

Overview of the Writing Process

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will take a broad look at the writing process, exploring its different stages and how they work together to produce essays. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Writing as a Process

2. Stages of the Writing Process

2a. Prewriting

2b. Drafting

2c. Draft Revision and Rewriting

2d. Copyediting

2e. Proofreading

1. Writing as a Process

The skills you use to write well-crafted sentences and paragraphs can in turn be used to develop **essays**, or short pieces of writing on a particular subject.

That means that essays are made up of paragraphs; turning those paragraphs into essays means going through the **writing process**, which is a series of steps involved in completing a successful essay or other writing project.

It's important to remember that writing is a process, not a product, and you won't necessarily move in a straight line. Instead, you'll start and stop, move forward and back, finish and begin all over again.

That's part of what writing is about, and learning these steps will help you embrace the recursive nature of writing.



TERMS TO KNOW

Essay

A short piece of writing on a particular subject.

Writing Process

2. Stages of the Writing Process

The series of steps that make up the writing process are going to be a little different for every writer. However, the overall process will follow the same pattern and go through the same overall progression of steps:

- Prewriting
- Drafting
- Draft Revision and Rewriting
- Copyediting and Proofreading

2a. Prewriting

Prewriting is a stage in the writing process during which the writer generates ideas and creates a plan prior to composing a first draft. In other words, this is the stage where you get to let your mind do its work, generating and organizing a whole host of ideas about your topic.

Letting yourself spend some time thinking through your opinions on and interests in a topic is key not only to developing interesting essays but also to slaying the dragon of writer's block. As such, **brainstorming** often occurs prior to, or as part of, this stage.

There are a few prewriting/brainstorming games that you can play with yourself, such as:

- Listing—writing down any ideas as they come
- Clustering—creating a map connecting your ideas and support
- Freewriting—writing down fully formed thoughts about the topic

Doing this kind of brainstorming can lead to an **outline**, which is a crucial element of the prewriting stage. Outlining is like drawing a sketch of your essay where you plot out the images you're going to draw on. You'll have your main idea, usually in the form of a thesis statement, and then section summaries of what will become the body paragraphs of your essay.



TERMS TO KNOW

Prewriting

A stage in the writing process in which the writer generates ideas and creates a plan for the writing project prior to composing a first draft.

Brainstorming

The use of a variety of techniques to generate ideas and/or clarify thinking.

Outline

The prewritten plan for an essay or other piece of writing that generally includes a working thesis, the primary ideas to be discussed, and the planned structural organization.

2b. Drafting

Once you've generated your ideas and outline in the prewriting stage, you're ready to start **drafting**. Drafting is the act of composing a piece of writing; it's where you get to take your sketch and fill in the details.

Remember, just as it might take multiple layers of paint and many tries to get a picture perfect, so, too, will it likely take multiple drafts before your ideas are ready.

This is ultimately a good thing because every draft you build makes the final draft that much better.



TERM TO KNOW

Drafting

The act of composing a piece of writing.

2c. Draft Revision and Rewriting

Revising is the act of re-envisioning an essay or other writing project; it's the stage where you look at the big picture of the whole essay.

That means you're re-seeing:

- Your ideas
- What kind of evidence and support you use
- The overall organization of your text

You're then evaluating how well each of those things is working and incorporating changes to form a new draft. This might happen several times as you go back around again and again to get the image perfect. This is because you are rethinking the thoughts that you've already put on paper, reorganizing and reconsidering what you want to say and how you want to say it, and rewriting and refining your words so that the text matches the overall big picture of your piece.



HINT

When revising, you should always start at the thesis statement and ask whether it still matches the direction that the essay has taken, and then look at each individual paragraph's examples to assess their connection to the main idea.



TERM TO KNOW

Draft Revision and Rewriting

The act of re-envisioning an essay or other writing project.

2d. Copyediting

After you've revised and generated a draft that you think has all the information it needs, it's time for **copyediting**. Copyediting is improving the sentences, word choices, and overall style of an essay or other piece

of writing.

In your last step, you looked at the big picture; here, you're zeroing in on the brush strokes that make up that picture. You're going to look really closely at the language you use and how clear it is, so you should have already completed the revision of the big picture.

When you copyedit, you're looking for:

- How well each piece of language is working
- How clear your ideas are
- How precise your language is
- How effective your choice of words is
- How much variety you have in sentence length and structure
- Whether your sentences are all complete



TERM TO KNOW

Copyediting

The act of improving the sentence construction, word choice, and the overall style of an essay or other piece of writing.

2e. Proofreading

Once you have a draft that you've revised and edited so that its language and ideas are the best they can be, you can start **proofreading**. Proofreading means fixing errors in grammar, mechanics, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, commonly confused words, and formatting in an essay or other piece of writing.

This is the step where you clean up your work and make sure that it's ready to be seen by its audience without any smudges or messes left over from when you were creating it.

Proofreading helps you catch these last little errors before you're ready to show your masterpiece to the world.



TERM TO KNOW

Proofreading

The act of fixing errors in grammar, mechanics, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, commonly confused words, and formatting in an essay or other piece of writing.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **writing should be thought of as a process**, not a product. Thus, there are several **stages of the writing process** that are important in creating a successful essay: **Prewriting** is the stage in which you lay out all of your ideas on paper in order to create an outline; **drafting** is the stage in which you compose your essay; **revising** is the process of re-envisioning and reimagining your ideas; **copyediting** is the process of improving the language, sentences, and overall style of the essay; and

proofreading is the process of correcting any errors in grammar or mechanics.

Best of luck in your learning!

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TERMS TO KNOW

Brainstorming

The use of a variety of techniques to generate ideas and/or clarify thinking.

Copyediting

The act of improving the sentence construction, word choice, and the overall style of an essay or other piece of writing.

Draft Revision and Rewriting

The act of re-envisioning an essay or other writing project.

Drafting

The act of composing a piece of writing.

Essay

A short piece of writing on a particular subject.

Outline

The prewritten plan for an essay or other piece of writing that generally includes a working thesis, the primary ideas to be discussed, and the planned structural organization.

Prewriting

A stage in the writing process in which the writer generates ideas and creates a plan for the writing project prior to composing a first draft.

Proofreading

The act of fixing errors in grammar, mechanics, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, commonly confused words, and formatting in an essay or other piece of writing.

Writing Process

A series of steps that go into writing a successful essay or other writing project.