The Writing Process

# Prewriting

# Ideas and Inspiration- Ideas are all around you. If you want to write but you don’t have any ideas, try:

# Using writing prompt to get you started (you’ll have prompts for most assignments in this class.

# Writing about incidents from your daily life, or childhood.

# Keeping a notebook of ideas – jotting down those thoughts that occur throughout the day.

# Building on Your Idea- These are a couple of popular methods you can use to add flesh to the bones of your idea:

# Free writing: Open a new document or start a new page, and write everything that comes into your head about your chosen topic. Don’t stop to edit, even if you make mistakes.

# Brainstorming: Write the idea or topic in the center of your page. Jot down ideas that arise from it – sub-topics or directions you could take with the article.

# Planning and Structure- Some pieces of writing will require more planning than others. Typically, longer pieces and academic papers need a lot of thought at this stage.

# First, decide which ideas you’ll use. During your free writing and brainstorming, you’ll have come up with lots of thoughts. Some belong in this piece of writing: others can be kept for another time.

# Then, decide how to order those ideas. Try to have a logical progression. Sometimes, your topic will make this easy: in an article, for instance, it makes sense to take each step of the writing process in order.

1. Writing- Sit down with your plan beside you, and start your first draft.
   1. At this stage, don’t think about word-count, grammar, spelling and punctuation.
   2. Don’t worry if you’ve gone off-topic, or if some sections of your plan don’t fit too well. Just keep writing!
   3. Some things that many writers find helpful when working on the first draft include:
      1. Setting aside at least thirty minutes to concentrate: it’s hard to establish a writing flow if you’re just snatching a few minutes here and there.
      2. Going somewhere without interruptions: a library or coffee shop can work well, if you don’t have anywhere quiet to write at home.
      3. Switching off distracting programs: if you write your first draft onto a computer, you might find that turning off your Internet connection does wonders for your concentration levels! When I’m writing fiction
   4. You might write several drafts, especially if you’re working on fiction. Your subsequent drafts will probably merge elements of the writing stage and the revising stage.
2. Revising- Revising your work is about making “big picture” changes. You might remove whole sections, rewrite entire paragraphs, and add in information which you’ve realized the reader will need. Everyone needs to revise – even talented writers.
   1. The revision stage is sometimes summed up with the A.R.R.R. (Adding, Rearranging, Removing, Replacing) approach:
      1. Adding
         1. What else does the reader need to know? If you haven’t met the required word-count, what areas could you expand on? This is a good point to go back to your prewriting notes – look for ideas which you didn’t use.
      2. Rearranging
         1. Even when you’ve planned your piece, sections may need rearranging. Perhaps as you wrote your essay, you found that the argument would flow better if you reordered your paragraphs. Maybe you’ve written a short story that drags in the middle but packs in too much at the end.
      3. Removing-
         1. Sometimes, one of your ideas doesn’t work out. Perhaps you’ve gone over the word count, and you need to take out a few paragraphs. Maybe that funny story doesn’t really fit with the rest of your article.
      4. Replacing
         1. Would more vivid details help bring your piece to life? Do you need to look for stronger examples and quotations to support your argument? If a particular paragraph isn’t working, try rewriting it.
3. Editing-The editing stage is distinct from revision, and needs to be done after revising.
   1. Editing involves the close-up view of individual sentences and words. It needs to be done after you’ve made revisions on a big scale: or else you could agonize over a perfect sentence, only to end up cutting that whole paragraph from your piece.
   2. When editing, go through your piece line by line, and make sure that each sentence, phrase and word is as strong as possible. Some things to check for are:
      1. Have you used the same word too many times in one sentence or paragraph? Use a thesaurus to find alternatives.
      2. Are any of your sentences hard to understand? Rewrite them to make your thoughts clear.
      3. Which words could you cut to make a sentence stronger? Words like “just” “quite”, “very”, “well”, “like”, “really” and “generally” can often be removed.
      4. Are your sentences grammatically correct? Keep a careful look out for problems like subject-verb agreement and staying consistent in your use of the past, present or future tense.
      5. Is everything spelt correctly? Don’t trust your spell-checker – it won’t pick up every mistake. Proofread as many times as necessary.
      6. Have you used punctuation marks correctly? Commas often cause difficulties. You might want to check out the Daily Writing Tips articles on punctuation.
4. Publishing-The final step of the writing process is publishing.
   1. Students need to produce a final, error-free copy of their work in the correct format.
   2. Journalists need to submit their piece (usually called “copy”) to an editor. Again, there will be a certain format for this.
   3. Fiction writers may be sending their story to a magazine or competition. Check guidelines carefully, and make sure you follow them.

