

## **Making The Case: How To Write Up Case Analyses**

### **Intro**

Case studies are effective tools for teaching and learning in most any field of study. They provide a valuable “simulation” component that can make even the driest subjects jump to life. Students who learn how to respond to a case assignment effectively will find that their course experience improves, as does their grade!

This short document is designed to provide direction and suggestions for writing up academic cases. It is provided for guidance only and should not be taken as exclusive or exhaustive.

### **Follow Your Instructor’s Directions**

Every instructor has a preferred approach to case write-ups, and the instructor’s preference always trumps other resources. Generally, your instructor will provide either a specific format for the case write-up or some general guidelines. Often, within even general guidelines there are specific requirements and constraints that merit your close attention. Be sure to carefully follow your instructor’s lead.

### **Summarize the Case**

The first step in responding to an academic case is to create a short (emphasis: short) summary of the case content. The summary should restate the facts of the case, the central issues and conflicts, and the player’s identities.

As a general rule, the case summary should not exceed 2-3 paragraphs. Extensive or detailed cases may indicate exceptions, of course.

### **Frame the Case**

It is important to place the case “in context.” That is, explain how or why the case came to be noteworthy, where it occurs on a time or geographic scale, or how the issues involved apply to a broader perspective.

The framework you build will communicate your understanding of the case’s importance. It will illustrate your grasp of the underlying issues.

### **State the Key Problems or Issues**

The key to case analysis is to pierce the circumstances and discover their causes or foundations.

Depending upon the case, these may be stated, but usually they are implied by the activities and situations described in the case. Your job is to extricate the underlying issues from the descriptions and rhetoric that surround them.

### **Link to Course Topics**

The most effective case write-ups link the lessons and illustrations from the case directly to the course’s information resources, such as readings, lectures, etc.

Connecting the case and its underlying issues directly to the course materials and objectives is the key to making your case: that you understand the course materials and have learned important things from the course. Be as direct about this as necessary, as it provides a direct indicator of your performance.

### **Provide an Outlook or Solve the Problem(s)**

Finally, the purpose of the case is to stimulate your best synthesis, analysis, and application. Your case conclusion is a great opportunity to look beyond the case and supply a recommendation, prediction, or anticipated consequence that reflects the quality of your thought.

Obviously, for cases involving specific, solvable problems (such as quantitative challenges), your solutions should be presented as clearly and concisely as possible.