

The Process of Writing

The real art of writing is rewriting.

Think about what you want to write about and what you want to say.

Prewrite

Set your purpose for writing.
Identify your audience.
Limit your topic.
Draft a thesis statement that contains the topic and controlling idea.
Brainstorm ideas/details that support the thesis statement.
Select two to four main ideas to use to support the thesis statement.
Draft a preliminary outline or map to logically organize the main ideas.
Gather information you need to begin to write. (Document sources)

Write Draft #1

Put your thoughts on paper.
Use the logical structure you determined in the outlining process.

Revise

Make certain the thesis statement is clear and that you have clear topic sentences.
Rethink and rearrange ideas, sentences, and paragraphs to best support thesis.
Check for unity and coherence.
Be sure each paragraph provides good details and well-chosen examples.
Gather additional information needed to support your thesis. (Document sources)

Write Draft #2, #3, and #4 as Needed

Incorporate revision changes.

Revise

Check each section of draft with the thesis and outline.
Rethink/rearrange ideas, sentences, and paragraphs. Check for plagiarism.
Check for unity and coherence.
Shorten/remove unnecessary words, sentences, and paragraphs.
Make certain the essay concludes and doesn't just stop.

Edit

Check grammar and punctuation.
Match language level and tone to audience.
Make certain the language is exact, concise, and fresh.
Proofread for errors in punctuation, spelling, and mechanics.

Write Final Draft

Prewrite

- » Identify Purpose, Audience, and Topic
- » Draft Thesis, Brainstorm, and Outline
- » Organize and Begin To Gather Information

The list of topics for a paper is limited only by your ingenuity. The key to a good topic is one that fits the assignment you need to complete as well as your audience. However, identifying a topic is only the start of writing a paper.

Once you have identified your topic, draft a thesis statement that clearly states the main idea of the entire essay. Next, brainstorm ideas/details that support your thesis. Then select two to four main ideas to use and jot an outline that includes these points in a logical order.

There isn't one best way for everyone to organize and get started, but there is a best way for you. Whatever your style, consider these three basics: 1) get all materials together in one place, 2) identify what you will need to do/get to complete your essay, and 3) make a task list and timeline.

Write Draft #1

- » Put Your Thoughts On Paper
- » Use a Logical Structure

As you gather your information, be sure to carefully document the sources you are using for the "Works Cited" page. When you complete your research, you're ready to begin writing. A paper doesn't have to have any certain number of sections, but it does have to have a logical structure that enables the content to flow smoothly with each part leading solidly into the next.

First paragraph: an introduction to your subject and a clear statement of your thesis—the main idea of the entire essay.

Body paragraphs: depending on the complexity of the subject, the body will vary in length from several paragraphs to several pages—includes your details, quotes, and anecdotes to explain/support your thesis.

Last paragraph: states your conclusion and/or underscores your thesis.

Rewrite Process

Writing a paper for a college class, like any good writing, is a process, not a product. The real art of writing is rewriting and more rewriting.

Two distinct aspects of rewriting are revising and editing.

Revise

- » Rethink and Rearrange
- » Cut. Cut. Cut.

Revise means a Re-Vision—seeing the topic, your purpose, and audience again. Revising is what turns your second draft into your third draft into your fourth draft into your...

Is your thesis statement clear? Have you adequately supported your thesis? Have you included everything from your outline? Is your organization and structure logical? Does the essay have unity, coherence? Does your paper communicate your message precisely and logically?

This is also the time to shorten or remove anything that doesn't move the essay forward. Don't be mesmerized by sparkling prose; every word, every punctuation mark must make a positive contribution to the whole paper.

Write and Revise Cycle

Now, incorporate your revisions into another draft. Continue this writing and revising cycle two or three times until you have a paper that clearly communicates your message. Each time you revise, carefully review what you've written to make sure you have all ideas in your own words and have not plagiarized your reference material.

Edit

- » Fine-Tune

Editing most often takes place on what you hope will be your final draft. You have completed the major revising and now you fine-tune your writing for clarity of content and accuracy of presentation. Make certain the language is exact, concise, and fresh and that the language level and tone match your audience.

Write Final Draft

- » Proofread

Finally, carefully proofread for errors in punctuation, spelling, and mechanics.