

The Writing Process

Step 1: Brainstorming

1. Write the topic/subject at the top of the page.
2. List all the ideas that related to the topic that come to your mind. Don't stop until you run out of ideas. Try to give yourself at least five minutes of brainstorming time.

Suggestions:

- ✍ For creative writing, ask yourself, "What if...?" questions. These might lead to wild, interesting ideas for your story.
- ✍ Define your purpose for the writing. Be specific!
- ✍ Define your audience. Who will be the reader of your work?

Step 2: Organizing

1. Create an outline which takes your brainstormed ideas and puts them into the order you plan to follow in your story or essay.
2. Create a concept map which graphically organizes your ideas. The biggest or main ideas should be closest to the center, and the smallest details should be furthest away from the central idea. Draw lines between ideas to show that they connect or are related to each other.

Some methods to choose from:

- ✍ Organize **chronologically**: Tell events of the story in order from beginning to middle to end.
- ✍ Organize **spatially**: Explain objects or people by their location (starting from the left and moving to the right, for example).
- ✍ Organize **by order of importance**: Present information beginning with the most important detail and move to the least important or vice versa.
- ✍ Organize **logically**: Put related details together, and link each idea to the next.

Step 3: Drafting

1. Using your outline or concept map, begin writing. Be sure to skip lines on your first draft.
2. Start your piece with a paragraph which introduces the reader to your topic. From there, build on your main idea using the organization you chose to follow from step 2. Make sure that the end of your piece clearly wraps up the story or essay.
3. While you are writing, feel free to add relevant details to your piece as you think of them.
4. Make your writing as clear as possible. Ask yourself if other people would understand it.
5. Do not try to edit as you are writing – simply get ideas down on paper. You can make changes and improvements later.

Step 4: Editing

I. Guidelines for Self-Editing

- A. Wait a few days before you go back and edit your own paper. If you spend time away from it, you are more likely to come up with ways to improve it.
- B. Read your draft out loud. Listen for parts that are unclear or that do not make sense. Make changes.
- C. Read your draft more than once. Here are things to ask yourself as you read each time:
 - 1. Would my writing grab someone else's interest right off the bat? Would it keep his/her interest?
 - 2. Is my main idea or the main point I am trying to make clear? Look back at your purpose from step 1.
 - 3. Do my smaller details support or explain my main idea or purpose?
 - 4. Are the details arranged logically so that it is easy for the reader to follow my points? (See step 2.)
 - 5. Do I have enough details?
 - 6. Are all sentences directly related to the topic?
 - 7. Are the connections between ideas and sentences clear?
 - 8. Is the language appropriate for my audience and purpose?

II. Guidelines for Peer Editing

- A. Trade papers with someone in your class. Use a colored pen or pencil so that your suggestions stand out.
- B. Read your partner's paper carefully, and ask yourself the above questions.
- C. Make specific suggestions for improving the paper. Be clear. Write questions on the paper when you don't understand something. Be positive.
- D. At the bottom or on the back of the paper, write at least two things you liked about your partner's paper. Sign your name below your comments.
- E. Read your partner's paper again. This time circle mechanical errors such as misspelled words, incorrect use of capital letters, punctuation errors, or any other mistakes you notice.
- F. Look to see that your partner did these things:
 - 1. Used complete sentences (no fragments or run-ons)
 - 2. Used correct capitalization and punctuation
 - 3. Used correct subject-verb agreement
 - 4. Maintained one verb tense throughout the paper
 - 5. Used adjectives and adverbs correctly
 - 6. Used pronouns correctly
 - 7. Correctly spelled words
 - 8. Used correct coordination and subordination

Step 5: Writing the Final Draft

1. Guidelines for typed papers:

- ✍ Double spacing between lines
- ✍ Centered title on the first page
- ✍ Indent the first line of every new paragraph using the “TAB” key
- ✍ Include in the header your first and last name and the date
- ✍ Set margins as follows: 1” top and bottom, and 1.25” left and right

2. Guidelines for handwritten papers:

- ✍ Write on the front side of the paper only
- ✍ Skip lines
- ✍ Use only blue or black ink
- ✍ Write neatly
- ✍ Center the title on the first line
- ✍ Indent the first line of every new paragraph
- ✍ Print your first and last name along with the date in the top right corner of every page

Step 6: Proofreading

Once the final draft has been completed, proofread your paper one last time by reading it aloud and listening for errors. It is always possible that you might have made a mistake in copying your last draft. If you use a spell-checker on your computer, you must still proofread in the event that you wrote the wrong word and spelled it correctly nevertheless. Never assume that it is perfect!