will simply buy more on subsequent days. Laura Bercovitz, who has promoted Buy Nothing Day since its inception and is worried about being misinterpreted by such critics, is therefore now promoting a radical alternative: Buy Nothing Christmas. She wants consumers to stop spending throughout the complete holiday period.

6 Tyler Collins, Michael Kalmanovitch, and Laura Bercovitz may have different strategies, but they have one common goal. They are trying to promote ethical consumption. In many cases, this means buying products that are produced locally and sold in small locally owned stores. They want consumers to be made more aware of what they are doing when they are shopping. They want them to ask themselves how their consumerist habits might be having an impact on the environment and the world.

W

<sup>3</sup>counterproductive: having an effect that is the opposite of what you intended

ACTIVITY

## 2.3 Check Your Understanding

Answer the questions.

- 1 What is Buy Nothing Day trying to change about society?
- 2 Why have some people proposed changes to Buy Nothing Day? What are the changes, and which ones do you think would be most effective?
- 3 Do you agree with the goals of the Buy Nothing Day organizers? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY

## 2.4 Notice the Features of Academic Essays

Answer the questions.

- 1 Look at paragraph 1. Which sentences draw the reader in?
- 2 Look at paragraphs 3, 4, and 5. What is the main idea of each paragraph?

catch the reader's attention



### 3 STUDY ACADEMIC WRITING

In Section 1 you saw how the writer of the Student Model reflected on her topic. In this section you will analyze the final draft of her academic essay. You will learn how to structure your ideas for your own essay.

#### A Student Model

Read the writing prompt again and answer the questions.

**WRITING PROMPT:** What are the main advantages or disadvantages of shopping online?

- 1 Circle the words in the prompt that you expect the writer to use in her thesis statement.
- 2 What are some advantages and disadvantages that you think the writer might mention?

Read the essay twice. The first time, think about your answers to the questions above. The second time, answer the questions in the Analyze Writing Skills boxes. This will help you notice key features of academic essays.

STUDENT MODEL

#### The Benefits of Online Shopping

1 As of 2012, Americans were spending over \$1 trillion online ("Ecommerce Sales"). Economists predict that e-commerce will increase another 62 percent by 2016 and continue growing after that. Years ago, people could only shop in stores near their homes or stores that they could drive to. Ordering by mail from catalogs was also possible, but it was time-consuming. The Internet offered a radical shift in shopping that has forever changed consumer behavior. While detractors<sup>1</sup> of online shopping often point to its dangers, these risks are exaggerated. There are retailers who are not ethical both online and in stores. Overall, online shopping is superior to shopping in stores because it is convenient, it offers consumers a wider range of products, and it saves money.

2 Online shopping is clearly more convenient than in-store shopping. The first reason why online shopping is more convenient is that it takes less time than traditional shopping. Less time shopping means more time to do free-time activities and to be with friends and family. In addition, it takes less time to receive merchandise, as well. Now, ordering and shipping almost coincide, because shoppers can order in a single click and send the order right to the warehouse. The number of distribution centers is growing throughout the world. As a result, transactions are faster than ever. Amazon.com is one example of this. As of May 2014, Amazon.com had 108 distribution centers<sup>2</sup> and was planning to build 14 more in the United States and another 11 outside of the U.S. ("Amazon"). In addition, online shopping is extremely beneficial<sup>3</sup> for senior

<sup>1</sup>detractors: people who criticize someone or something  
<sup>2</sup>distribution centers: places where goods are stored and sent to other locations  
<sup>3</sup>beneficial: helpful

#### 1 Analyze Writing

Underline the sentence in paragraph 1 that gets attention or makes you interested in this topic.

#### 2 Analyze Writing

- a What is the writer discussing in paragraph 1? Circle your answer: advantages, disadvantages, or both.
- b Circle the three points that the writer will discuss in her thesis.

#### 3 Analyze Writing

Underline the sentence that the writer uses in paragraph 2 to match one of the points you circled in the previous box.



citizens, the disabled, and anyone who has limited mobility. One example of this is the world's first Internet shopper, Jane Snowball, who ordered groceries to be delivered when she broke her hip (Winterman and Kelly). It's easy to see that convenience is a key advantage of online shopping.

3 Another advantage of online shopping is that it offers better product availability than stores do. Online retailers can keep a very large number of items in stock<sup>4</sup> at all times. There is often more variety and more actual items available online than in physical stores. For example, retailers such as Target and Walmart carry many more items in their online stores than they do in their physical stores (Fitterman). In addition, shoppers can buy items from anywhere in the world, not just things that are available in their local stores. This can expose consumers to new and exotic items that they may not have in their neighborhood stores, such as ethnic foods and foreign language DVDs. Online shopping also allows consumers to know what is in stock at all times. This is because many online retailers can show customers the quantities that are available for many items. Consumers can also sign up for email messages that tell them when items they are looking for become available. Online shopping clearly offers shoppers a wider range of products than traditional retailers can.

4 Finally, online shopping reduces costs. Shoppers are much less likely to practice excessive consumption because they are less likely to make last-minute or unplanned purchases than they might make in a physical store. With online shopping, there are no high-pressure salespeople, so online shoppers can think through their purchases independently. Online retailers can also often offer lower prices for products because they have such large quantities stored in their distribution centers, and not just what they can stock in a physical store. Online shoppers also save money on gas and parking because they use their cars less when they shop at home. These conditions make online shopping less expensive overall than in-store shopping.

<sup>4</sup>in stock: available for sale

#### 4 Analyze Writing Skills

Read the final sentence of paragraph 2 and the first sentence of paragraph 3. Circle the words that help the writer change from one point to another.

