

Suggested Steps for the Writing Process

* *Note: the writing process can look many different ways, but the point is that it is a PROCESS. Writing needs to be clear, effective, purposeful. That is NOT something that just happens. If can't be bothered to reread and revise, no one else wants to read it either. Even the best of first drafts needs to be revised. Please know, it is painfully obvious when a paper has been turned in in its first draft form.*

* Before going any further, SAVE your word document, and save it OFTEN. Hitting "Ctrl S" o save should be an unconscious key stroke for you as you type.

1. Look at the topic – make sure you know what is being asked of you
2. Depending on how you're feeling about the topic you may do A and B in reverse
 - A.) Draft a working thesis (your thesis may be revised / altered in the process of writing)
 - A thesis needs to have an assertion or 'claim' that can be argued for and against
 - A thesis cannot be self-evident, neither can it be vague and generic
 - B.) Brainstorm your ideas (this can be in a list, a cloud/web of words, a quick write, a conversation with someone else while taking notes, T-chart, Venn Diagram, etc. There is no *one* or *right* way to brainstorm. You may use multiple different forms, depending on your needs)
3. Collect evidence (Concrete Details (CDs)) / revisit revise thesis if necessary
4. Outline ideas – determine the most logical sequencing of your arguments.
 - Generally essays should follow a logical train of thought from point A, to B, to C, etc. The point of an essay is to communicate an idea or argument – if you're not clear in your purpose and organization you will not be successful in communicating anything.
 - Papers need to move *FORWARD* – be very conscious of how one idea or argument connects to / relates to / affects / influences the others. The sequence in which you structure your ideas needs to be intentional and purposeful.
 - (In other words: Because something was the first idea you thought of while brainstorming is NOT enough of a reason for it to be your first paragraph. If you can't explain why one idea precedes or follows another in the service of your thesis, you need to go back and revisit.)
5. Draft your paper in a "shaping sheet" or the equivalent of.
 - If writing in a shaping sheet seems formulaic / unnatural / stunting, try writing out the paper first without it, then go back and identify (highlighting with multiple colors (either on paper or on the computer) works well for this step) the different sentences you've written: Assertions (thesis / topic sentences / body points); concrete details; commentary, and plug them in. Some of what you have written will have to be cut or condensed, and more sentences will have to be written to fill in what you have skipped.
6. Revise
 - You need to be ruthless here. Just because you wrote it in your first draft does not mean it should make it into your final draft. Writing is **REWRITING**.
 - If it does not directly prove your thesis, it does NOT belong in the paper. If you run into this problem, you either need to cut and rewrite, or revise your thesis. (Be careful when revising your thesis that you are still addressing the prompt).
 - Be sure that you are being explicit and your commentary is elaborating your ideas and connecting them to the thesis – do not leave your readers to connect the dots of your argument for you. It is your job to be clear.
 - Be careful not to claim things or omit things out of convenience. Your writing needs to be in service of the truth and accuracy.
 - Topic sentences must contain arguments or 'claims' – they cannot be mere statements of facts
 - Topic sentences must effectively transition from one idea to another (conclusion sentences serve as a check point that everything in the paragraph is relevant to the topic sentence (and thesis), and may also transition to the next paragraph)
 - Commentary should avoid beginning with "this shows that" and should NEVER summarize or restate the CD – it has to analyze it and say something *about* it in relation to your assertions and claims in BPs, Topic Sentences, and Thesis
 - Every concrete detail (whether a quotation, summary or paraphrase) MUST be CITED
 - A conclusion paragraph is more than just repeating what you've already said – this is where you address the "SO WHAT?" question: You've written all this, *so what?* What is the greater significance or implication of this?
7. Share

Have somebody else (most often an adult) read it. This person must read it critically – do you successfully make your point? Read it yourself OUT LOUD. Sometimes when we read our own work we see what we *meant* instead of what we actually wrote; it is easier to catch these errors when hearing the paper.
8. Format in MLA. Double check your in-text citations and your Works Cited page. Keep a saved copy for your files for the next four years. Post to turnitin.com