

WORDSMITH

A GUIDE TO COLLEGE WRITING

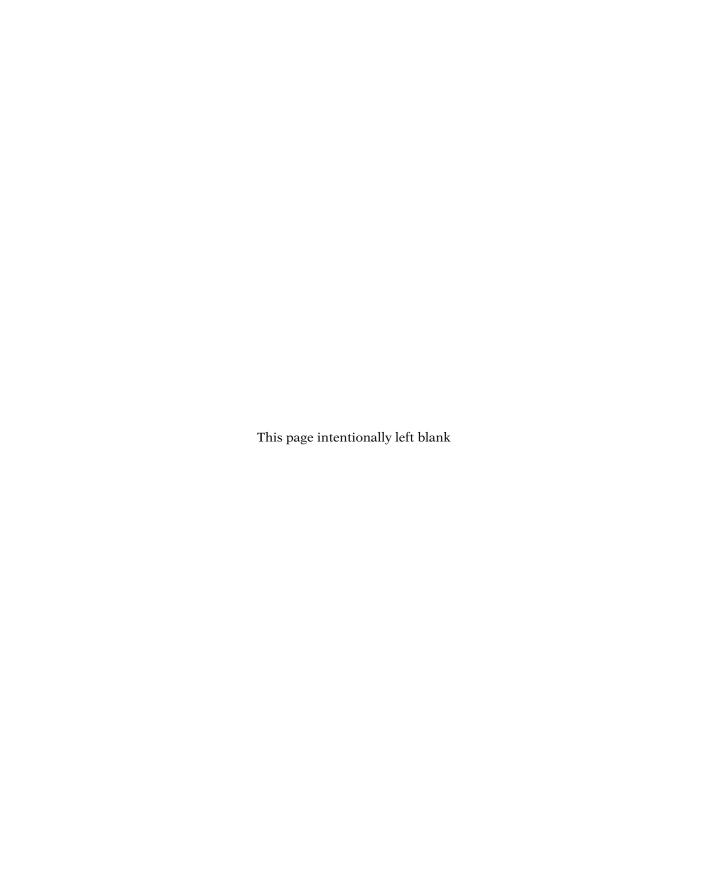
SEVENTH EDITION

PAMELA ARLOV



Wordsmith

A Guide to College Writing



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A Guide to College Writing

Seventh Edition



Pamela Arlov *Middle Georgia State University*



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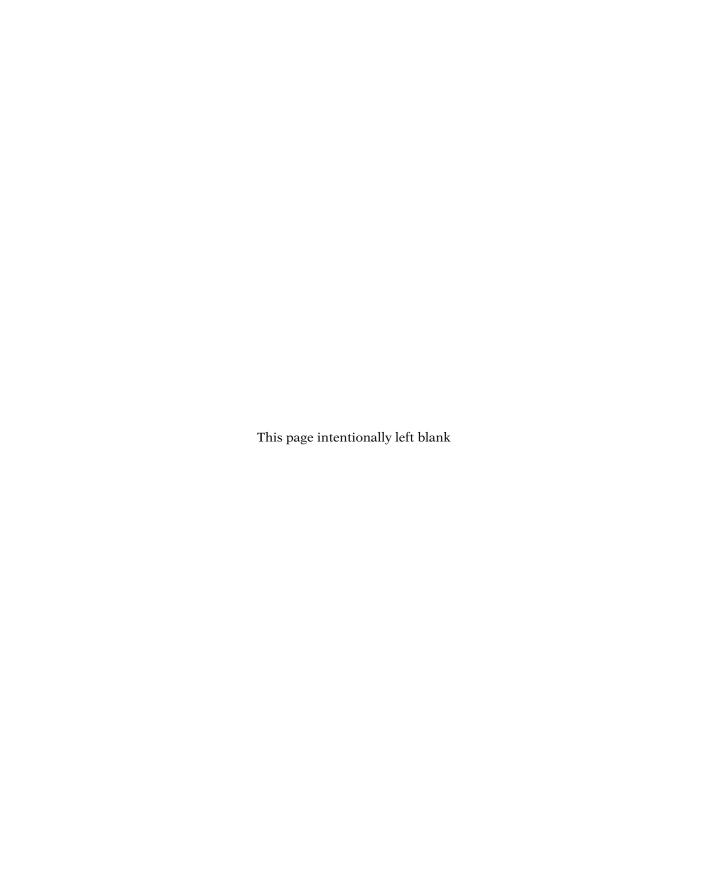


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Thank you for choosing *Wordsmith: A Guide to College Writing* as your textbook. Whether you are teaching from this text or learning from it, it is my hope that you will enjoy its simplicity. Writing itself is remarkably complex, incorporating the personality and experience of each writer and each reader. It also requires adherence to agreed-upon rules of grammar, punctuation, and form. Therefore, I have tried to make this book simple in its structure, straightforward in its language and presentation, and easy to use for both instructors and students.

Updates to the Seventh Edition

Several changes have been made in the seventh edition of *Wordsmith: A Guide to College Writing*.

Changes to Part 1, Composition

- You will find new exercises, images, assignments, and model essays throughout the section.
- Chapter 8 contains a new and delightful professional essay, "Fish Cheeks" by Amy Tan.
- Chapter 11, Writing a Research Paper, has a new look. In addition to containing the latest MLA updates, it now contains an extensive section on incorporating quotations into research. Because college writing focuses much more on quotations in the context of research rather than as used with simple dialogue, all of the material on quotations and use of quotation marks now resides in Chapter 11.

Changes to Part 2, Grammar

- Each chapter in this section boasts something new: new questions, new exercises, new Grammar Alert! boxes, and/or new chapter openers.
- An additional paragraph-style editing exercise has been added to important areas where students are most likely to have problems and need extra work: Chapter 13, Subject-Verb Agreement, Chapter 14, Coordination and Subordination, Chapter 15, Run-on Sentences, Chapter 16, Sentence Fragments, and Chapter 18, Pronoun Agreement, Reference, and Point of View.
- In many chapters, particularly the subject-verb agreement chapter and the two pronoun chapters, explanations and examples have been streamlined and simplified to enhance clarity without sacrificing coverage.

Changes to Part 3, Readings

In addition to Amy Tan's "Fish Cheeks" in Chapter 8, two new readings have been added with millennial students in mind. For those who have never seen the Milky Way galaxy spread across the night sky, "Our Vanishing Night," sourced from *National Geographic*, explains how the proliferation of lights over the last couple of centuries has affected animal life, including humans. For those affected by social media envy, "Curing the Social Media Blues" discusses why social media can cause feelings of inadequacy and what can be done about the problem.

Features of Wordsmith: A Guide to College Writing

- A three-part layout allows the freedom to mix and match writing chapters, grammar chapters, and readings.
- A structured yet flexible approach to writing encourages clarity and creativity.
- A direct, conversational approach is used throughout.
- Lighthearted chapter openings promote a positive and playful approach to learning.

Part 1: Composition

Part 1, Composition, begins with an overview of the basics. Chapter 1 introduces the writing process and a review of the paragraph; a student essay is presented in all drafts and stages, along with a transcript of a student writing

group's discussion of the work in progress. Next (in Chapters 2–7), the five steps in the writing process are presented in the order in which most writers address them: prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and proofreading. This section includes a complete chapter devoted to writing a thesis statement and planning the essay (Chapter 3). Throughout Part 1, topics for essays, paragraphs, and journal writing provide the bases for assignments and encourage further practice.

