

Writing Strategies Workshop

The Five Basic Steps to the Writing Process

1. Brainstorming Ideas

- Put your ideas down on paper! Several ways to do this:
 - Create a List – used for ideas that may not be separated into categories
 - Cluster – ideas separated into categories
 - Jot Down Ideas – less organized than lists but with same purpose
 - Venn Diagrams – great for compare/contrast papers
 - Other – What is your preferred method of brainstorming?

2. Organizing and Outlining Thoughts

- Create a “working thesis.”
 - This should answer in one sentence the question your paper explores; it should summarize the main idea of your paper.
- Group similar ideas together
 - These will fuel your body paragraphs
- Write topic sentences for each group of ideas

3. Writing Body Paragraphs

- Look at each topic sentence you created and determine which of the nine rhetorical modes (types of paragraphs) should be used:
 - **Description:** Using the five senses to describe something.
 - **Narration:** Using stories/anecdotes to relate the topic to the reader.
 - **Process Analysis:** Analyzing how something works or explaining a process.
 - **Illustration and Example:** Giving examples to illustrate or prove something about the topic.
 - **Division and/or Classification:** Categorizing the topic into different groups or classifications.

3. Writing Body Paragraphs (Cont'd)

- **Compare and Contrast:** Showing similarities/differences between subjects and related topics.
- **Definition:** Clarifying a term or phenomenon through defining it.
- **Analyzing Cause and Effect:** Discussing the causes and effects of an event or phenomenon.
- **Analyzing Parts or Categories:** Dividing a subject into classifications for analysis.
- What type of essay you are writing determines which of the nine modes you will use. Any essay may use more than one of these modes.
- The modes give purpose to your essay and help you effectively make your point.

4. Writing the Introduction, Conclusion, and Title

- ❑ Continuously reread your thesis and make sure it is supported throughout your essay. Change it if necessary to ensure it is supported.
- ❑ Your introduction should introduce your topic, articulate background information on the subject, and end with your strong thesis.
- ❑ Your conclusion should restate your main argument (thesis), summarize your body paragraphs, and end with an overall significance or a call to action (depending on the type of essay).
- ❑ Your title should be interesting and relate to your subject; it can be witty (depending on the subject) and should draw the reader in.

Road Trip Analogy

- ❑ A well written essay is like a road trip with your friends.
- ❑ Your introduction is like the road map; it shows the reader where you will be going.
- ❑ Your thesis is the purpose of the trip.
- ❑ Your body paragraphs are the actual trip itself and what happens on the road.
- ❑ Your conclusion is the slideshow you have afterwards; it shows the reader briefly where you've been.

5. Proofreading/Editing and Revising

- Steps of editing:
 - “Global” editing – “Does my essay make sense?”
 - Go through and change the location of paragraphs/parts to ensure the paper makes logical sense and the reader can easily follow your argument.
 - Write transition statements to link paragraphs to each other.
 - Sentence-level editing:
 - Make sure you are using the correct grammar/punctuation and word choice.

Summary/Final thoughts

- ❑ With the five steps to writing, you are well on your way to writing a great paper.
- ❑ Don't get overwhelmed by the overall task of writing an essay; take each step by itself and before you know it, you'll be finished.
- ❑ Great essays convey the writer's passion so find a way to be passionate about your subject!