

THE WRITING PROCESS

A step by step guide to the process of writing

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What Does Writing Look Like?

Writing comes in all shapes, sizes, and styles. Every style of writing, whether it is creative, journalistic, scientific, or analytical has a specific purpose and therefore specific guidelines that make that writing successful.

It is Important to understand different styles of writing and their requirements. Pay close attention to what your syllabus or publisher requires. If you are unfamiliar with a style or standards, you can find resources for most styles on [Purdue Owl](#) or come visit us in the [Rollins Tutoring and Writing Center](#)!

How is Writing Different for Different People?

Writing is different for everyone. Some like to craft detailed outlines, others like to write out their ideas stream-of-consciousness style as they brainstorm. However, getting from that beginning point to a clear, cohesive end-product is important for all writers. **Communicate clearly what you want your reader to learn.**

Pitfalls: Reader-Based vs Writer-Based

One of the places where many writers get stuck is during a stream-of-consciousness style writing session. Often writers think only about getting ideas on paper. This is a fine **first draft strategy**. However, this is **writer-focused** work. This means it will not be easily understood by a reader.

For example, when drafting, we begin with a knowledge base. We are the experts, and we know about the topic. However, when we write this way, it can be hard for others to understand. In essence, this first draft is written for an audience of **one: The writer**. However, for writing to be successful, the writer must consider that the audience of **readers** need to be taught about the topic from scratch.

The goal is to **write for readers who have beginner-level knowledge**, who may have never seen your material before, rather than to write from an expert (yourself) to another expert.

How do I get Started?

Getting started is one of the hardest parts for many writers. Here are some strategies to get the work-flow going. Remember writing is different for each person. These are not required steps, but ways to help you make your work easier!

Interest and Ideas

One of the best ways to decide on a topic or purpose for a paper is to do some research. You may already know what you have to write based on an assignment, or you may have a topic of interest already in mind. However, getting the writing from idea to paper is sometimes difficult.

- Use the **peer-reviewed research** available to you on sites like **Google Scholar** or the **Olin Library** to learn more about your topic.
- Keep track of what you learn, save links, and keep a list of quotes and page numbers in your document. This way, if you want to use anything you learned, you have easy access to come back to it.

Outlining

Not every writer outlines, and that's okay! But, if you find organization is a struggle when you get into your writing, outlining may help you at the outset. If you have taken notes from your readings and research, an outline will be a great way to categorize that information. Move your quotes around into easy-to-understand categories that will make sense to your reader.

The goal with the beginning phase is to:

1. Get ideas from research in your area. **Know what other people are saying** about your topic.
2. Have notes written down to help you get past the blank page.
3. Begin organizing your ideas by **topic**.
4. Have some resources and quotes already picked out.

Starting a Draft:

Crafting a clear and concise introduction is a great step one. See our [Introduction Worksheet](#) for more information.

The second step is to begin writing. You can either: **Begin adding your own writing to your outline** with the resources and research that you found, or **begin writing out your ideas stream-of-consciousness-style**. With either method, use your own ideas to tie together the quotes, ideas, and notes that you found. Ensure that you have **proper citations** for quotes and paraphrasing.

It is important with either method to make sure that you keep your reader in mind. Tie multiple resources together. Make sure that your evidence helps you teach a beginner about your topic. However, this draft does not need to be perfect.

Cleaning up: Moving toward a Final Draft

Once you've finished a first draft, **put it down for a few hours or days**. Do something else, or relax for a while. Then, come back to the project. This allows you to:

- Come back to the work with a fresh perspective.
- To catch errors or points of confusion if you haven't been staring at the same work for hours at a time.
- Have mental space to come up with new ideas.
- Have the energy to work on Revising and Editing!

Revising

Think about big picture and logical flow. Do the ideas make sense together in that order? Do you need to clarify how we get from one idea to the other? Is it clear how all of the ideas are connected to the thesis? A properly revised reader-focused paper will make sure that the big picture and goal of the writing is completely clear to the reader. **You may need to revise a paper more than once.**

Editing

This is where you get into the tiny details. Clean up grammar, punctuation, word order, transitions, and spelling. It is best if you only do this at the end of your revisions, otherwise you're just making more work for yourself.

Remember, revising and editing are different. For further information on **revising and editing** see the [Editing and Revising](#) resource.

Final Draft and Submission

For your final draft and submission, it is really important to review all of your work. Some strategies to make sure that you don't miss anything key in the final draft are:

- Complete a final read through – reading out loud can be a great way to catch last minute typos and continuity problems.
- Utilize outside resources like _____ to help you catch minimum errors.
*Note! This is not a replacement for your own editing skills!
- Bring your final draft to the **Tutoring and Writing Center** for a final content review before submission.

Remember, we are always here to help you with the writing process. There are many different kinds of writing, and many different methods to complete it. Take the time to find what works for you, and always feel free to come see us if you have questions.



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