Chapters 8–10 move into methods of development. Because methods of development are seldom used in isolation in "real-world" writing, they are grouped into three chapters. These groupings highlight the relationships among the modes and allow students to read about all the methods even if they use only a few. Modes with a similar purpose are grouped together, and the optional "Mixed Methods" assignments at the end of the chapter show how the modes can be used together in a single piece of writing. Two full-length essays provide models for each method of development.

Chapter 11, Writing a Research Paper, helps students make the transition from personal writing to academic writing. The chapter provides a step-by-step guide to summarizing an article, then takes students a step further into writing papers based on outside sources.

Part 2: Grammar

Part 2, Grammar, can be used in a variety of ways: with direct, in-class instruction; in a lab setting, as a supplement to lab assignments; or for independent study. It also works well for instructors who want to combine methods by addressing more difficult topics in class while assigning easier material or review material for independent study.

In the grammar chapters, explanations are clear, logical, and user-friendly. Each topic is dealt with, one skill at a time, with numerous practice exercises for each skill. The step-by-step, easy-to-understand presentation is suitable for classroom discussion or independent study. At the end of each chapter are review exercises in increasing order of difficulty, ending in most chapters with a paragraph-length editing exercise.

Part 3: Readings

Part 3, Readings, offers two poems, a short story, and several high-interest essays by professional writers to reinforce reading skills and serve as spring-boards for discussions and assignments. In any craft, the works of accomplished artisans can inspire the apprentice. These works model writing at its best: entertaining, challenging, and thought-provoking. Each reading is

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followed by a comprehension exercise that includes questions about content, questions about the writer's techniques, and related topics for discussion and writing. Diversity in authorship, subject matter, and rhetorical method is emphasized.

Instructor and Student Resources

Annotated Instructor's Edition for Wordsmith: A Guide to College Writing 7e ISBN 0-134-75303-8 / 978-0-134-75303-4

Instructor's Resource Manual for Wordsmith: A Guide to College Writing 7e ISBN 0-134-75304-6 / 978-0-134-75304-1

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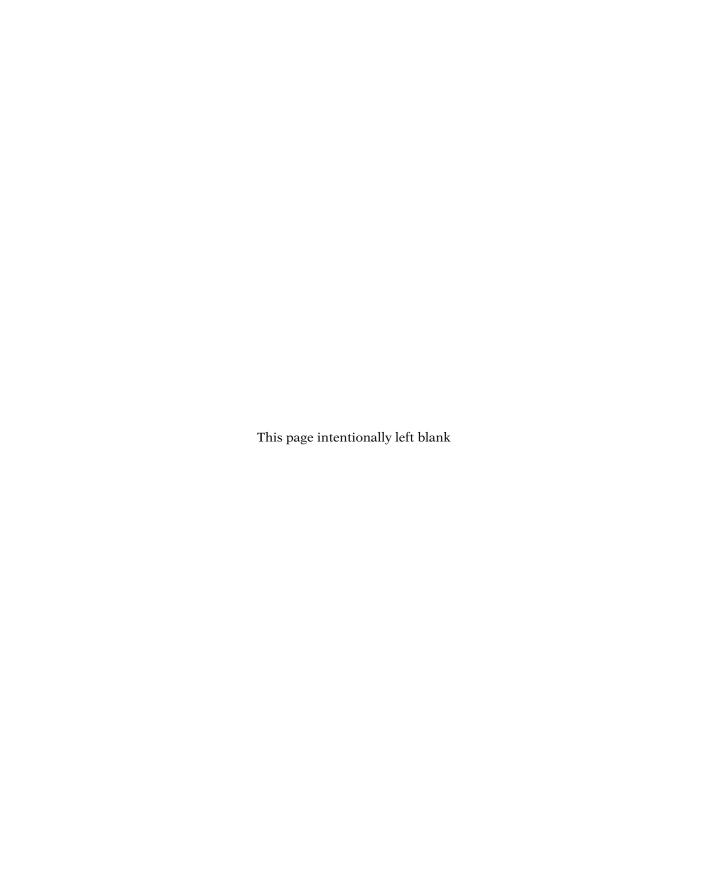
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Pamela Arlov



PART 1: Composition

CHAPTER 1

The Writing Process



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn how to

- Use a five-step writing process.
- 2 Identify the functions of a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a summary sentence.

The writing process helps your ideas grow.

Before you write anything, the first thing to do is gather your thoughts. In the writing process, this first step is called **prewriting**. A natural outgrowth of gathering your thoughts is organizing them, or **planning**. The third step, **drafting**, involves writing out your organized thoughts from beginning to end. After drafting, you may find it necessary to make changes—clarifications, rearrangements, additions, or deletions—by **revising** your work. Finally, **proofreading** helps you find and correct errors in your paper.

Focus on the Writing Process: Completing the Steps



Think of the steps that went into painting this sign. Someone planned it right down to the size of its letters and its position on the street. Yet, clearly, something went wrong during the process.

Taking shortcuts in any process, including the writing process, can result in embarrassing mistakes. So even if "Dash it off and hand it in" has been your motto until now, give the writing process a

chance, and allow yourself time to complete all the steps. That way, whatever you are writing—a paper for school, a memo for work, a purchasing request, a legal document—will reflect your best effort.

Reflect on It

- 1. Write down something you do that requires several steps.
- 2. List the steps in the order in which you do them.
- **3.** Is it a flexible process, like the writing process, in that you can go back to a previous step if you need to? Or is it a process more like cooking, in that once the cake is in the oven, it's too late to add another egg?
- **4.** Finally, think about the importance of each step in your process. What would happen if you left out a step?

The Writing Process



On a good day, when writing goes smoothly, you may feel as though writing is a single coherent act. On a bad day, it can feel more like hitting your head against a brick wall until you knock out an idea. Writing is not a single act, but a process composed of several steps. One writer, Nick, describes the process this way:

I think first. It's not like it pops out of me; it has to brew for a while. The next thing I do is begin writing ideas down, good or bad. Once I get the ideas down in rough form—I wouldn't call it an outline necessarily—I write it out from beginning to end. Then the revision process begins, because I'm always

unhappy with the first thing I write. It's a thorough examination: cutting, connecting thoughts, shifting ideas around, adding new ideas. I really go back to the beginning, because every time I revise, I have to think more. Then I write out the second draft from beginning to end. I don't worry about punctuation or spelling. I keep revising until I think I've got it; then I start worrying about periods and commas. Then it's ready for another reader.

Although everyone approaches writing a little differently, most of us follow a process similar to the one just described. Nick, the writer in the example above, is, in fact, following all of the steps in the writing process: prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and proofreading.

Prewriting

"I think first."

Prewriting covers a range of activity from casually thinking about your topic to sitting down and doing a prewriting exercise to get your thoughts on paper. Because you are always thinking, prewriting can happen any time and anywhere. When you are waiting at a traffic light and an example to illustrate one of your points pops into your head, you are prewriting. When you realize that a paragraph isn't working the way you planned and you stop to figure out another approach, you are prewriting. Prewriting *is* thinking, and the more thought you put into your paper, the stronger it will be.

Planning

"I get the ideas down in rough form—I wouldn't call it an outline."

Careful and thoughtful **planning** makes an essay easier for you to write and easier for a reader to read. Your plan may include a thesis statement—a statement of the main idea. Because it states the main idea, the thesis statement is the cornerstone of your essay. It may change more than once as your essay takes shape; still, it is important to have a main idea and to keep it in sight. After all, if you are not certain of your main point, you can be sure that your readers won't be, either. Besides a thesis, your plan will probably include an informal outline. Planning is never a waste of time. Careful planning—or the lack of it—always shows in the final draft.

Drafting

"I write it out from beginning to end."

