

## The Writing Process

### Pre-Drafting

- Study the assignment/prompt. Mark key words. Ask questions. Make sure you understand the assignment/prompt.
- Brainstorm: list words and phrases that come to mind.
- Think, read, research, discuss: Think. Read about the topic, do research, discuss the topic with friends, gather evidence/statistics/quotes.
- Free Write: start putting your ideas into sentences. Write freely. Don't criticize yourself. Write everything that comes to your mind. You won't use all of it in your essay, but you need to get all of your ideas out on paper so you can consider which ones to use. If you have trouble writing much—reread what you've already written. Sometimes this helps get the thoughts flowing. You can also go back to the previous step and read, research, and discuss the topic to find more ideas.
- Outline: this can be informal. The goal is to study your free writing, find your main points and some of the details, and then plan how you will organize your thoughts.

### Drafting

- A rough draft should be written fairly quickly. It will be messy and incomplete. It may have ideas that you decide later not to keep. There will be punctuation and spelling errors. You may even be missing words or sentences. The goal is to get a semi-complete essay written—one with a beginning, middle, and end. But try not to stop too often while writing; let the words flow; and don't be hard on yourself. (DO NOT worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar at this point. Don't even worry about finding the right word; you can leave a blank if you can't think of the word you want. The point is to not slow down; keep going.)

### Revising

- If you think your chosen topic or main point isn't working or doesn't respond to the assignment well, now is the time to figure out major changes or start over. Every writer has had to start over—sometimes you have to write the “bad” draft in order to get to the “good” draft. (Trying to “fix” or “save” an essay that is off topic with a bunch of little changes is REALLY hard—much harder than starting over.)
- Once you feel confident that you are on topic, you have 3 tasks for revising: add, delete, move (see details that follow).

- **Add** details, examples, explanations, even additional paragraphs if necessary. Look for areas where the essay feels weak (or “thin”). Consider doing some additional thinking, reading, researching, and talking so that you can find additional interesting content for your essay. Be careful of relying on “fluff” or repetition to meet a page count or word count requirement. It isn’t any fun to write fluff or repeat yourself. Go looking for additional ideas—facts, comparisons, explanations, etc.
- **Delete** anything that doesn’t fit. Sometimes writers fall in love with an example or a detail or a sentence—even when it doesn’t fit. If that happens to you, listen to your instincts and take out the pieces that don’t fit—they can really weaken a piece of writing.
- **Move** sentences or entire paragraphs if the order doesn’t seem to work. If you can’t find a place for a particular idea or if you can’t find a transition, the idea might not belong in the essay at all.
- Read your work aloud to yourself. You will hear where the weak and unclear parts are. Most writers have to write multiple drafts. This means that they are reading their essays multiple times and revising multiple times. This is normal.
- Do not worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar at this stage.

## Editing

- Once you feel pretty good about the content of your essay, it’s time to begin polishing. Read your work aloud multiple times, or have someone read it aloud to you. Reading aloud forces you to slow down, and you will be more likely to find errors and sentences that need work. This is when you check for spelling, grammar, punctuation errors. This is also when you consider your sentence structure variety and your transitions.