

UNIVERSITY OF BATNA II – MOSTEFA BENBOULAI
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT TRANSLATION
LEVEL: 3rd YEAR
SUBJECT: WRITING TECHNIQUES
Mr. L. OUAZANI

THE WRITING PROCESS

A process is a series of actions that are followed to some desired end result. In order for the result to be successful, all steps must be followed. Cooking is a process and a recipe is the directions you follow to get a positive end result

These are the five steps in the writing process:

1. Prewriting
2. Outlining the structure of ideas
3. Writing / drafting
4. Revising
5. Editing

Effective writing can be simply described as good ideas that are expressed well and arranged in the proper order.

1. PREWRITING

Prewriting is the stage of the writing process during which you transfer your abstract thoughts into more concrete ideas in ink on paper (or in type on a computer screen). Although prewriting techniques can be helpful in all stages of the writing process, the following four strategies are best used when initially deciding on a topic:

- 1. Using experience and observations**
- 2. Reading**
- 3. Freewriting**
- 4. Asking questions**

At this stage in the writing process, it is OK if you choose a general topic. Later you will learn more prewriting strategies that will narrow the focus of the topic.

CHOOSING A TOPIC

In addition to understanding that writing is a process, writers also, understand that choosing a good general topic for an assignment is an essential step. Sometimes your instructor will give you an idea to begin an assignment, and other times your instructor will ask you to come up with a topic on your own. A good topic not only covers what an assignment will be about but also fits the assignment's purpose and its audience.

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

USING EXPERIENCE AND OBSERVATIONS

When selecting a topic, you may also want to consider something that interests you or something based on your own life and personal experiences. Even everyday observations can lead to interesting topics.

READING

Reading plays a vital role in all the stages of the writing process, but it first figures in the development of ideas and topics. Different kinds of documents can help you choose a topic and also develop that topic. For example, a magazine advertising the latest research on the threat of global warming may catch your eye in the supermarket. This cover may interest you, and you may consider global warming as a topic. Or may be a novel spark your curiosity of a particular lawsuit or legal controversy.

After you choose a topic, critical reading is essential to the development of a topic. While reading almost any document, you evaluate the author's point of view by thinking about his main idea and his support. When you judge the author's argument, you discover more about not only the author's opinion but also your own. The steps in the writing process may seem time consuming at first, but following these steps will save you time in the future.

FREEWRITING

Freewriting is an exercise in which you write freely about any topic for a set amount of time (usually three to five minutes). Try not to worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Instead, write as quickly as you can without stopping. If you get stuck, just copy the same word or phrase over and over until you come up with a new thought.

EXERCISE 1

Freewrite about one event you have recently experienced. With this event in mind, write without stopping for five minutes. After you finish, read over what you wrote. Does anything stand out to you as a good general topic to write about?

ASKING QUESTIONS

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? In everyday situations, you pose these kinds of questions to get more information. Who will be my partner for the project? When is the next meeting? Why is my car making that odd noise?

You seek the answers to these questions to gain knowledge, to better understand your daily experiences, and to plan for the future. Asking these types of questions will also help you with the writing process. As you choose your topic, answering these questions can help you revisit the ideas you already have and generate new ways to think about your topic. You may also discover aspects of the topic that are unfamiliar to you and that you would like to learn more about. All these idea-gathering techniques will help you plan for future work on your assignment.

EXERCISE 2

Choose a general topic idea from the prewriting you completed in "Exercise 1". Then read each question and use your own paper to answer the 5WH questions. It is OK if you do not know all the answers. If you do not know an answer, use your own opinion to speculate, or guess. You may also use factual information from books or articles you previously read on your topic.

1. Who? _____
2. What? _____
3. Where? _____
4. When? _____
5. Why? _____
6. How? _____

MORE PREWRITING TECHNIQUES

The following prewriting strategies can help you narrow the focus of the topic:

- Brainstorming
- Idea mapping
- Searching the Internet

BRAINSTORMING is similar to list making. You can make a list on your own or in a group with your classmates. Start with a blank sheet of paper and write your general topic across the top. Underneath your topic, make a list of more specific ideas. Think of your general topic as a broad category and the list items as things that fit in that category. Often you will find that one item can lead to the next, creating a flow of ideas that can help you narrow your focus to a more specific paper topic.

IDEA MAPPING allows you to visualize your ideas on paper using circles, lines, and arrows. This technique is also known as clustering because ideas are broken down and clustered, or grouped together. Many writers like this method because the shapes show how the ideas relate or connect, and writers can find a focused topic from the connections mapped.