Drafting your essay can be easy or difficult. Sometimes your ideas flow freely. At other times, your thoughts grind to a standstill. Both situations are a normal part of the creative process. If you get stuck during the drafting process, push on; write *through* the problem. If necessary, return to the planning or prewriting stage.

The best advice on drafting is "don't procrastinate." Do your planning and prewriting early. If you have a project that involves research or outside reading, do those things early to give the information time to sink in before you write. Writing is easier if you plan ahead, and getting an early start prevents last-minute panic. Then if you get stuck during the drafting process, you will have time to work out the problem rather than going into emergency mode because your paper is due the next day.

As you draft your essay or paragraph, don't worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Stopping to look up a comma rule will only distract you. Concentrate on ideas and save proofreading for later.

If you are distracted by the red squiggles and green underlines that your word processing software makes, turn the spelling and grammar checker off until you are ready to proofread. You will appreciate your word processing software much more if it does not interrupt you as you write.

Revising

"I'm always unhappy with the first thing I write."

In its Latin roots, the word *revising* means "seeing again." **Revising** is difficult because it is hard to see your work with the eyes of a reader. Writers often see what they *meant* to say rather than what they really said. Sometimes they take for granted background knowledge that the reader may not have. To overcome these difficulties, put your draft aside for a day or so before trying to revise it. With twenty-four hours between writing and revising, you will see your writing more clearly. It is also helpful to let someone else look at your work—a friend, classmate, or relative. Ask the person to focus on the *content* of your paper rather than on grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Ask which ideas are clear and which ones need more explanation. Ask how well your examples illustrate the points you have made. A reader's comments can help you see your work in a new light.

Don't be afraid of making big changes during revision. Throwing out a whole paragraph and starting over may keep an essay on track. Changing

the paragraph order sometimes gives your message the emphasis you want. Or you may find that a first draft contains a seed of what you really want to say. Don't be afraid to start over. The first words you write are not written in stone.

Proofreading

"Then I start worrying about periods and commas."

Proofreading is the final polish that you put on your paragraph. When you proofread, consider such matters as grammar, spelling, and word choice. Replace vague words with specific words, and mercilessly cut words that are not carrying their weight. Look at connections, making sure ideas flow smoothly from one sentence to the next. Because the stages of the writing process overlap, you have probably done some minor proofreading along the way. Before the final proofreading, set the piece of writing aside for a time. Then proofread it once more to give it the polish of a finished piece.

Expect the Unexpected

If you think about taking a weekend road trip, the steps involved seem simple and straightforward. Plan. Pack. Drive. Enjoy. Yet it is never that simple. You have to set aside enough money (it always takes more than you expect) and decide where to go. Then, as you drive, you find that traffic is heavier than you anticipated. You take a wrong turn and have to find your way back to the main road. Eventually, you reach your destination, but getting there was more complicated than you expected it to be. You decide that on road trips, you have to expect the unexpected.

Writing an essay works the same way. The writing process seems straightforward: Prewrite. Plan. Draft. Revise. Proofread. But it is never that simple. You have to set aside enough time to write (it always takes more than you expect) and decide what to write about. As you write, you find that the topic you chose is harder to write about than you thought. You take a wrong turn and have to bring your paragraphs back in line with the main topic. Eventually, you find your way, but writing an essay was more complicated than you expected it to be. Don't feel inadequate. Expect the unexpected. It is normal to write and rewrite, to repeat steps, and even to feel lost. Once you reach your destination, both processes—taking a trip and writing an essay—are worth the time and trouble that you took.

Exercise 1-1

THE WRITING PROCESS

Answer the following questions to review your knowledge of the writing process.	
1.	The five steps in the writing process are,,,
	, and
2.	The "thinking step" in the writing process is called
3.	The part of the writing process that involves correcting grammar and
	punctuation is called
4.	Major changes would most likely be made during the step in the
	writing process.
5.	True or false? The steps in the writing process often overlap. T F

The Writing Process: Carla's Essay

The next section follows the development of one writer's essay from start to finish. In writing her essay, Carla went through several forms of prewriting and made two different outlines. Earlier, the class had been divided into writing groups of four or five people who would critique and support one another during the term. She talked with members of her writing group and her instructor, and she wrote two rough drafts. (Only the first rough draft is shown here because the final draft reflects all of the changes made.) Before turning in her final draft, Carla also proofread the essay from top to bottom and from bottom to top. Then she asked a member of her writing group to look over the final draft for any mistakes she might have overlooked.

The steps that Carla goes through are the same steps that you will take as you learn the writing process. You will also share some of her frustrations. But like Carla, you will probably find that what seems difficult at first is attainable, one step at a time.

Carla's Assignment

Carla's instructor handed out a list of three essay topics. Carla chose to write on this one:

Write an essay about one of your roles in life and the emotions it makes you feel. Discuss positive aspects, negative aspects, or both, but be sure to tie your discussion to specific emotional reactions.

Carla's instructor suggested that the students try one or more forms of prewriting and then make an outline to discuss with their writing group. Then each student would write a rough draft to bring to an individual writing conference with the instructor.

Carla's Prewriting

Working on a computer, Carla turned off the monitor and typed whatever came to mind. (For more information on Carla's strategy, called "invisible writing," and other forms of prewriting, see Chapter 2.) In this prewriting, Carla did not worry about grammar or spelling. Instead, she focused on gathering ideas.

Roles, roles. I have many roles in life. I am a student, a worker, a mother, a daughter, a friend. And I have roles within those roles. With my daughter I am a teacher, a doctor, a disciplinarian, a playmate. With my mother I am sometimes child, sometimes adult. At work I feel competent and at school I often feel lost. As a modern woman I have to do it all, work, school, motherhood, the whole bit and still stay sane. It's juggling roles that gives me such headaches. I get so stressed sometimes when I have to study for a test and I am beat from working all day and Alisa needs her bath and a story. There is so much to say I don't know where to start. And what about the emotions connected with all that. Sometimes I am happy, sometimes I am too tired to feel anything, sometimes I am proud of all I do and sometimes I could just cry from exhaustion and frustration. I don't know what else to say and I don't feel any closer to getting an essay written. I am afraid this is not working for me.

Later, Carla followed up her invisible writing by brainstorming, focusing on her role as a mother.

Role—Mother

Everything I do is for Alisa. school work reading to her tucking her in at night asking about her day spending time with her

making sure she knows her grandparents, has a family connection

working hard so her future can be secure

want to be someone she can look up to

give up a lot but get a lot in return

Carla's Outline

As she looked over her brainstorming, Carla saw that many aspects of her role as a mother were focused on her child's present needs, while still others centered on Alisa's future. She also saw a possible connection to the past through Alisa's grandparents. She decided to structure her outline around her child's past, present, and future.

Outline

Thesis: As a mother, it is my job to see that my daughter is connected to the past, has her present needs met, and is ready for the future.

Paragraph 1—Connect her to the past:

- 1. Teach her what I have learned
- 2. Make sure she is connected to a previous generation through grandparents

Paragraph 2—Take care of her present needs:

- 1. Work to see that she is provided for
- 2. Spend time with her

Paragraph 3—The future:

- 1. Go to school to take care of her future
- 2. Make sure her future needs are met and that she can go to college

Carla's Writing Group Meets

Next, Carla met with her writing group. A transcript of the portion of the session dealing with Carla's outline appears here.

Transcript: Writing Group Session, Monday, October 3, 2:10 P.M.

Brenda: Okay, who wants to go first? Antonio?

Antonio: Not me. Carla?

Carla: Well, I just brought an outline. I'll go first. (Carla

passes out copies of her outline, and the group reads

the outline.)

Antonio: I like it. I like the way you include past, present, and

future. It gives the outline a good flow.

