

The Writing Process



The purpose of this class is to give you a clear process and techniques that you can apply to ANY WRITING TASK. All instruction is geared to help you become a more confident and comfortable writer.

This will focus on THE WRITING PROCESS. Young writers often complain that they don't know what to write about, or don't know how to get started, or have no confidence. This process is designed to help with all of these concerns and provide writers with simple steps to follow. Writing can be enjoyable if you have a plan.



This sign on a page signifies learning notes that may help you get a better grasp of the concepts being offered.

Overview

Writing is a process that can be fun and expressive. It is a skill that in order to be effective needs to be organized, easily understandable, focused, and well developed. Here is a simple process that will empower any writer to be effective for any writing task. If followed diligently, a writer will have more than enough to write about, an organized way to say it, and far less anxiety about writing. On the following pages, each of the following will be presented in detail.

Prewriting

The 5 step Prewrite includes:

1. Choose an appropriate topic
2. Do a Preliminary Brainstorm (Brainstorm for broad ideas)
3. Cluster Brainstorm
4. Make a Working Outline
5. Make Prewrite Decision

Rough Draft

Based on the prewrite, an author makes a first draft of the essay.

Revise/Edit Rough Draft

This is the step where the first draft is carefully rewritten

Final Copy

The culmination of the Writing Process in a formal presentation



Prewrite (5 steps)

This is the process of gathering ideas before writing. It is perhaps the most important step because this is where the writer explores and gathers information about the topic. It is also where Main Ideas (the focus of each paragraph) & A Thesis (the larger idea that controls the entire essay) are created. It is also where writing decisions are made.

1. Choose an appropriate topic.

- Will it have interest to a reader?
Pick something you know about. Knowledgeable writers are much more effective.
- If you do not have sufficient knowledge of a topic, research it first and learn enough about it to be convincing.
- Be original; topics that are over used are not interesting and probably will provide a dull and uninformative reading experience for a reader.
- Be sure to address the assignment you have to accomplish. Pay close attention to the writing prompts.
- Make it manageable: Do not pick something huge. Some writers have a tendency to pick global or current issues. These usually require more knowledge and expertise than a typical college essayist has or is able to acquire in a short time.



Note: I am only interested in helping you to write effectively. A good writer using good techniques can make any topic interesting to. The topic you choose is not as important as how you present it. Make it easy to write about.

Example: Lets say the assignment asks me to describe something or someone I feel strongly about. I chose "My twin sister Celia.". Since we grew up together, I feel like somewhat of an expert on her. Also, she is a very inspirational person to learn about, and I can provide lots of concrete examples, stories, insight, and information about her.

2. Do a Preliminary Brainstorm about your topic

- Begin by jotting down observations about your topic.
- Think of important aspect
- Obvious characteristics
- Broad ideas etc.



Note: Many writers complain about not knowing what to write about. Brainstorming is a way to open up ideas. Feel free to write whatever comes into your head. Do not limit yourself. As you write and think, you may be surprised how many new things pop into your head. The more you can observe, learn, know about your topic before you write, the easier and more fun the writing experience becomes.



Note: You want to come up with several (I recommend at least 3) very broad areas. In the next step we will do a second brainstorm on each broad area defined here.

Example: Thinking about my topic “Celia” my preliminary brainstorm hits a few highlights and things I know about her that make up big parts of her life. After combining ideas and thinking further, it occurs to me that 3 big areas (sub-topics) of her life are:

- **her interests**
- **her generosity (our birthday theater trip showed me this)**
- **her home life & friends**

3. Cluster Brainstorm

- Now that we have several sub-topics, we need to learn more about each.
- Brainstorm again for each sub-topic.
- Go into more detail and get more [concrete](#)
- Gather as much as you can about each sub-topic.



Note: The more info, examples, stories, concrete stuff you can gather about each sub-topic, the easier it will be to write. If you have too much, which is often the case, when it comes to writing, pick and choose what seems most relevant.

Example: Notice all of “Her Interests” I could easily write an entire essay on these alone. Notice the “Theater trip” She really did give our tickets to 2 little old gals who planned their trip for an entire year but lost their tickets. We couldn’t go to the theater, but Celia was happy to do it. I thought this would illustrate just how generous she is. Notice all the stuff I thought about for her “Home Life.”



Note: After the cluster brainstorms, decide on a [Rhetorical Method](#) for that paragraph.

Example: Notice for cluster 1 “her interests” I chose “example\illustration because I had lots of examples. For the second: “Her generosity” I chose “Narration” to tell a story, For the third “her home life” I chose “description” to show readers what her home life appears to be.

4. Make a Working Outline

- First: Create a Main Idea (MI) for each of the cluster brainstorming.

A Main Idea (MI) is an abstract statement based on all the brainstorming data you wrote down. All paragraphs MUST have only ONE Main Idea. The rest of the paragraph proves\supports\illustrates that ONE Main Idea. a MI = Topic of paragraph + Author's Point of View (APOV) Topic = who\what you are writing about. APOV = your opinion, views, point you make about your topic

Example:

For my essay about Celia, note my first MI directly taken from my cluster brainstorm

Topic = Celia's Interests

APOV = keep her busy; she always has something to do

I got my APOV from looking at all the ideas I collected on my cluster brainstorm. Good writers first gather lots of info about a topic, than make a statement (MI) based on all the data collected. (Not the other way around – that is a headache)

My MI II and III follow this same process.