Using idea mapping, you might discover interesting connections between topics that you had not thought of before.

To create an idea map, start with your general topic in a circle in the center of a blank sheet of paper. Then write specific ideas around it and use lines or arrows to connect them together. Add and cluster as many ideas as you can think of.

SEARCHING THE INTERNET

Using search engines on the Internet is a good way to see what kinds of websites are available on your topic. When you search the Internet, type some key words from your broad topic or words from your narrowed focus into your browser's search engine. Then look over the results for relevant and interesting articles.

EXERCISE 3

In "Exercise 2", you chose a possible topic and explored it by answering questions about it using the 5WH questions. However, this topic may still be too broad. Here, in "Exercise 3", choose and complete one of the prewriting strategies to narrow the focus. Use either brainstorming, idea mapping, or searching the Internet.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Share what you found and what interests you about the possible topic(s).

2/OUTLINING

Paragraph 1: Introduction

The introductory paragraph should include the following elements:

Background information: Enough information necessary for your reader to understand your topic

Thesis statement: Indicates your paper's topic, makes your paper's purpose clear, and provides an overview of the **three main supporting points** that will unify the essay. The thesis statement is typically the last sentence.

If you are writing in response to a text, the introduction should include the title, author, and genre of that piece.

Paragraph 2: Body Paragraph

Begins with a **topic sentence** that identifies **one main idea** that will be discussed as support or proof for the thesis statement

Supporting sentences use specific details, demonstrated through closely related examples or evidence, to expand and explain the main idea. Generally, a well-developed paragraph has at least five to eight sentences.

Paragraph unity means that all ideas in a paragraph are closely related to its topic sentence and further develop that topic sentence. That is, all sentences in a single paragraph must be unified around a central point or idea.

Paragraph 3: Body Paragraph

This paragraph, and any subsequent body paragraph, should begin with a **topic sentence** that signals the reader that a **new idea** or point is being introduced.

As you organize your essay, keep in mind its coherence. **Coherence** refers to connections among paragraphs and ideas—the logical sequence of your thoughts.

- Use **transition words or phrases** at the *outset* of your body paragraphs and to move from one idea to another *within* your paragraphs.
- Have you transitioned logically from the main idea in the previous paragraph to this one? Are you making clear connections among the paragraphs and ideas? Be sure to think about coherence during the revision stage of the writing process.

Paragraph 4: Body Paragraph

This paragraph begins with the final **topic sentence** that relates back to the remaining point mentioned in the thesis statement. Each paragraph should contain a new main idea.

Again, flesh out this main idea with specific examples, details, and relevant support.

Be sure to maintain paragraph unity. That is, each sentence must relate to your topic sentence.

Paragraph 5: Conclusion

The conclusion revisits your overall purpose for writing and often invites your reader to consider the implications of why your ideas are significant.

The conclusion may restate the thesis, summarize the paper's major points, or leave the reader with a final thought to ponder. Several other methods for writing conclusions are included on a separate Tutoring Center handout. If you choose to restate the thesis or summarize the essay's main ideas, do not repeat the same wording from the introduction or body paragraphs. Remember not to introduce new, unrelated ideas in the conclusion.

3/DRAFTING

Drafting is the stage of the writing process in which you develop a complete first version of a piece of writing.

Basic elements of a First Draft.

Making the Writing Process Work for You

What makes the writing process so beneficial to writers is that it encourages alternatives to standard practices while motivating you to develop your best ideas. For instance, the following approaches, done alone or in combination with others, may improve your writing and help you move forward in the writing process:

- **Begin writing with the part you know the most about.**
- **Write one paragraph at a time and then stop.**
- **Take short breaks to refresh your mind.**
- **Be reasonable with your goals.**
- **Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you write.**

Knowing what a first draft looks like will help you make the creative leap from the outline to the first draft. A first draft should include the following elements:

- **An introduction** that piques the audience's interest, tells what the essay is about, and motivates readers to keep reading.
- **A thesis statement** that presents the main point, or controlling idea, of the entire piece of writing.

A thesis statement has three practical aims:

1. It tells in a single sentence what your essay is about: *Fast driving causes accidents and increases air pollution.*
2. It helps you organize your essay: *To do well on an essay exam, you must know the material, understand the question, and organize your answer.*
3. It reflects your understanding of the topic and your feelings about it. For instance, to develop the thesis: *Females are the stable element in baboon society* would require an understanding of baboon rituals and communication. Likewise, the thesis: *Affirmative action gives everyone equal chance* announces clearly that the writer's feelings are in favour of affirmative action.