Carla: You're just saying that because I got you off the

hook. You didn't have to go first. (Laughter.)

Thanh: I like the chronological order, too. But there's one

thing I don't see. Where's the emotion?

Carla: What?

Thanh: Remember the assignment said to connect the role

to the emotions it made us feel?

Carla: Oh, no! That's right. Now, after all the work I've

done, I'll have to change it. Maybe I can just go back and put in how I feel about teaching, working, and

going to school.

Kelly: How do you feel about it?

Carla: I feel good. It makes me happy to know that I'm

doing all I can for her.

Antonio: No tough times? No bad emotions?

Carla: (Laughs.) Plenty. I am always tired—no energy, no

money. Sometimes it gets me down.

Brenda: Tell me about it. My kids are grown, but I remember.

But I wouldn't raise a kid today for anything. The

world is too scary.

Carla: I know. Sometimes I lie awake at night and worry

about all the things that could happen.

Thanh: Well, why don't you put some of that in? You know,

reality. Tell us what it's really like.

Carla: Okay. I'll try it. What about my three points? Should

I keep them?

Brenda: Maybe. Or you could make the emotions your three

points.

Antonio: But don't get rid of that past, present, and future

part. I like that.

Carla: Thanks, everybody. You've really helped. Okay,

Antonio, now it's your turn.

Carla's Journal Entry and New Outline

After talking to her writing group, Carla wrote a journal entry, then made a new outline.

I can't believe I forgot that the assignment said the essay should be about my emotions. Well, let's see. What are the emotions I feel about being a mother? First of all, I feel an overwhelming and protective love for my daughter. I never knew I could feel that way about any living thing. But I also feel discouraged and downhearted many times. I work hard and just barely get by. I can't remember the last time I bought a new outfit for Alisa or for myself. Financial troubles are the worst. And like Brenda said, it is scary raising a child these days. Some nights I lie awake terrified about what could

happen to her or what could happen to me that would keep me from taking care of her. I also feel angry when I hear people talk about single parents not being able to raise their children with the right values. This is not a perfect world. I did not create it, but I have to live in it and I do the best I can. If they haven't walked in my shoes, they can't judge me.

So far, the emotions I can pick out are happiness, love, discouragement, terror, and anger. Maybe I can write about some of those.

Carla's new outline:

Thesis: Since my daughter Alisa was born, I have lived with the joy, the pain, and often, the sheer terror of raising a child alone.

Joy:

- 1. Seeing her at birth
- 2. Watching her grow and form a personality

Pain:

- 1. Being a single parent
- 2. Not having enough money
- 3. Working long hours along with going to school

Terror:

- 1. Something could happen to me—illness or whatever—and keep me from taking care of her
- 2. Things that could happen to her

Carla's Rough Draft with Notes

From her new outline, Carla wrote a rough draft. Then she met with her instructor for a conference on her draft. Here is Carla's rough draft, with notes she made at the conference.

Since my daughter Alisa was born, I have lived with the joy, the pain, and also the sheer terror of raising a child alone. Being a single parent can happen to anyone but I never thought it would happen to me. I had dreams of a marriage that would last forever and of strong, healthy children who would always feel secure in the love of two full-time parents.

Move the thesis to the end of the introduction.

Raising my daughter Alisa is a joy that I would not trade for anything. The first time I saw her, I thought she was beautiful even though to anyone else, she probably was not much to look at. Watching her grow into a real little human being with a personality that is not mine or her grandparents' or her father's but uniquely her own has been a delight. Seeing her develop as a person has been and will always continue to be my chief joy in life.

Add description. What did she look like? How did the sight of her affect me? What is her personality like? Make the last sentence less wordy.

At first, I was unhappy not having her father to share the joy of Alisa's first word or to sit up with me through the night when she had a fever. But that kind of pain goes away. What remains is the constant weight of struggling to keep up financially. I wait for child support checks that may or may not come, and if they do not come, I do without. Between school and work, my day often lasts twelve hours. But I know the rewards of building a life for myself and my daughter will one day outweigh the pain I have endured. Add a topic sentence to this paragraph. Add more support about the ways I cope.

Parenthood has brought with it feelings of terror. No matter how loving and watchful I am, there are so many things that are beyond my control. Sometimes, I wake in the lonely hours before dawn and think, What if something happens to me? What if I die or am in an accident and can't take care of Alisa? Worse yet is the thought that something could happen to her. Every time I hear of a child who is seriously ill or who has been badly hurt, my heart freezes. When I see television news stories about trusted scout leaders, teachers, or pastors being arrested for child molestation or child pornography, I am reminded that I can take nothing for granted. Fortunately, the business of daily living usually keeps those thoughts away, otherwise, I don't know how I would stay sane.

No major changes.

Raising a child is a joy even though it is a full-time job, and it is even harder when money is scarce and the world seems uncertain. Still, I would not trade the joys of raising my daughter for all the wealth and security in the world. *Conclusion is okay.*

Carla's Final Draft

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Carla Sandoval Professor De Luca English 1101 3 May 2019

My Feelings about Motherhood

Being a single parent can happen to anyone, but I never thought it would happen to me. I had dreams of a marriage that would last forever and of strong, healthy children who would always feel secure in the love of two full-time parents. But life is not a fairy tale, and dreams don't always come true. Since my daughter, Alisa, was born, I have lived with the joy, the pain, and the sheer terror of raising a child alone.

Raising my daughter, Alisa, is a joy that I would not trade for anything. The first time I saw her red, wrinkled face, swollen eyes, and the thin fuzz of hair plastered to her tiny head, I was certain that I would do anything to protect her and keep her safe. Watching her personality develop has been a delight. From the start, she has had incredible focus. At two months, she peered at people intently, as if she were memorizing their faces. At two years, that intentness turned into a stubborn insistence on exploring every cabinet and emptying every drawer and shelf she could reach. Now, at five, she still has that same focus. I see it when she stacks her blocks or looks at her books, shutting out the world in her concentration on the task. She is my joy.

Along with joy, single parenthood holds special pain. Alisa's father was not there to share the joy of Alisa's first word or to

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sit up with me through the night when she had a fever. But that kind of pain goes away. What remains is the constant weight of financial struggle. I wait for child support checks, and if they do not come, I do without. I scour yard sales for good used clothing for the two of us and stretch my paycheck so that I can still buy groceries at the end of the month. I leave Alisa at my mother's and head out for a day that, between school and work, often lasts twelve hours. If it weren't for Alisa, I don't know how I could endure those long grinding days. But I know the rewards of building a life for myself and my daughter will one day outweigh the pain I have endured.

Parenthood has brought with it feelings of terror that are even more intense because I am raising my child alone. I know that no matter how loving and watchful I am, many things are beyond my control. Sometimes, I wake in the lonely hours before dawn and think, "What if I die or am in an accident and can't take care of Alisa?" Worse yet is the thought that something could happen to her. Every time I hear of a child who is seriously ill or who has been badly hurt, my heart freezes. When I see television news stories about trusted scout leaders or pastors being arrested for child molestation or possession of child pornography, I am reminded that I can take nothing for granted. Fortunately, the daily rush usually keeps those thoughts away; otherwise, I don't know how I would stay sane. Raising a child is a full-time job, and it is even harder when money is scarce and the world seems uncertain. Still, I would not trade the joys of raising my daughter for all the wealth and security in the world.

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Carla's Approach to Writing—and Yours

Carla's final draft is the product of many hours' thought and work, and is at least partly a result of her willingness to listen to the advice and comments of others. It is also a result of her willingness to discard ideas that did not work.