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- Then create a Thesis from all of your MI.
 - * A Thesis is the Main Idea of the entire essay. It is the largest concept that unifies the essay. Read all of your MI and see what they tell you
- Thesis = topic of essay + APOV

Example:

For my essay about Celia. After deciding on 3 MI, I combined them and came up with a larger abstract thought about Celia (my essay topic) Note how my Thesis is the largest thought and is clearly supported by all 3 of my MI.

- Then fill in support for each MI. Use the ideas you gathered from your cluster brainstorm.

Example:

For my essay about Celia, see how I took whatever I liked from my 3 cluster brainstorms and used it to support my 3 MIs.

- Then consider ways to write an Introduction. The purpose of an introduction is grab a readers attention & to state your Thesis (which you already have on your outline

Example:

For my essay about Celia, I though some questions, maybe an anecdote, perhaps some statistics might get a reader interested in reading my essay.

- Then consider what to use in a conclusion

Example:

For my essay about Celia, I tried to give some advice, and thoughts about the importance of family. I wanted to give the reader something to remember and think about.

5. Make Prewrite Decisions

: This determines how paragraphs will be ordered in your essay. Some basic orders are:

- Time (like a story)
 - Space (for descriptions – physical arrangement)
 - Order of importance
 - General to specific

Example: For my essay, I chose “Order of Importance” I plan to write about here least important “her interests” to next important “her home life” then finish with the most important “her generosity.”

- Primary Rhetorical Method
 - Narrative (telling a story)
 - Descriptive (showing what it appears to be)
 - Example\illustration (giving examples)
 - Classification (putting things into classes)
 - Compare\Contrast (putting items side by side)
 - Process (to show how something is done or how it came about)
 - Cause\Effect (shows how it happened or result of it happening)
 - Definition (your view of it)
 - Persuasion (to argue a position)

Example: For my essay, although each paragraph has a unique Rhetorical Mode, the overall feeling of this essay will be descriptive.



Part of being a good writer is becoming a good researcher. (so you have something to write about). The concepts presented in this module are basic writing principals. If you need more help, go to the BRB (on the Welcome Page) and The Basics , a required textbook, and get more guidance..

Level of formality

- Informal (friendly), familiar (relatives) formal (college writing)
(college writing is formal = use of proper grammar, good sentences, limited slang, no PC abbreviations etc.) (all our essays will be formal)

Purpose

- Entertain, inform, argue, instruct, condemn, etc.

Person

- 1st (writing about yourself)
- 2nd (writing about the reader)
- 3rd (everything else in the world)



Avoid incorrect 2nd person writing. “YOU” incorrectly. It is very common to do! Whenever you say “YOU” you are referring to the reader! Do not do this.

Time: determines what time area you are referring to

- Present (now)
- Past (anytime before now)
- Future (anytime after now)
(you must stay consistent with verbs to avoid reader confusion)

Tone:

Like the tone of a conversation or a stereo, essayist should be aware of their “verbal” inflections and nuances. It will establish the tone of the writing.

After this preparation, you should be ready to write a rough draft.



Rough Draft

Write a rough draft from your outline.

- Use the MIs from you outline as TS (topic Sentences) in your paragraphs. MI and TS are the same thing. If I was to write an essay based on my outline, it would have 3 support paragraphs. One from each of my MI on my outline.
- Use the Introduction ideas to write an Introduction
- Use the Conclusion ideas to write a conclusion

Be Sure your essays has these basic elements of good writing.

- ✓ Unity
- ✓ Coherence
- ✓ Development



Keep in mind your Prewrite decisions that you made earlier.



Revise \ Edit Rough Draft

Do not attempt to revise your rough draft immediately. Let it sit for a while and come back to it. When you are ready to revise, carefully read over your rough draft. You are looking to see how you can improve on it with regard to the following. Consider the following:

- Is it UNIFIED enough. Are you clearly focused in all paragraphs and throughout the essay.
- Is it COHERENT enough. Can the reader follow you easily; does it make sense?
- Is it DEVELOPED enough. Is there good concrete support for your MIs?
- Is it MECHANICALLY SOUND. Check all sentences for common errors such as: verb confusions, fragments, run-ons, comma splices, comma usage, punctuation, wordiness, dangling/misplaced modifiers, pronoun usages, word choice, missing words, inappropriate 2nd and/or 1st person writing.



It might be a good idea to have someone else read your Rough Draft. Perhaps get a friend or relative to look it over to be sure it has all the above.

When you are sure that this is your best effort...

You are ready for the Final Copy



Final Copy

A Final Copy should reflect a polished piece of college writing. You are telling your reader, this is the best I can do. Be certain.

- Is it UNIFIED enough. Are you clearly focused in all paragraphs and through-out the essay.
- Is it COHERENT enough. Can the reader follow you easily; does it make sense?
- Is it DEVELOPED enough. Is there good concrete support for your MIs?
- Is it MECHANICALLY SOUND. Check all sentences for common errors such as: verb confusions, fragments, run-ons, comma splices, comma usage, punctuation, wordiness, dangling\misplaced modifiers, pronoun usages, word choice, missing words inappropriate 2nd and\or 1st person writing



Be extra sure that sentence are accurate and grammatically sound.

The best content will be diluted and have far less impact if blatant sentence errors persist. Your credibility as a writer will be seriously questioned and\or your thoughts may not be even understood due to confusing grammatically inaccurate sentences.

When you are sure this represents your best effort.

Complete the Final Copy

See how easy that is – Congratulations; you're done!