Common Faults of the Thesis Statement

1- The Too-Broad/ Too Narrow Thesis Statement

A thesis that is too broad is a statement that is too large to be adequately developed in the length essay you have been assigned. A thesis that is too narrow is a statement that is not large enough to be developed into an essay.

A well-focused thesis presents a main idea that can be adequately developed in the number of paragraphs or pages you have been assigned to write.

Example:

- ✗ **Too broad:** People are unhealthy for many reasons.
- **Adequate focus:** The diet of many American teenagers is unhealthy.
- ✗ **Too narrow:** American teenagers consume too much salt.
- **Adequate focus:** The diet of many American teenagers is unhealthy.

2- The Indefinite Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is uncommitted or indefinite if it does not plainly state the writer's opinion on the subject but instead tries to avoid taking a stand.

Example:

- ✗ **Indefinite thesis:** My uncle and my aunt seem different to me.
- **Better :** My uncle is different from my aunt in looks, attitude, and interests.
- ✗ **Indefinite thesis:** There are many useful shots in tennis.
- **Better :** Among the many useful shots in tennis are the lob, the smash, the volley, the half volley or pickup, and the drop shot.

3- The Unclear Thesis Statement

The unclear thesis statement is one that is badly written. It may be wordy, fuzzy, or pompous.

- ✗ **Unclear:** In my opinion, which may not be agreed upon by everyone in society, the reason the United States is a great leader in the political world is that everyone is treated equal as to chances by men and women.
- **Clear :** One of the reasons the United States is considered a great land of opportunity is that men and women have an equal chance to succeed.
- ✗ **Unclear:** Walking is an ideal exercise of which old and young make no difference as far as being able to improve physical condition that is not particularly good.
- **Clear :** Walking is an ideal exercise for both young and old people who are not in top physical condition.

The Good Thesis Statement

1. The thesis statement should be expressed in a complete sentence stating a complete thought; and should not be written as a question.

Example:

- My fear of the dark. ✗
 - My fear of the dark has made my life miserable. ✓
2. A thesis statement expresses an opinion, attitude, or idea; it does not simply announce the topic the essay will develop.

Example:

- I'm going to discuss the effect of radiation. ✗
 - The effects of radiation are often unpredictable. ✓
3. A thesis statement should express an opinion not a fact. It is therefore a statement that needs to be explained or proved.

Example:

- William Shakespeare wrote King Lear. ✗
- King Lear exemplifies the finest development of Shakespeare's dramatic talent. ✓

4. A good thesis is unified: It should express one major idea about one subject; if it contains two or more ideas; the essay runs the risk of lacking unity and coherence.

Example:

- Detective stories are not a high form of literature, but people have always been fascinated by them and many fine writers have experimented with them. ✘
- Detective stories appeal to the basic human desire for thrills. ✓

5. A thesis is not a title.

Example:

- The Decline of Baseball ✘
- Baseball, once a national pastime and even an addiction, has lost its popularity because of the new interest in more violent sports. ✓
- Homes and Schools. ✘
- If parents want better education for their children, they must be willing to commit their time to working with the schools. ✓

A thesis statement has a clearly stated **opinion**, but does **not bluntly announce** the opinion ('in this essay I will...'), it is **narrow** enough to write a focused essay, but also **broad** enough to write at least 3 body paragraphs, it is clearly stated in **specific** terms, **easily recognized** as the main idea, and **direct, not softened** with token phrases ('in my opinion, I think,..), and **can list** the main points that will be made

- **A topic sentence** in each paragraph that states the main idea of the paragraph and implies how that main idea connects to the thesis statement. The topic sentence can be the first, middle, or final sentence in a paragraph. The assignment's audience and purpose will often determine where a topic sentence belongs. When the purpose of the assignment is to persuade, for example, the topic sentence should be the first sentence in a paragraph. In a persuasive essay, the writer's point of view should be clearly expressed at the beginning of each paragraph.
- **Supporting sentences** in each paragraph that develop or explain the topic sentence. These can be specific facts, examples, anecdotes, or other details that elaborate on the topic sentence.
- **A conclusion** that reinforces the thesis statement and leaves the audience with a feeling of completion.

4/ REVISING AND EDITING

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

Revising and editing allow you to examine two important aspects of your writing separately, so that you can give each task your undivided attention.

- When you **revise**, you take a second look at your ideas. You might add, cut, move, or change information in order to make your ideas clearer, more accurate, more interesting, or more convincing.
- When you **edit**, you take a second look at how you expressed your ideas. You add or change words. You fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. You improve your writing style.

You make your paragraph into a polished, mature piece of writing, the end product of your best efforts.