Writing is a process of trial and error—sometimes it feels like mostly error. Even experienced writers often find writing difficult, often wonder each time they write if they have anything worthwhile to say or the ability to say it. In addition, the very act of writing makes the writer vulnerable. Your words and experiences are a part of you, and putting them on paper for others' examination can make you feel exposed. So why should you bother to write? You should bother because, at its best, writing can give you power and joy and the ability to move others. Fortunately, writing is a skill that improves with practice, and if you give it serious effort, you will amaze yourself. The following list, "Five Quick Takes on Writing," may help you put the task of writing in perspective.

Five Quick Takes on Writing

- **1.** Take it a step at a time. Writing is often a slow process, and it always requires thought.
- 2. Take it seriously. The ability to write clearly and well will benefit you academically, professionally, and personally throughout your life.
- **3.** Take it easy. Don't expect yourself to be perfect.
- **4.** Take it to the limit. Stretch the limits of your imagination. Refuse to limit yourself by labeling yourself a poor writer.
- **5.** Take it with you. Writing is a vital part of the real world. Make it a part of your life.

Group Exercise 1-1 The Ideal Conditions for Writing



In a group of three or four, discuss the ideal conditions for writing. Think about questions such as these: What tools do you enjoy working with? Do you write best with music or in absolute silence? Do you like having others around, or do you prefer to be alone? Do you need coffee or snacks when you write? Do you need room to pace, or do you think best seated in front of a desk or a computer? After each group member has contributed, see what differences and similarities exist among members of your group. Have a spokesperson report your group's findings to the rest of the class.

If You Hate the Thought of a Step-by-Step Approach . . .

This section is for those who rebel at the idea of a step-by-step approach like the one described in this chapter. Although prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and proofreading are identifiable steps in the writing process, there's no law that says everyone has to approach them in exactly the same way.

For some people, a step-by-step approach does not come naturally. These people have a thinking style that is most often called "right-brained" or "holistic." The human brain is divided into two halves, or hemispheres, and most people are wired to rely heavily on the left hemisphere—the half responsible for logical, sequential, step-by-step thinking. Some people, however, rely more heavily on the right half of the brain, the part responsible for seeing the whole, for thinking in images, and for flashes of insight.

The following questions may help you decide if you are a right-brained thinker.

- **1.** If you were asked to analyze how you write, would your answer be, "I don't know. I just do it"?
- 2. When you are required to turn in an outline, do you do it last, after you have written the paper?
- **3.** If you were asked to describe your usual prewriting technique, would you say, "I never prewrite"?
- **4.** Do you often arrive at the right answer to math problems without following the steps?
- **5.** Do you have a hard time getting detail into your writing?
- **6.** Are you a "big-picture person" rather than a "detail person"?

If you answered yes to three or more of these questions, you may have sometimes been seen as a rebel because you don't always follow a step-by-step, conventional approach to your work. But chances are that, whatever other characteristics you possess, you are also a right-brained writer.

Right-brained people are often intuitive, seeing the big picture before others do. They have a strong creative streak. They sometimes grasp ideas easily without knowing why or understanding how. But unlike their methodical, list-making, left-brained brothers and sisters, right-brained people often have trouble with the details. Planning isn't in their natures, and they tend not to have systems or specific steps to rely on. Whatever the task is, they "just do it."

If you are right-brained, does that mean that the methods in this text won't work for you? No. They *will* work. But you may have to work at them a bit harder. Give them a chance. Don't count them out until you have had enough experience with them to determine whether they work for you or not.

There are additional strategies you can use. Unlike more conventional methods, the following tips for right-brained writers were crafted with you in

mind. These ideas may give you the extra boost you need to harness your creativity and let your right-brained way of thinking work for you, not against you. If your thinking style is left-brained, read on anyway. There may be something here that you can use along with the logical, step-by-step approach that works so well for you.

Tips for Right-Brained Writers

Find your most creative time and use it for writing. Some people find that they are at their best in the mornings. Others find that their creative juices begin to flow around 9:00 or 10:00 P.M. Writing will be easier if you schedule it during your natural period of creativity.

Use your rough draft as your prewriting. Because you think in terms of the whole, you may find it easier to do a rough draft than to prewrite. Consider your rough draft a form of prewriting, to be extensively revised before you turn it in.

Give your brain an assignment. When you have writing to do, let your right brain work on it while you are doing other things. At the beginning of the day, for instance, look over the assignment for a few minutes. Then come back to it in the evening and reap the benefits of having worked on the topic subconsciously. Or think about your topic before you go to sleep at night and write in the morning. This technique can work not only in prewriting but also in revising.

Realize that doing the grunt work is a necessary evil. Right-brained people are less likely to put in the time it takes to master the basics because doing so may be tedious and boring to them. They are also less likely to plan. But even the most creative people need self-discipline. It's a hard lesson to learn, but mastering the basics is essential to creative work. Singers spend endless time on breath control and scales. Artists learn anatomy and basic drawing. It is those efforts that set them free to do their best work. The payoff in mastering the basics is that once you learn them, you can forget about them. They will be second nature. The same goes for planning. Once you have made a plan, you are free to do the creative work. Doing the grunt work now always pays off in more freedom later.

Make a commitment to writing. Many professional writers are right-brained and face the same resistance that you do. Invariably, they say that the only way they can maintain the extended effort it takes to write books, plays, or novels is to have a routine and to write every day.

Review of the Paragraph

2 Identify the functions of a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a summary sentence. This text guides you step by step through the process of writing an essay. Before you begin essay writing, take the time to briefly review the single-paragraph composition.

A paragraph has a topic sentence that gives it direction and lets the reader know where the paragraph is headed. It has strong support for the topic sentence in the form of details and examples, all of which contribute to paragraph unity by supporting the topic sentence. Each sentence flows smoothly into the next, providing coherence. Often, the paragraph ends with a summary sentence that restates the topic sentence and brings the paragraph to a strong close.

The Topic Sentence

A topic sentence does two things. First, it presents the **general topic** of the paragraph. Then it makes a **specific point** about that topic.

Example Topic Sentences

topic specific point about the topic Balancing school and family life can be difficult.

topic specific point about the topic My sense of humor often gets me in trouble.

The Supporting Sentences

A topic sentence provides direction—the road map for a paragraph—but supporting sentences supply the scenery. While topic sentences are broad and general, large enough to encompass the entire paragraph, supporting sentences are specific, giving details and examples.

The Summary Sentence

A summary sentence ends the paragraph. Sometimes it sums up the points made in the paragraph, sometimes it restates the topic sentence, but it always brings the paragraph to a graceful and definite close.

A Model Paragraph

People-Watching at the Convenience Store Title, centered My part-time job as a convenience store clerk allows Topic sentence me to observe a fascinating variety of people. If I work the morning shift, my customers are mostly neatly dressed First supporting point office workers rushing to work. They stop to buy gas for their morning commutes or to grab cups of coffee on the way to the office. They dash up to the register in a cloud of aftershave or perfume, pay for their purchases, and quickly leave. In the early afternoon, the store fills with children Second supporting who attend a nearby elementary school. They flock point into the store in giggling groups and head straight for the candy aisle. The children take their time choosing fruit-flavored bubble gum, sour candies, and chocolate bars. They bring their purchases and their money to the register, then noisily flock out again, happy to be out of school for the day. If I work the late afternoon shift, I see laborers, grimy and exhausted, buying single cans Third supporting point of beer or lottery tickets. Their eyes are tired, yet most of them offer smiles or make jokes as they count out crumpled dollar bills with callused hands. With such a wide variety of customers, my job at the convenience store Summary is never dull. sentence



PARAGRAPH 1 Writing and You

Write a paragraph describing your attitudes toward writing. Use the following steps.

