

The Writing Process

Writing, as the title says, is a process. It is not something you can do at one sitting, but takes time and should be planned out. There are 4 stages in the writing process:

1. Prewriting
2. Writing
3. Revising
4. Publishing

To ensure that you have enough time for the entire process, consider the $\frac{1}{4}$ plan drafted by Lethbridge College:

$\frac{1}{4}$ of time for research
and preparation

$\frac{1}{4}$ of time for drafting

$\frac{1}{4}$ of time for
revising and editing

$\frac{1}{4}$ of time for publishing

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Time Management

A key component for the writing process to work is managing your time well. If you struggle with time management, you can use the Assignment Calculator or the Research Paper Navigator links below:

<http://assignmentcalculator.library.ubc.ca>

<http://www.library.tufts.edu/researchpaper>

By putting in your starting and due date, both tools break down your assignments into a series of manageable steps and even send alarm reminders of what you should be completing on certain days.

Stage 1: Prewriting

The first stage in the writing process is prewriting. This is where you jot down your initial thoughts about a topic. There is no set structure or organization strategy for prewriting; rather it is just a collection of your initial ideas about your paper. If you get writer's block, nailing the prewriting stage will help.

Prewriting Strategies:

- **Freewriting Strategy**
Writing down all ideas that you think about the topic.
- **Mind-Mapping Strategy**
Listing your ideas and connecting them with arrows or lines.
- **5-W Strategy (who, what, where, when, why, how)**
Asking yourself these questions about your topic and writing down the answers.
- **Sketching Strategy**
Drawing what you think about your topic.

From here, you need to create an **outline** for your paper. Outlining takes what you jotted down during your prewriting and organizes it by structures (parts) in the essay. Outlines generally look like:

Introduction-

Main Body Paragraph 1-

Main Body Paragraph 2-

Main Body Paragraph 3-

Conclusion-

Outlining helps you visually see where possible gaps could be in your essay, and how your paper will be structured.

Stage 2: Drafting

Drafting involves taking your outline and creating written paragraphs from it. The more detailed your outline is, the easier it will be for you to write out. The first time you write it out, also called the first draft, just focus on getting your ideas down. Edit and revise afterwards. If you struggle with writer's block, the following strategies may help:

- Write a little bit every day and **do not** write the entire draft in one sitting. Break the writing up into smaller chunks and do 1-2 paragraphs a day.
- If you're stuck on the introduction, skip it and write the main body of your paper first. This will stop you from feeling frustrated, and may help you write your introduction since you'll know what your main ideas are.

- If you skipped outlining your paper, do a reverse outline. This is where you break down your draft into an outline format. This may help you see gaps in your writing.
- Talk through your paper before you begin writing it. Sometimes hearing your thoughts out loud helps you organize your ideas better.

In all, focus on getting words down! Don't worry about editing yet as you will have time for this later.

Stage 3: Revise

Revising is the self-editing stage. This is the process of rereading your draft and making all corrections. Keep in mind to:

- Take a break before you start revising. Do not go straight from drafting into revising.
 - Consider the class you are writing for, the assignment type, and citation style. This influences how your paper is formatted, and prevents plagiarism. **Cite everything!**
 - Do not leave the editing to the day your assignment is due!
 - Edit your paper more than once
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Stage 4: Publishing

This is the last and final stage in the writing process. This is where you check your paper to make sure it is in the format required by your instructor. General things to include (unless otherwise indicated by your instructor) are:

- A title page that has the title of the essay, your name, the name of your institution, the course name and number, and the instructor's name.
- 1-inch margins
- Double-spaced and size 12 font
- Page numbers at the top right corner
- A reference page

The citation style (APA, MLA, Chicago) will depend on the class, along with your instructor's specifications about formatting. Clarify with your instructor first!

Need help improving your academic writing skills? Contact the Writing Specialist for support:

Online: <http://www.mhc.ab.ca/Services/AcademicSupport/WritingSupport>

or at the Student Success Centre located in the

Vera Bracken Library.