

# English 101

## Developing an Essay

Frequently, writers hear that they need to “develop” their ideas more, but often no one explains what it means to develop one’s ideas. In this class we will explore many ways to develop essays. For now, we will consider the three primary ways of expanding and developing an essay: detail, argumentation, and example.

### Using Detail

Here’s a simple example of how the addition of a few facts can help make a more general statement clearer and more effective:

| Inadequately Developed                                                                                               | Well Developed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| Students shouldn’t have to take more classes. It already takes too long to graduate.                                 | Students should not have to take any more required courses. Each student is already burdened with numerous general education courses, and many majors are adding required courses as well. The four year degree is no longer possible for most students. Even those going to school full-time often take six or seven years now to graduate, and the <i>Los Angeles Times</i> recently reported that it takes an average 5.3 years for a full-time student to graduate from a state university. |
| All this new technology is affecting our privacy. There are many new devices being used today to invade our privacy. | All this new technology is affecting our privacy by providing government, businesses and even other private citizens with advanced devices that enable spying. From miniature cameras to microphones that can listen across open spaces, equipment that used to be available only to rich and powerful governments can be purchased by anyone with a few extra dollars and an interest in what their neighbors are doing.                                                                       |

### Using Argument

You use argument to develop and clarify your ideas. Frequently, the first draft of an essay will consist of a series of statements, which, while probably true, are unclear. The problem is often that the writer has already argued out the point for him or herself and doesn’t recognize that the reader needs to know how the writer did this. The writer needs to *show the reader the steps* used by the writer to arrive at some idea or statement. Remember, if the goal is to convince the reader of some particular idea or interpretation, the writer needs to show reader how any reasonable person would arrive at the same conclusion.

| Inadequately Developed                                                                                                   | Well Developed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| The system is to blame for cheating. The way the whole thing is set up makes it easier for students to cheat than study. | While students are responsible for their own actions, the education system at American universities must also share some of the blame for cheating. At many major universities, students are given a second-rate education with classes taught by graduate students. Professors are encouraged to do research and seek grants and are not rewarded for teaching. This system leads to little emphasis being placed on classroom instruction. Professors focus on “getting through” material, and students focus on “getting through” courses. The result is inevitable: students do whatever it takes to pass, and professors look the other way.                                                                              |
| Privacy is important to who we are. If we think we’re always being watched, we won’t be free.                            | Privacy is important to who we are. If we think we are always being watched, our actions and behavior will change. Eventually our thoughts will change too. We like to believe that we are free to make our own choices and our own mistakes, that we learn from our experiences and that we decide what direction our life will take. If we are monitored constantly, will we make the same choices? Will we be allowed to make the same mistakes? Will we have any experiences to learn from? Will we have any say in the direction our lives take? Freedom is not just the freedom to act, but the freedom to act contrary to everything except the law. If we think we are always being watched, then we will not be free. |

## Using Cases

The single most important and effective step you can take right now is to use examples (or cases) to support the key points of your essay. An example (or case) illustrates a key point by giving the reader a specific and real instance of some more general statement. In a narrative or personal essay, often a specific case looks like a “little story,” where the details of the story relate directly to the general argument the writer is making. Generally there are three types of cases:

- hypothetical (general scenarios of what might (or will) happen)
- anecdotal (stories known from personal experience)
- textual (stories, ideas from another writer).

Writers commonly use hypothetical cases to explain complex ideas. Other than in the first essay, we will not use anecdotal cases (personal experience) as evidence in the essays you write. For now, here are examples of a hypothetical case and a textual case used as evidence to support some general observation.

| Inadequately Developed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Well Developed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| <p>Many argue that while technology has had a negative effect on people’s privacy, technology has brought about many positive results in terms of crime fighting and prevention. While we have seen some benefits, the costs are still far too great.</p> | <p>Many argue that while technology has had a negative effect on people’s privacy, technology has brought about many positive results in terms of crime fighting and prevention. However, while eavesdropping on cellular phone conversations did lead to the arrest of a drug kingpin, does that justify the lack of privacy found on all cellular phone conversations? What if a private citizen were suspected of committing a crime? While law enforcement agencies could not enter the suspect’s home without a search warrant, they could access employment records, military records, mental and physical health records, bank and utility records, school records, and many other sources of information. What if the allegations against the suspect were totally unfounded? Is any attempt made to contact all those sources of information to make sure everyone knows that the police made a mistake, that the person who was being investigated is innocent of any crime? All of us know that the answer to the last question is no.</p>                                                                                                                                  |
| <p>The legal basis of privacy has traditionally been based on the “reasonable expectation of privacy” (Banisar 3). This standard has not been able to keep up with new technologies. Our privacy is being compromised.</p>                                | <p>The legal basis of privacy has traditionally been based on the “reasonable expectation of privacy” (Banisar 3). This standard implies that in some places we have a reasonable expectation of privacy while in others we do not. For the most part, this makes sense. If we are walking across a public parking lot, we do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy, and if a camera were watching us we would probably be grateful. But do we expect privacy when we are shopping? The answer is probably both yes and no. We expect to be seen by others, but we do not expect others to know everything about us? Banisar notes that “A.C. Neilson, the large market rating company, recently patented a system using facial recognition for covertly identifying shoppers to track their buying habits” (2). Once identified, marketers could link shoppers to “comprehensive records” compiled from “purchase records, surveys, credit reports, department of motor vehicle and medical records, and numerous other files” (3). Clearly the standard of “reasonable expectation” has not been able to keep up with new technologies. Our privacy is being compromised.</p> |