

The Writing Process

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High School and Pre-College Prep

Special points of interest:

- Considering the process of writing
- Considering purpose and audience
- Exploring, planning, drafting, and revising
- Editing and Proofreading
- Thinking critically about your own writing

Considering the Process of Writing

As a sophomore, junior, or senior in high school or a freshman in college; you will undoubtedly discover the importance of writing. Many people enter the professional world or into business backgrounds and realize that writing is a crucial factor in effective communication.

In fact, research has shown that writing encourages and enhances certain types of learning and complex thinking skills. Evaluating this research would be extremely difficult without the use of the writing process technique.

Every person has the ability to write. It is an essential and powerful way of discovering what you know and how to communicate that knowledge to others.

It is not possible for any student to excel in high school or college without writing.

Writers are people who create, explore observations, and write their ideas on paper. They are careful and selective with the written words that their readers will respond to.

To become a successful writer, however, it helps to have a good understanding of the writing process and how it works and then to develop a method that is specific to your own style.

You would begin by taking small steps to get started; as these steps will change and alter themselves often while you are writing. First, have an idea, then a plan; then an introduction, body, and conclusion. These steps are often completed simultaneously, in a kind of spiraling sequence that include: exploring, drafting and revising.

It is useful to think of the writing process as a series of activities: considering purpose and audience, during which the writer determines the purpose of the writing and its intended outcome and whom it will be addressed; exploring, planning and drafting, during which the writer gathers information, develops a thesis and organizes the information in a chronological format for drafting; revising, editing and proofreading, during which the writer works with the draft to improve it and polishes it for its final

form. As some writers will discover this process can be done out of order and is rarely done in sequence. You will often move back and forth throughout the process.

Brief Look at the process:

- Considering the assignment
- Exploring the topic
- Thinking about the audience
- Gathering more information
- Planning, drafting, and revising
- Drafting other sections, revising again and planning a little more
- Editing and proofreading until the writing is complete.

Remember, every person has the ability to write. You have been doing all of these techniques from the moment you learned to recognize your name through hearing, writing it down, and then reading the word and knowing that it (the name) belonged to you.

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Considering purpose and audience

In most of your work, the writing process begins with an assignment for a course.

Whether the topic is given by the instructor or left solely up to you, you should think carefully about the assignment itself. Making sure you understand what it is asking you to do.

As you think about the assign-

ment, you will want to decide what the major purpose of the writing is and what you hope to achieve with its completion.

Consider, that beyond presenting yourself well and demonstrating your unique writing skills that you want your writing to accomplish a goal.

Ask yourself they following:

- Is the writing to persuade your reader to take a certain action; or
- To explain some event to them; or
- To entertain

Think carefully about your audience and how you will reach the mind of the reader.

Prewriting & Exploring A Topic

Any writing worth reading usually starts with a puzzling question or idea that calls for some exploration (thinking about what you already know or want to know), and coming up with a working and plausible solution through the gathering of information.

Depending on the writing task, exploring can last a few minutes or several months. If assigned a one-page essay in a class about your family, you would probably jot down a few ideas and begin writing the paper quickly, this is because you know the subject well.

However, if asked to write a twenty page research paper on the relationship of the U.S. Government with France, you will need time to carefully plan your thesis statement, and to gather information by researching the topic thoroughly.

The most immediate way to begin exploring a topic is to talk it over with others. Seek out those who know about your topic, listening carefully and taking notes.

Another excellent way to talk to others is to have a brainstorming session; where everyone tosses out their ideas in order to discover new ways to approach the topic. You can also, brainstorm on your own with just a pen, pencil and a piece of paper. Take a look at the following methods:

- For five or ten minutes jot down a list of key words or phrases that come to mind about your topic.
- Free write for ten minutes in full sentence structure anything that

comes to mind about the topic, don't stop! Just write down everything you think of.

- Looping - look back at what you have written in the freewriting. Find the strongest thought, let it be the start of your next freewriting for ten minutes. Keep this process going until you have discovered a clear angle on your topic and a clear path to writing your full length essay.
- Set aside a notebook to use as a writer's journal. It can serve as a record of your experiences, feelings, ideas, questions, and thoughts.

Don't worry about spelling or grammar. Write in it everyday inshaAllah



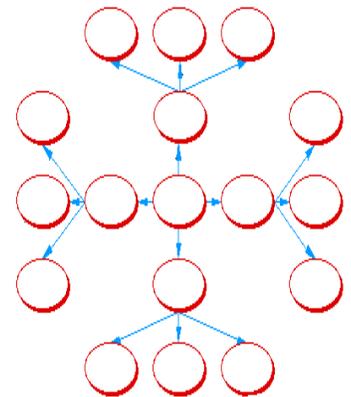
“talk to others to have a brainstorming session.”

“Some trails may reach a dead end, but that's ok “

Clustering

Clustering is a way of generating ideas using a visual scheme or chart. It is specifically useful for understanding the relationships among parts of a broad topic and for developing smaller ideas and subtopics.

- Write your topic in the center of a blank piece of paper and circle it.
- In a ring around your topic circle start writing down the main parts of the topic. Circle each one. Draw connecting lines from it to the topic.
- Think of any ideas, examples, facts, or other details relating to each main part. Write each of these down near the appropriate part. Circle it and draw a line connecting it to the part.
- Repeat the process until you have filled the paper with ideas on the topic. Some trails may reach a dead end, but that's ok considering you have many other ideas and trails to follow on the paper.



Asking Questions

There is a more formal and structured strategy for exploring your topic - which involves asking - and answering - questions. You can make up your own questions, these are just a few to help you get started.

Questions to describe

- What is it? What caused it? What is it like or unlike? What larger system is your topic a part of? And What do people say about it?