Prewrite: Jot down a few of the words that come to mind when you think of writing. Think of any significant experiences you have had that have shaped your attitude toward writing. Consider your writing habits. Are you organized? Do you procrastinate?

Plan: Look over your prewriting. Try to sum up your attitude toward writing in a single word or phrase, and then construct an opening sentence for your paragraph using that word or phrase. Use one of the following sentences, filling in the blank with your word or phrase, or construct your own sentence.

 My attitude toward writing is 			
---	--	--	--

- When I think about writing, I feel ______.
- My feelings about writing have always been _____ ones.

Once you have constructed an opening sentence, decide how to organize your paragraph. A couple of possibilities are listed here.

- **1.** Take a narrative approach, describing the influences that have shaped your writing. Use chronological (time) order.
- **2.** Take a step-by-step approach, describing what you do and how you feel as you go through a writing assignment.

Finally, complete the planning stage by making an outline that briefly lists the points you plan to make in support of your opening sentence.

Draft: Write out a rough draft of your paragraph. Focus on expressing your ideas rather than on grammar and punctuation.

Revise: Read over your rough draft. Have you left out anything important? Is each idea clearly expressed? Does the paragraph flow smoothly? Is the sequence of ideas logical and effective? If possible, ask a classmate to look over your rough draft with the same questions in mind. Then revise your paragraph, incorporating any necessary changes.

Proofread: Check your paragraph for mistakes in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Look at each sentence individually. Then proofread once more. You have now completed all the steps in the writing process.

PARAGRAPH 2 Reasons for Attending College

People go to college for many reasons. Some attend college to fulfill lifelong goals, others to escape dead-end jobs, still others to fulfill their families' expectations. What has brought you to college?

Write a paragraph discussing your reasons for attending college, using the following steps.

Prewrite: Take a sheet of paper and begin with the words, "When I...." Write for five or ten minutes without stopping, then look to see what you have. Does your prewriting focus more on the past (When I was a child, I used to line up my dolls and pretend they were students...) or on the future (When I receive my nursing degree, I will be able to fulfill many of my dreams ...)? Seeing whether your focus is on the past or on the future will help you to decide on the direction your paragraph should take.

Plan: Look over your prewriting and underline the most important words and ideas. Then construct an opening sentence that states the central idea you want to express in your paragraph. Some typical opening sentences follow.

- All of my reasons for attending college are rooted in the past.
- Attending college is one way I can ensure a brighter future for my children.
- Attending college will help me realize my dream of becoming a nurse.
- For me, attending college is a way out of a dead-end job.

Once you have constructed an opening sentence, decide how to organize your paragraph. A couple of possibilities are listed here.

- 1. Take a historical approach, describing the influences that shaped your decision to attend college. Use chronological (time) order.
- 2. Take a point-by-point approach, listing your reasons one by one.

Finally, complete the planning stage by making an outline that briefly lists the points you plan to make in support of your opening sentence.

Draft: Write out a rough draft of your paragraph. Focus on expressing your ideas rather than on grammar and punctuation.

Revise: Read over your rough draft. Have you left out anything important? Is each idea clearly expressed? Does the paragraph flow smoothly? Is the sequence of ideas logical and effective? If possible, ask a classmate to look over your rough draft with the same questions in mind. Then revise your paragraph, incorporating any necessary changes.

Proofread: Check your paragraph for mistakes in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Look at each sentence individually. Then proofread once more. You have now completed all the steps in the writing process.

Learning Objectives Review



LO1 Use a five-step writing process.

What are the five steps in the writing process? (See pp. 2–16.)

The five steps in the writing process are prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and proofreading.



LO2 Identify the functions of a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a summary sentence.

What purposes do a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a summary sentence each serve? (See pp. 17–18.)

A **topic sentence** presents the general topic and makes a specific point about the topic.

Supporting sentences provide details and examples that support the topic sentence.

A **summary sentence** sums up and brings the paragraph to a graceful and definite close.

CHAPTER 2

Preparing to Write



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn how to

- Identify the advantages of prewriting.
- Use various prewriting strategies.

Dream CONSIDER Play
Reflect 7hink
Invent Imagine Discover

Prewriting is the first step in the writing process. It is the act of gathering your thoughts on a topic. Prewriting begins the moment you receive an assignment. Immediately, a part of your mind begins to tap your knowledge and creative power. Follow your mind and enjoy the process of bringing your ideas to light. If you need a jump-start, the prewriting methods in this chapter can help you collect your thoughts on a topic and get them on paper.





Writers are often asked where they get ideas for their books, poems, and stories. J. K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series, has said that Harry Potter and his story came to her during a four-hour train delay. She spent the four hours thinking about the story, and afterward made extensive notes to flesh out the characters and the books. Eudora Welty got her ideas during long car trips to visit her mother in a nursing home, and Agatha Christie thought up plots for her mysteries while in the bathtub. It is no accident that writers get ideas during periods of mental downtime. Mental downtime is hard to get in modern society. Cell phones are our constant companions, complete with games to play if we are not texting or talk-

ing. Televisions entertain us while we wait in doctors' offices, peruse menus in restaurants, or wait for the oil to be changed in our cars.

If you find it hard to generate ideas, the methods in this chapter will help you tap into your imagination so that you can get your ideas on paper. In addition, try giving your brain a little downtime as you take a walk, go for a swim, watch a sunset, or enjoy a long hot shower.

Reflect on It

Whether you are taking a class or pursuing a career, you need ideas. Think about how you best generate ideas. Is your mind most open to new ideas when you are talking with others or when you are alone? Do you need to "sleep on it" to get good ideas, or do they come to you quickly? Think about a time when you solved a problem with a creative idea. How did you come up with it?

Why Prewrite?

 Identify the advantages of prewriting.

It's tempting to skip prewriting. After all, why take the time to prewrite when you can just sit down and start writing? The answer is that taking fifteen or twenty minutes to prewrite is more efficient than not prewriting. Prewriting is worth your time for several reasons.

- *Prewriting opens a doorway to your thoughts.* Your mind does not offer instant access to its content. Bits of memory and stored knowledge reveal themselves gradually, one by one. Prewriting allows your mind time to reveal its knowledge on the subject.
- Prewriting helps prevent writer's block. Prewriting can never be wrong, so the process of prewriting provides a certain immunity to writer's block,

the paralysis that comes from feeling that every word must be perfect and every sentence correct.

- *Prewriting builds confidence*. By the time you finish prewriting, you will probably find that you have more to say about your subject than you imagined. Therefore, you will write more strongly and confidently.
- *Prewriting sparks creativity.* When you are not worried about whether your ideas are right or wrong, you are more likely to think creatively and let your thoughts flow freely.
- *Prewriting prevents "fizzle in the middle."* It's a horrible feeling to get to the middle of your essay and realize you have nothing more to say on your topic. Writers who prewrite and plan seldom have that problem.

Prewriting Methods

Use various prewriting strategies.

The aim of all **prewriting methods** is the same: to get ideas on paper. At this point in the writing process, it is not the quality of ideas that counts, but the quantity.

When you are ready to prewrite, sit at the computer or in a comfortable spot with pen and paper. Relax your mind and body, and remind yourself that prewriting is a playful exercise of imagination and that it is okay to write down anything that comes to mind. As for the part of your mind that automatically jumps in to criticize what you think and say, give it some time off. Your purpose in prewriting is to put down every thought on your topic, no matter how ridiculous it seems. Later, you can discard what is not usable. But while you are prewriting, there is no good or bad, no right or wrong.

