



# The Writing Process

## A-State Online Writing Center

As writers, we all create and process writing differently. By examining it in the simplest form, the writing process becomes easier to see structurally. In doing this, it allows you to acknowledge your own process and develop it.

**Jump in, let's figure this out together.**

### Researching Support and Understanding the Prompt

- Figure out what the prompt or assignment is asking of you.
- Check to see if the professor has a requirement for the number of sources, where the sources should come from, and what medium they want them from (i.e., professors asking students to go to the library and choose a book, newspaper clip, image, or other documents from there as support for their text).
- It's time to choose the topic: based on your knowledge of what the prompt asks of you, decide what to write. Challenge yourself to choose something different from everyone else while still catering to your audience.
- Now, the research process begins! Most of the material gathered during this time will be used as evidence to support the text.

- It is important to read and understand the research that is found. Make sure to fully understand how the author of that text is discussing your topic while gathering this evidence; this will help situate your evidence in the right place and keep it from feeling like it was randomly used in the text.

## Prewriting

The topic has been chosen, and the research has been gathered. Now, it needs to be organized.

The first step to a great paper is crafting the thesis; it is the blueprint for the entire text.

- Some choose to decide on their body paragraphs before they create their thesis. This can be helpful because it allows the supporting ideas and evidence gathered to be placed in the most relevant spot, giving the paper the smoothest flow. The idea, however, is to have the thesis crafted before the first draft is written.
- Prewriting is best utilized as a place to brainstorm and grow original concepts and ideas into a guide.
- When crafting body paragraphs, choose a few supporting ideas with the same general theme, use research to pull evidence (quotes, statistics, research methods, etc.), and find the most useful spot to place that evidence.

## Drafting

This is where the fun starts and the beginning working stages of a paper are written.

- Everyone drafts differently. Some people find it more helpful to use pen and paper and edit as they type the draft later. Others begin typing and stumble into their final drafts by polishing and re-polishing one document.

- The goal of a first draft is to get all of your ideas out into one gigantic, beautiful, tangible mess. It is okay if it is a bit chaotic because it creates a better understanding of the thought process behind ideas within the draft.
- The best writers know that the first draft without revision will never be the best version of a text; likewise, as you take on the role of the writer in your field, keep in mind your first draft isn't the best draft, and it will never satisfy as the only proof of your writing capabilities. The beauty (and the meat of the text where one grows in knowledge) is in the process.

## Revising

Let's work more on that bit of tangible mess that is the first draft.

- Revising is one of the most important steps of the process because it is where that chaos is reworked into cohesion.
- Normally, revising works like an inverted pyramid and is separated into what scholars call "global and local concerns."
  - Global concerns refer to the overall cohesion and progression of the text. The main concern is making sure that the work flows with smooth transitions and organized structure. It also checks that what is written responds to what the prompt is asking.
  - Local concerns ask the author to reflect on sentence clarity and the cohesion of ideas. Is the text staying on topic, and do the support and evidence reflect and add to that topic on a sentence to sentence basis and a paragraph to paragraph basis?
- The idea of looking at the revision as an inverted pyramid forces the author to examine the text as a larger picture instead of looking at how the pieces (each paragraph) work on their own. Using this method effectively will help build a sound foundation to communicate the

main idea first, then work on polishing places where meaning is lost or misunderstood through language and grammar.

- The revision process helps situate where the main idea and overall point of the text is introduced. How an author chooses to close the argument and leave an audience is important. As the introduction and conclusion are being revised, consider how the topic and main idea are being introduced, then look to see if the conclusion wraps up the discussion in a memorable way while delivering the point. In order to create academic and well-rounded responses, it is important that the author makes the “why” known so the audience can take something away from the text.

## Editing

After revising the draft, students normally assume that it is ready to be turned in. However, many students find that AFTER turning it in, numerous errors will catch the eye. Don't make the mistake of finding these errors after it is too late! Editing is where the author is able to review the text again to fix these simple errors.

- Reading the text out loud or peer-reviewing it with a friend, tutor, or professor can help fix mistakes made during the revision and editing periods of the process. When reading it out loud, is there a place where the wording is awkward, or it felt like you were stumbling through it? If the answer is yes, it may need to be reworked into a more useful sentence/paragraph, or the evidence you use might need to be placed in a different spot.
- Revising and editing are recursive processes meaning that, in writing, revisiting this process will only help shape the paper more and more with every sequence of revision and editing.

## Formatting

Formatting looks at in-text citations, footnotes, works cited, and the overall appearance of the text.

- Check what format the professor has assigned. Does your writing meet all of those qualifications?
- Do you have a header and footer (if required), are they in the right font and the right place?
- Are the margins all correct?
- Does it include the right font and the right size?

Writing processes, like many things in life, are learned on a generalized scale and personalized to fit the individual it affects. The arc of the writing process remains identical for everyone, but everyone moves through those processes differently.

Understanding the way you move through your own writing process is essential to better writing and analysis. It helps in knowing where one is stagnantly comfortable in their writing and shows potential for growth outside the comfort zone by adding and developing steps to the individual writing process. By knowing your process, how can you grow and challenge it?