

Stages of the Writing Process:



Prewriting:

Prewriting is everything you do before you begin to draft the paper. Look over an assignment handout, choose and narrow your topic, and assess your audience and purpose. Research is also an important aspect of prewriting.

You can use certain prewriting strategies to help you to choose and develop a topic:

- Make lists of ideas on a topic
- Read and take notes on a topic
- Make a cluster, which is a visual map of ideas and concepts related to your topic
- Ask questions about a topic
- Discuss ideas about a topic with others and take notes
- Make an outline of your paper

You may also need to consider your audience before you begin to write. To make sure that your writing will fit the audience you are addressing, you need to consider who they are. To do that you might want to assess your audience by considering the following:

- How much does my audience know about my topic?
- How do they feel about my topic: enthusiastic, neutral or hostile?
- What are their personal characteristics that might affect their views on my paper: age, gender, culture, socioeconomic background, values, politics, etc.?

Your audience, typically, will be the professor who assigned the paper, but occasionally classmates may read it. Once you have thought about your topic, developed your ideas on the topic, and taken into account your purpose and audience, you are ready to draft the paper.



Drafting:

Drafting is the stage when you begin to put the paper in paragraph form. When you begin to draft your writing, you need to keep in mind five separate writing techniques that will help your reader to understand your paper:

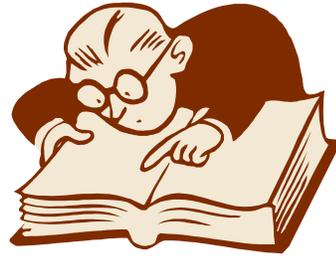
1. **Thesis statement:** At the end of your introduction, write a one-sentence statement that is the basis for your entire paper. A good thesis statement lets the reader know what your paper will cover. For example, you might write this thesis statement: *“There are four possible causes for alcoholism, yet not all alcoholics drink for these reasons.”* The paragraphs that follow should support this statement, and each paragraph should focus on one of the possible causes.
2. **Topic sentences:** Each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence that states the main idea of that paragraph. Just like the thesis statement, the topic sentence lets you know what the paragraph contains. For the first paragraph on the causes of alcoholism, you might write a topic sentence that states, *‘The most compelling cause of alcoholism is genetics.’* From this, the reader will know that you will cover the concept of heredity and alcoholism within this paragraph.
3. **Sufficient support:** While your opinions thoughts are important, they cannot be the legs your paper stands on. You need to support you topic ideas by developing the paragraphs with evidence from credible sources. Support comes in many different forms: statistics, researched information, observations, descriptions, case studies, interviews, personal experience, hypothetical situations, definitions, etc. The more specific the information, the more interesting the paragraph. So instead of writing about all alcoholics, you might want to write about one particular alcoholic—someone you know, someone you observed, someone you interviewed, someone you researched.
4. **Coherence:** This means it all comes together. If an essay is coherent, all the paragraphs relate to the one before it and all the sentences relate to the one before it. **Transitional words and phrases** help to create bridges between sentences, words such as: however, for example, in other words, in contrast, nevertheless, etc. You set up the key words to an essay and a paragraph within the thesis statement and the topic sentences.
5. **Unity:** The idea here is not to veer off into the woods. Stay on the path. Make sure all sentences relate to the topic sentence and all paragraphs relate to the thesis.

As you draft your paragraphs, you want to try to include all these effective writing techniques.

Revising:

1. Check to see if the essay fits the thesis.
2. Make sure each paragraph has a topic sentence.
3. Make sure there are smooth transitions between paragraphs.
4. Check for digressions.
5. Do you have sufficient support in all paragraphs?
6. Is your paper logical in order?
7. Do you have an introduction and a conclusion?

Editing and Proofreading:



Here is where you check on your spelling and grammar and mechanics. Spell check is your friend! In a research paper, you would also check to see if your documentation is done properly. Most students skip this step, but most teachers take off points for papers that are not proofread. It might be in your best interest to take a look, and sometimes four eyes are better than two. Have a friend look over it, or take it to the writing center for extra help.