Some of the methods may feel awkward at first, but try them all. One will be right for you.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming, a listing technique, is one of the easiest prewriting techniques. To brainstorm, take a few minutes to list whatever comes to mind on your topic, no matter how strange it seems. Your purpose is not to censor or come up with the "right" items for your list, but to generate ideas.

Example of Brainstorming

Here's how one writer, Tamika, approached a brainstorming exercise on clothing:

stores fashion models name brands my red dress slick magazines
anorexia
proms
expensive
department stores
occasions
job interviews
uniforms
professional dress

designer labels
even children are fashionconscious
secondhand stores
my favorites—old jeans and
T-shirts
"Clothes make the man"
(or woman)

When Tamika looked over her prewriting, she decided that the part of it that most interested her was the quotation "Clothes make the man." She wasn't quite sure which side she was on, so she did a two-sided brainstorming. Though Tamika used brainstorming, she could have chosen any form of prewriting to explore both sides of the issue. The result of her brainstorming follows.

Example of Two-Sided Brainstorming

Clothes make the man (or woman).

Agree

People judge us by the outside
Clothing tells people about us
Tells our economic status
Sometimes reveals professional
status
Shows our sense of style
Different dress for different
ages
Helps us express personality
Tells how much we care about
appearance
It's all people have to go on until
they know us

Disagree

It's what's inside that counts
Clothing can hide the truth
People who can't look beyond clothing are shallow

When she looked at her brainstorming, Tamika was surprised to find that her evidence favored the "agree" side of the issue. "I thought I looked beyond superficial things like clothes," she said, "but I really have more evidence to support the statement than to disagree with it."

Like Tamika, you may find that willingness to explore both sides of an issue leads you in an unexpected direction.

EXERCISE 2-1

BRAINSTORMING

Do a two-sided brainstorming on one of the following narrowed topics. When you are through, see which side has more supporting statements. Are you surprised, as Tamika was in her two-sided brainstorming?

- 1. Using credit cards is dangerous to a person's financial health.
- **2.** Good manners are still necessary in the modern world.
- **3.** Public video surveillance is a protection rather than a violation of citizens' privacy.
- **4.** If two adults are in love, large differences in their ages do not matter.

Freewriting

Freewriting is nonstop writing on a topic for a set period of time. Your flow of words never ceases; your pen never stops moving. If you have nothing to say, repeat your last thought again and again until a new thought replaces it. Do not worry about spelling, about clarity, or about whether your thoughts are logically connected. Just write.

Example of Freewriting

Tavin's freewriting on "sports" draws on his own experience.

I am supposed to do a freewriting on something I enjoy. I really enjoy soccer. I have played since I was a kid. I hope to play on the college level eventually, but for now, my mom wants me here at a school close to home where she can keep a close eye on me and make sure I am studying.

But back to soccer. When I play soccer, I have to know where the ball is at all times. I have to read body language and know which players will try to fake me out. It's funny, I am not the world's most focused human being (which is one reason my mom wants me at home for my first year), but when it comes to soccer, I just laser in on it. If I don't focus, I make mistakes. And if I do make a mistake, I have to put it behind me and not let it affect my play.

It's funny how much I have learned in soccer. I have learned to overcome mistakes quickly and refocus. I have learned that if the game is not going well and my confidence wavers, I can try for an easy play or just a quick, easy pass,

and all of a sudden I remember, "Hey, I am good at this. I know how to do this." I have also learned to keep my patience even if a referee makes a bad call against me or my team. If I argue with a referee, I don't just hurt myself, I let my whole team down. I have learned to analyze my game and put in extra practice on the things I am not as good at. That's it. I will write about what soccer has taught me and how those things might apply to my actual life. My professor just called time, but I have my topic.

Exercise 2-2

FREEWRITING

Freewrite on one of the following topics; then see if you have a focus for a possible essay.

1. dogs

- 3. music
- 2. friendship
- **4.** food

Focused Freewriting

Focused freewriting helps you zoom in on a topic and bring ideas into closer focus. Rather than ranging outward in all directions, focused freewriting examines a narrow topic. Use focused freewriting when the assigned topic is a specific question or when you have narrowed your topic through previous prewriting. Focused freewriting is just like any other freewriting, but with a narrower range.

Example of Focused Freewriting

Here is how one writer, Eric, handled a focused freewriting on the question "What rules of etiquette are important today?"

Some people today totally ignore manners, as if they are not important. Some of the old rules are gone but new ones replace them. Just like that old guy in the health club who said he never opened doors for women. He seemed to think that he didn't have to be polite anymore. That's wrong. Manners are just basic consideration for other people. Maybe there was a time when it was which fork to use, that kind of thing, but now that the world is so crowded, that stuff matters less and respecting people's space matters more. New rules come up for new situations, too. There are rules for

computers and email and rules for talking on the phone and texting. All the old stereotypes are out and manners are just practical ways of getting along in the world.

EXERCISE 2-3 FOCUSED FREEWRITING

Do a focused freewriting on one of the following topics.

- 1. What kinds of risks are good to take?
- **2.** Why are people superstitious?
- 3. What kinds of music do you enjoy?
- 4. Is family more or less important than it was in your grandparents' day?

Invisible Writing: A Computer Technique

Invisible writing is a freewriting technique especially for writing on a computer. Turn on your computer and, once you have a blank screen in front of you, type the words "Invisible Writing" at the top of the page. Then turn your monitor off or adjust the contrast until the words are no longer visible and your screen is completely dark.

Freewrite for five or ten minutes. It is especially important not to worry about spelling errors. With this method, you can hardly avoid them. At first, you may feel strange, even anxious, pouring your words onto the dark computer screen. Soon, though, your thoughts and fingers will fly.

EXERCISE 2-4 INVISIBLE WRITING

If you have access to a computer, do an invisible writing on one of the following topics. Then see if you have a focus for an essay.

- **1.** transportation
- 3. newspapers
- 2. competition
- **4.** littering

Clustering

Clustering is a technique designed to boost your creativity by stimulating both hemispheres, or halves, of your brain. Some scientists believe that the left brain performs logical tasks that move in 1-2-3 order. When you count to ten, write a sentence, or make an outline, you are using your left hemisphere. Your right hemisphere specializes in tasks involving imagery or intuition. When you look at a painting or sculpture, your right brain goes to work. Since clustering involves both listing (a left-brain task) and drawing (a right-brain task), it allows you to tap both your logical side and your creative side.

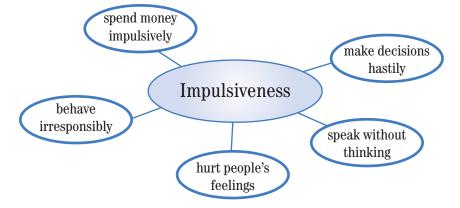
To cluster, begin with a circled word—your topic. From there, "map out" associations. Some people branch out ideas from the central word like quills on a porcupine. Others group ideas when they cluster, with smaller clusters branching out from larger ones. This type of cluster resembles the diagram of a molecule in a chemistry textbook.

What your diagram looks like does not matter. In clustering, what matters is that you get your thoughts on paper using both images and words.

Look at the examples of clustering that follow.

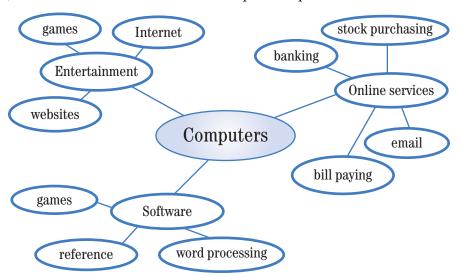
Example of a Porcupine Cluster

Here is Kelly's "porcupine" cluster on the topic "If you could change one aspect of your personality, what would it be?"



