about Americans who die from renal failure to support her argument for legalizing organ sales; Kristof shows how regulating cars led to dramatic decreases in driving deaths and injuries. Leonard presents several videos to demonstrate how excessive Black Friday advertising has become.

**Appeals to readers' values.** Effective arguers try to appeal to readers' values and emotions. MacKay appeals to basic values of compassion and fairness. These are deeply held values that we may not think about very much and as a result we may see as common ground we share with the writers. And some of MacKay's evidence appeals to emotion—her descriptions of people dying from kidney disease and of poor people selling their organs are likely to evoke an emotional response in many readers.

**A trustworthy tone.** Arguments can stand or fall on the way readers perceive the writer. Very simply, readers need to trust the person who's making the argument. One way of winning this trust is by demonstrating that you know what you're talking about. Kristof offers plenty of facts to show his knowledge of the history of automotive regulation — and he does so in a self-assured tone. There are many other ways of establishing yourself (and your argument) as trustworthy — by showing that you have some experience with your subject, that you're fair, and of course that you're honest. Occasionally, an outraged tone such as Leonard's is appropriate, especially when it is tempered by good reasons and qualified as he does in noting that he is "undoubtedly reading too much into the Kohl's . . . parody."

**Careful consideration of other positions.** No matter how reasonable and careful we are in arguing our positions, others may disagree or offer counterarguments. We need to consider those other views and to acknowledge and, if possible, refute them in our written arguments. MacKay, for example, acknowledges that some believe that selling organs is unethical, but she counters that it's usually healthy, affluent people who say this — not people who need either an organ or the money they could get by selling one.
A questioning, speculative tone. In a reflective essay, you are working toward answers, not providing them neatly organized and ready for consumption. So your tone is usually tentative and open, demonstrating a willingness to entertain, accept, and reject various ideas as your essay progresses from beginning to end. Foer achieves this tone by looking at people’s relationships with dogs from several different perspectives as well as by asking questions for which he provides no direct answers.

A BRIEF GUIDE TO WRITING REFLECTIONS

Deciding on a Topic

Choose a subject you want to explore. Write a list of things that you think about, wonder about, find puzzling or annoying. They may be big things—life, relationships—or little things—quirks of certain people’s behavior, curious objects, everyday events. Try CLUSTERING one or more of those things, or begin by FREEWRITING to see what comes to mind as you write.

Considering the Rhetorical Situation

PURPOSE

What’s your goal in writing this essay? To introduce a topic that interests you? Entertain? Provoke readers to think about something? What aspects of your subject do you want to ponder and reflect on?

AUDIENCE

Who is the audience? How familiar are they with your subject? How will you introduce it in a way that will interest them?

STANCE

What is your attitude toward the topic you plan to explore? Questioning? Playful? Critical? Curious? Something else?
Will your essay be a print document? an oral presentation? Will it be posted on a website or blog? Would it help to include any visuals or video or audio files?

Generating Ideas and Text

Explore your subject in detail. Reflections often include descriptive details. Foer, for example, DESCRIBES the many ways he encounters dogs in New York: “Retrievers in elevators, Pomeranians on No. 6 trains, bull mastiffs crossing the Brooklyn Bridge.” Those details provide a base for the speculations to come. You may also make your point by DEFINING, COMPARING, even CLASSIFYING. Virtually any organizing pattern will help you explore your subject.

Back away. Ask yourself why your subject matters: why is it important or intriguing or significant? You may try LISTING or OUTLINING possibilities, or you may want to start DRAFTING to see where the writing takes your thinking. Your goal is to think on screen (or paper) about your subject, to play with its possibilities.

Think about how to keep readers with you. Reflections may seem loose or unstructured, but they must be carefully crafted so that readers can follow your train of thought. It’s a good idea to sketch out a rough THESIS to help focus your thoughts. You may not include the thesis in the essay itself, but every part of the essay should in some way relate to it.

Ways of Organizing a Reflective Essay

Reflective essays may be organized in many ways because they mimic the way we think, associating one idea with another in ways that make sense but do not necessarily form a “logical” progression. In general, you might consider organizing a reflection using this overall strategy:
two sides to any given issue. Once you begin seriously studying a topic, though, you're likely to find that there are several sides and that each of them deserves serious consideration. In your academic writing, you need to represent fairly the range of perspectives on your topic — to explore three, four, or more positions on it as you research and write. In her report, “Does Texting Affect Writing,” Marywood University student Michaela Cullington, for example, examines texting from several points of view: teachers’ impressions of the influence of texting on student writing, the results of several research studies, and her own survey research.

A confident, authoritative stance. If one goal of academic writing is to contribute to a larger conversation, your tone should convey confidence and establish your authority to write about your subject. Ways to achieve such a tone include using active verbs (“X claims” rather than “it seems”), avoiding such phrases as “in my opinion” and “I think,” and writing in a straightforward, direct style. Your writing should send the message that you’ve done the research, analysis, and thinking and know what you’re talking about. For example, here is the final paragraph of Michaela Cullington’s essay on texting and writing:

On the basis of my own research, expert research, and personal observations, I can confidently state that texting is not interfering with students’ use of standard written English and has no effect on their writing abilities in general. It is interesting to look at the dynamics of the arguments over these issues. Teachers and parents who claim that they are seeing a decline in the writing abilities of their students and children mainly support the negative-impact argument. Other teachers and researchers suggest that texting provides a way for teens to practice writing in a casual setting and thus helps prepare them to write formally. Experts and students themselves, however, report that they see no effect, positive or negative. Anecdotal experiences should not overshadow the actual evidence.

Cullington’s use of simple, declarative sentences (“Other teachers and researchers suggest…”; “Anecdotal experiences should not overshadow…”) and her straightforward summary of the arguments surrounding texting,
along with her strong, unequivocal ending ("texting is not interfering with students’ use of standard written English"), lend her writing a confident tone. Her stance sends the message that she’s done the research and knows what she’s talking about.

**Carefully documented sources.** Clearly acknowledging sources and documenting them carefully and correctly is a basic requirement of academic writing. When you use the words or ideas of others — including visuals, video, or audio — those sources must be documented in the text and in a works cited or reference list at the end. (If you’re writing something that will appear online, you may also refer readers to your sources by using hyperlinks in the text; ask your instructor if you need to include a list of references or works cited as well.)

**Careful attention to correctness.** Whether you’re writing something formal or informal, in an essay or an email, you should always write in complete sentences, use appropriate capitalization and punctuation, and check that your spelling is correct. In general, academic writing is no place for colloquial language, slang, or texting abbreviations. If you’re quoting someone, you can reproduce that person’s writing or speech exactly, but in your own writing you try hard to be correct — and always proofread carefully.

**What’s Expected of College Writers: The WPA Outcomes**

Writing is not a multiple-choice test; it doesn’t have right and wrong answers that are easily graded. Instead, your readers, whether they’re teachers or anyone else, are likely to read your writing with various things in mind: does it make sense, does it meet the demands of the assignment, is the grammar correct, to name just a few of the things readers may look for. Different readers may notice different things, so sometimes it may seem to you that their response — and your grade — is unpredictable. It should be good to know, then, that writing teachers across the nation have come to some agreement on certain “outcomes,” what college students