#### 5 Analyze Writing Skills

- Underline the main point that the writer discusses in paragraph 3.
- How many supporting ideas does the writer use to explain this subject?

#### 6 Analyze Writing Skills

Underline the last sentence in paragraph 4. Does this sentence restate the main point of the paragraph?

(CONTINUED)

BUY NOW





## © Writing in the ...

- 5 Online shopping was once an alternative approach to the retail experience, but today it is the most convenient, cost-effective way to shop for a wide variety of products. With these advantages, it seems very likely that economists' predictions about online shopping are correct: online shopping will undoubtedly become even more convenient and popular in the future.

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## 7 Analyze Writing

- a Circle the sentence in the last paragraph that connects back to the thesis.  
b Underline the sentence in the last paragraph that contains a suggestion, opinion, or prediction.

### ACTIVITY

## 3.1 Check Your Understanding

Answer the questions.

- 1 According to the writer, what are the main benefits of online shopping?
- 2 Evaluate the writer's main points. Which do you think is the strongest? Why?
- 3 Have you or someone you know ever had similar experiences with online shopping?

### ACTIVITY

## 3.2 Outline the Writer's Ideas

Complete the outline for "The Benefits of Online Shopping" using the phrases in the box.

- ✓ consumers know what's in stock
- ✓ saves money on transportation
- ✓ more variety and items in stock
- ✓ good for people with limited mobility
- ✓ cost reduction
- ✓ takes less time to receive goods



walk and are

Consume

## ESSAY OUTLINE

## I. Introduction

Thesis Statement

Online shopping is superior to shopping in stores because it's convenient, it offers consumers a wider range of products, and it saves money.

Body Paragraph 1

## II. Convenience

Supporting Idea 1

A. Takes less time to shop

Supporting Idea 2

B. Takes <sup>less time</sup> to receive <sup>goods</sup> merchandise

Supporting Idea 3

C. ~~beneficial~~ good for people w/ limited mobility

Body Paragraph 2

## III. Product availability

Supporting Idea 1

A. Consumers know what's in stock

Supporting Idea 2

B. Can buy things not available locally

Supporting Idea 3

C. more variety of items in stock

Body Paragraph 3

## IV. Cost reduction

Supporting Idea 1

A. Fewer unplanned purchases

Supporting Idea 2

B. Large stock = lower prices

Supporting Idea 3

C. Saves money on transportation

## V. Conclusion



## B Academic Essays: Essay Structure

Writers use essay structure to communicate their ideas clearly and convincingly. There are several types of essays that you will study in this book, including narrative, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, problem-solution, and argumentative. Academic writers often combine elements from different types of essays, depending on which type is more effective for their purpose. For example, a college writing prompt may ask a writer to argue a specific viewpoint (argumentative), and the writer may choose to do so by comparing two subjects (comparison and contrast) or by examining the causes or effects of an issue (cause and effect).

An academic essay has three parts:

1

An introductory paragraph that explains the topic and the writer's purpose in writing. It includes:

- a hook
- background information
- a thesis statement

2

Body paragraphs that develop each of the writer's main points. Each body paragraph includes:

- a topic sentence
- supporting sentences and details
- a concluding sentence or transition sentence

3

A concluding paragraph that summarizes the main idea of the essay and provides a final comment. It includes:

- a restatement of the main idea
- an insight, prediction, or call to action

ACTIVITY

### 3.3 Notice

Circle the correct answers.

- 1 What does an introductory paragraph usually include?
  - a a topic sentence
  - b an insight, prediction, or call to action
  - c a thesis statement
- 2 In which part does the writer develop each main point of the essay?
  - a introductory paragraph
  - b body paragraphs
  - c concluding paragraph
- 3 A concluding paragraph includes ..... the main idea of the essay.
  - a a restatement of
  - b support for
  - c an introduction to



## THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

An effective **introductory paragraph** invites the reader into the essay with a hook, provides context for the topic with background information, and presents the writer's point of view in a thesis statement.

The **hook** is usually the first sentence in the paragraph. It makes the reader interested in reading your essay. A hook can be:

- a surprising statistic  
*Online shoppers spent over \$1.964 billion during Black Friday sales in 2013.*
- a provocative question  
*Have you ever wondered why an ad for an item you recently bought online pops up every time you check your social media page?*
- an interesting fact or statement  
*Some people are trying to change the culture of consumerism in North America.*
- a memorable quotation  
*"To travel is to shop."*

**Background information** usually consists of three to five sentences. It connects the hook to the thesis statement and provides information the reader needs to know before beginning the essay, including definitions of terms and ideas. Background information can be:

- a story or narrative  
*One rainy Saturday, Jen decided to stay home and go online to buy some items she needed for an upcoming business trip. As she clicked her way through her purchases, it never occurred to her that ...*
- historical information  
*Years ago, people could only shop on days when stores were open. In fact, there were days when no one shopped at all. Sundays and holidays, for example, ...*
- general to specific information  
*The goal of many shoppers is finding a good deal. For example, finding something inexpensive and fashionable online gives many of us a thrill. However, do we ever stop to consider what makes these items so inexpensive in the first place?*

The **thesis statement** is the last sentence or two in an introductory paragraph. It presents the main idea of the essay. A thesis statement includes:

- the topic of the essay
- what the writer wants to communicate about the topic

A thesis statement may or may not include the main points that the writer will discuss in the body paragraphs.

- *Online shopping is inferior to bricks-and-mortar shopping because you cannot interact with the merchandise, it's more expensive, and it isn't safe. (includes points)*
- *Bricks-and-mortar shopping will never disappear as it offers significant advantages over online shopping. (doesn't include points)*

You will learn more about thesis statements in Section 4.