Example of a Molecule Cluster

Jamal's "molecule" cluster is on the topic "computers."



EXERCISE 2-5

CLUSTERING

Do a cluster diagram on one of the following topics.

1. fitness

3. automobiles

2. goal setting

4. bad habits

Outlining

Outlining is often the last step in the prewriting process. Once you have used one or more of the other prewriting methods, organizing your thoughts into outline form takes you one step further in the writing process. Forget about the formal outline with its array of Roman numerals, ABCs, and 1-2-3s. A short essay calls for a short outline. Your outline may be just a few words jotted on a page, or it may include a thesis statement, topic sentences, and a brief listing of support for each topic sentence. Following are two sample outlines on the same topic.

Outline 1

Texting Versus Calling

1. Speed

Calling is slow.

engage in polite chitchat

deliver message

exchange polite goodbyes

takes longer

Texting is faster.

deliver main point concisely

takes just a few seconds

2. Privacy

Calling when others are around offers no privacy.

expression is limited

must speak quietly

must watch language

must restrain endearments and sweet talk

Texting ensures freedom of expression.

can "yell" in all caps

can use curse words

can send kisses via emoji

3. Annoyance factor

Calling annoys others around me.
disrupts their concentration
attracts annoyed glances
signs often forbid cell phone use
Texting does not annoy anyone.
quiet
attracts no attention

Outline 2

Thesis:

Texting is faster, more private, and less annoying than making a phone call.

Topic Sentence 1:

Sending a text takes far less time than making a phone call.

Topic Sentence 2:

A text is private, but a phone call can be easily overheard.

Topic Sentence 3:

Texts, unlike phone calls, do not have the potential to annoy anyone nearby.

Exercise 2-6

OUTLINING

Choose one of your practice prewritings and make an outline for a paragraph or essay.

Journal Writing

The word "journal" comes from *jour*, the French word for "day." **Journal writings**, then, are "daily writings." Journals are usually composed of informal writings on a variety of subjects. A journal allows you to experiment with the techniques you are learning in your writing class. In a journal, the only form of writing you should avoid is "diary mode." An "I-got-up-I-fed-the-dog-I-went-to-school" format makes for dull writing and even duller reading. Write about issues that matter to you. Interpret your dreams. Describe your grandfather's tool shed. Work toward detailed writing that follows a logical pattern.

Whether you receive credit for it in class or not, make journal writing a habit. Practice is the only thing that is guaranteed to make you a better

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writer. Courses and texts are of limited value without time spent alone with a computer or pen and paper. If you think, "It won't matter because I'll never be a good writer," ask yourself this: How good a driver would you be if the only driving you had done was in a driver's education course? You *can* be a better writer. Daily writing in your journal will start you on your way.

Exercise 2-7

JOURNAL WRITING

Write a journal entry on one or more of the following topics.

- 1. What are some reasons for keeping a journal or diary?
- 2. What are the characteristics of a good student?
- 3. Discuss a person who has been a mentor or a role model to you.
- **4.** A poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar begins, "We wear the mask / That grins and lies . . ." Discuss some of the masks that you wear.
- 5. Should every able citizen of the United States be required to do some sort of paid public service (not necessarily military service) for a set period?
- **6.** Why are some people unsuccessful in school or at work?
- 7. Is it necessary for you to own an automobile?
- 8. Do Americans spend too much time watching television?
- 9. Is year-round school a good idea?
- **10.** If you could know any one thing about your future, what would you want to know?
- **11.** Have you ever had a dream that was so vivid that it seemed real? Describe it.
- 12. If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you choose to live?
- **13.** If you could visit any historical period, which one would you choose to visit?
- **14.** Although responsibilities are sometimes burdens, they also tell us who we are. Which of your responsibilities is most important to you?
- **15.** Is it better to have a determined, forceful, type A personality or a relaxed, easygoing type B personality?



PROGRESSIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENT

How the Progressive Writing Assignment Works

One of the following topics will serve as the basis for your first essay. In this chapter, you complete **prewriting** for the essay. Throughout the next five chapters, each progressive assignment takes you a step further toward a completed essay. By the time you finish the assignment at the end of Chapter 7, you will have completed all the steps in the writing process and will have a finished essay.

Prewriting

In this chapter, your progressive assignment is a prewriting assignment. Once you have completed your prewriting, you should have more than enough material and ideas to develop into an essay. If not, you may have limited yourself without realizing it. If you focus on having enough material for three body paragraphs, you may come up with only three ideas. Let go of any preconceived notions about how much material you need, and turn off the inner censor that says your ideas are not good enough. When you have more ideas than you need, think about which ideas you want to focus on in your essay. Choose one of the topics below and follow the instructions.

Topic 1: Create and discuss three or four sensible social media rules.

TIPS FOR PREWRITING

Use any of the methods outlined in this chapter to prewrite on the topic "Create and discuss three or four sensible social media rules." As you prewrite, consider all the factors that people control, such as what they post, who is allowed to see their posts, and whose posts they follow. What differences might these things make? Might social media posts affect whether a person is hired or offered a scholarship, for example? Might it be dangerous to allow strangers to see social media posts? Could following an ex delay getting over the relationship and moving on? Consider these and other ideas as you prewrite.

WHAT Now?

After you have completed your prewriting, devise the rules that you want to focus on in your essay. If you do not have enough material to pick and choose, prewrite a little more.

Topic 2: Discuss your short-term goals, long-term goals, or both.

TIPS FOR PREWRITING

Use any of the methods outlined in this chapter to prewrite on the topic "Discuss your short-term goals, long-term goals, or both." As you prewrite, consider all the factors that surround those goals. What are the goals? Are they new goals or lifelong ambitions? Is goal setting easy for you because you have practiced it all your

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life, or is it difficult because you have not been a goal-oriented person? What is the nature of your goals? Are they academic goals, career goals, physical goals, spiritual goals, or family goals? How do you plan to reach them? How are they related to one another? How will they change your life?

WHAT Now?

After you have completed your prewriting, decide which goals you want to focus on. Recall that you can discuss long-term goals, short-term goals, or both. If you do not have enough material to pick and choose, prewrite a little more.

Topic 3: Discuss your personal values and the people who have influenced them.

TIPS FOR PREWRITING

Use any of the methods outlined in this chapter to prewrite on your values—your ideas about what is important and how you should conduct yourself. Think about your core values and beliefs. Your values shape your attitudes toward work, money, family, and relationships, among other things. For example, in the area of work, some people define themselves through their work, while others see work as simply an activity that funds their *real* lives. Some people believe that hard work speaks for itself, while others believe that networking is necessary for success. Often, these values are learned from parents, grandparents, friends, and mentors. As you prewrite, think not only about your values but about the people who modeled them for you. Be as specific as possible.

WHAT Now?

After you have completed your prewriting, look it over and decide which values and role models you want to write about. Keep in mind that the best ideas for writing often have a story attached to them. The sweaty summer spent earning your own money may have taught you the pleasure of self-sufficiency; the look of disappointment on your mother's face when you broke a promise may have taught you the value of keeping your word. Tell those stories.

Topic 4: Discuss some effective methods of coping with stress.

TIPS FOR PREWRITING

Everyone experiences stress from many sources, such as overwork, family problems, pressure to excel in school, or even boredom. In this essay, you will write about your ways of coping with stress. Begin by brainstorming or freewriting about some sources of stress. Then explore coping strategies. Think in detail about those methods and about how well they work.

WHAT Now?

After you have completed your prewriting, decide which coping strategies you want to focus on in your essay. If you do not have enough material to pick and choose, prewrite a little more.