I. Paragraph Structure

A. What is a paragraph?

1. A paragraph is a collection of related sentences dealing with a single topic.

2. Good paragraphing greatly assists your readers in following a piece of writing.

a. You can have fantastic ideas, but if those ideas aren't presented in an organized fashion, you will lose your readers (and fail to achieve your goals in writing).

B. The Basic Rule: Keep One Idea to One Paragraph

1. The basic rule of thumb with paragraphing is to keep one idea to one paragraph.

a. You can have one idea and several bits of supporting evidence within a single paragraph.

b. You can also have several points in a single paragraph, as long as they relate to the overall topic of the paragraph.

C. Elements of a Paragraph

1. To be as effective as possible, a paragraph should contain each of the following: A Topic Sentence, Adequate Development, Unity, Coherence, and a concluding statement.

a. A topic sentence

i. A topic sentence is a sentence that indicates in a general way what idea the paragraph is going to deal with.

ii. An easy way to make sure your reader understands the topic of the paragraph is to put your topic sentence near the beginning of the paragraph.

b. Adequate development

i. The topic (which is introduced by the topic sentence) should be discussed fully and adequately.

ii. Use examples, facts, or other explanations to develop your idea

c. Unity

i. The entire paragraph should concern itself with a single focus.

ii. If it begins with a one focus or major point of discussion, it should not end with another or wander within different ideas.

d. Coherence

i. Coherence is the trait that makes the paragraph easily understandable to a reader.

ii. You can help create coherence in your paragraphs by creating logical bridges: move from statement to statement in a way that makes sense: chronology, spatially, order of importance, etc.

e. Conclusion

i. The conclusion serves to provide closure to your topic or lead the reader into the topic of the next paragraph. Don’t end your paragraphs abruptly.

D. Some methods to make sure your paragraph is well-developed:

1. Use examples and illustrations

2. Cite data (facts, statistics, evidence, details, and others)

3. Examine testimony (what other people say such as quotes and paraphrases)

4. Define terms in the paragraph-

5. Compare and contrast

6. Evaluate causes and reasons

7. Examine effects and consequences

8. Analyze the topic

9. Describe the topic

10. Offer a chronology of an event (time segments)

E. Transitions

1. One very important element of paragraphing is transition statements.

2. Transitions are usually one or several words that "transition" from one idea to the next.

Creating an outline before you write will greatly assist your organization and it is a requirement for every writing assignment in this course

Essay Structure- usually 5 P minimum.

1. Introduction: this first paragraph should be several sentences that introduce the reader to your topic. It should include a thesis that gives the organizational format of your essay.
   1. One purpose: to inform, to persuade, entertain
   2. One voice: narration is 1st (I, me, my), 2nd (you, your) 3rd (he, she, it)
   3. One audience: college audience, academia

Background: history, reference to experience, any general information about the topic- you’re only trying to get the reader’s attention.

Thesis statement: What the entire essay will focus on, what you’re trying to prove, what you’re informing the reader about.

Thesis Statements will give a topic and a comment. Following the comment may be evidence of a particular organizational format.

Ex. Recently in the United States, fast food chains have started to add healthier options to their menus. These business have been forced to address America’s problem with obesity, a decrease in annual revenues, and social pressure.

Example Thesis: Carlotta Walls Lanier, author of *A Mighty Long Way*, was able to overcome incredible barriers to her educational goals. She succeeded due to her (trait A), (trait B), and (trait C).

II. The Body: this portion of the essay should consist of several paragraphs. Each paragraph will focus on a particular aspect of the comment in the thesis using support to validate your thoughts. These paragraphs should follow the order provided in the organizational format in the introduction.

Remember notes on paragraph structure!

III. Conclusion: This paragraph will consist of several sentences that give closure to the essay. You will summarize your statements, as well as compare your own experiences to those discussed in the paper.