Questions to explain a topic

- Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Questions to Persuade

- What claim are you making? What good reasons support your claim? What underlying assumptions support the reasons for your claim? What backup evidence do you have or can you find to add further

support to your claim? What refutations of your claim can be made? In what ways is or should your claim be qualified?

What if? Questions

Asking “What If?” questions can give a writer many new and different creative ideas.

Example: What if the President of the United States came to visit me?





A writer who has organized information carefully and has completed all of the prewriting activities is one who already has a plan

Planning & Writing the First Draft

After gathering and exploring your ideas for writing, the next step in the process is arranging your ideas in an order that makes sense.

The ways you group your information will ultimately depend on your topic, purpose, and audience. Writers usually group information according to four simple principles:

- Chronological -used for narration because it presents events in the order in which they happen in time.
- Spatial - used for description because it presents objects according to location

- Importance -used for evaluation because it presents details from least important to the most important, or reverse.
- Logical - used for classification (comparison and contrast) because it groups related details together.

A writer who has organized information carefully and has completed all of the prewriting activities is one who already has a plan for a draft, a plan that should be written down.

- Use your prewriting plans as a guide
- Write freely. Focus on express-

ing your ideas clearly

- As you write, keep your mind open for new ideas.
- Don't worry about spelling and grammar errors. You can correct them later.

Try this exercise for your prewriting activities and writing your first draft:

Identify which method or methods of organization you would recommend for students who are writing on the following topic, and explain why.

Education to prevent the spread of AIDS

Rest for a day, then reread your draft.

Evaluating , Revising, and Editing

After giving yourself and your rough draft a break before revising, review the draft by rereading it carefully for meaning. Recall your purpose, and consider your audience again. Have you accomplished your goal?

1. The writing has a clearly stated main idea.
2. The main idea is supported with details.
3. The order of the ideas makes sense.
4. The connections between ideas and sentences are clear.

5. The writing is interesting. It grabs and holds the reader's attention.

effective writers look closely at the paragraphs, sentences and words in their writings.

You can begin revising your first draft using the following four techniques: adding, cutting, replacing, and reordering.

1. Add words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs
2. Take out repeated or unnecessary words or ideas

3. Replace weak or awkward words with more precise and vivid words.
4. Move words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs into a more logical order.

For self-evaluation:

1. Set aside your draft for a while before editing it..
2. Read your paper at least three times. Read to check for content, then read for organization. Finally read to check its style.

Ask a friend to evaluate your work, too.

“Read your draft aloud. Listen for awkward or unclear spots that need attention.”

“make your final draft as free from error as possible”



Proofreading and Publishing

As a writer, you need to make your final draft as free from error as possible. You can do this by taking time for one last, careful proofreading, which means reading to correct any typographical errors or other slips, such as inconsistencies in spelling and punctuation.

Read through the copy aloud, making sure that punctuation marks are used correctly and consistently, that all sentences are complete, and that no words are left out.

Then go through it again, this time reading backwards so that you can focus

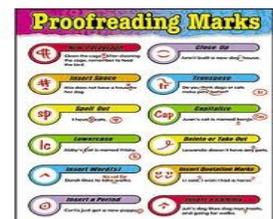
on each individual word and its spelling. This final proofreading aims to make your written product letter-perfect, and something you can be proud of.

Guidelines for Proofreading:

1. Is every sentence a complete sentence?
2. Are capitalization and punctuation correct throughout?
3. Are there errors in subject-verb agreement?
4. Are verb forms and verb tenses

correct?

5. Are adjective and adverb forms used correctly?
6. Are pronouns used correctly?
7. Is each word spelled correctly?



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The THM Sadaqa Group program is dedicated to the advancement of education for young women and adults from beginning to end. Our instructors are dedicated to assisting the participants of this program and their families in learning and implementing the skills provided to lead meaningful partnerships that encourage compassionate, nurturing, and cooperative relationships for personal, professional, and individual endeavors.

Muslim Women from all cultures in various communities may enroll for this course with the mindset of improving their individual goals as leaders in society and developing the skills to become better mothers, students of knowledge, lecturers, and renowned educators based upon the Standard Salafi Curriculum Guide (SSCG).

Resources for Information used:

1. The St. Martin's Handbook. Third Edition. New York by Andrea Lunsford and Robert Connors, 1995
2. English Workshop, Second Course by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1995



"Concentrate on asking questions that will get to the root of the matter at hand"

Thinking critically about your own writing

Critical thinking is a process by which we make sense of all the information around us. It is the crucial component of argument that helps us recognize, formulate, and examine the arguments that are important to us.

The following steps may help:

Questioning Stance:

Rather than accepting your own ideas as true or excepting what you read, see, and hear at face value, you should approach all ideas with a potentially critical eye.

Asking Questions:

Concentrate on asking questions that will get to the root of the matter at hand. Questions that will yield a path for the exploration of answers.

Examples of questions:

1. What is the writer's agenda?
2. Why does he or she hold these ideas or beliefs?
3. What condition may have influenced these ideas?
4. What does the writer want the reader to do and why?
5. What reasons does the writer offer to support their ideas? Are they good reasons?
6. What sources does the writer rely on? How reliable is the source? What agenda does the source have?
7. What objectives might be made to the argument?
8. What are the writer's unstated assumptions? Are they acceptable? Why or why not?

Getting necessary information:

Consider the need for more information on the topic and other perspectives before you accept or reject the argument.

Assessing Information:

All information has a perspective point of view and interpretation. Your job as a critical thinker is to identify the perspective and to assess the interpretation. Examining the source and asking pertinent questions about its context, will help you draw conclusions written by others.

Making and assessing your own arguments:

The ultimate goal of all critical thinking is to construct your own ideas and reach your own conclusions.