

THE WRITING PROCESS

This handout is available in an alternative format on request

This handout introduces university students to the academic writing process. It encourages students to plan and write essays in a sequential yet flexible way, using complementary handouts from the Writing Centre for additional guidance. With this handout, essay writing is shown as a process that not only provides results, but also a sense of accomplishment with each step completed.

Step One: Generating Ideas	Ideas/Topics I am Interested In:
Answer the following questions, using point form: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do I know about my topic?• What is my purpose for writing?• Who are my readers and how much do they know about my topic?• How is this essay like others I have written before?• What structure will work best for my topic?	
Step Two: Creating An Outline I	My Ideas and Sub-ideas:
From the ideas/topics you generate: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrange ideas and related sub-ideas in sequence, based on what makes sense to you.• If needed, start looking for resources to facilitate your research (these may be books, periodicals, websites).• Refer to the Assignment Calculator for help in managing your time for the essay (http://webapps-new.utsc.utoronto.ca/assignmentcal/)	
Step 3: Creating An Outline II	Notes for My Paragraphs and Thesis Statement:
Next: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using point form, organize the ideas and sub-ideas for your topic into paragraphs (i.e., the introductory, main body, and concluding paragraph).• Based on the same questions above, organize ideas into sections as they come up in your mind.• Start thinking about a thesis statement: Ask yourself what the point or claim you are making is.	

Step Four: The First Draft

At this stage:

- Start writing the essay for your topic (initially, your intention is out of focus, but that is okay)
- You are attempting to express your ideas on the page
- Organize ideas and information into sections as they come up in your mind, and continue asking yourself the same questions as above to help you generate ideas for your draft.

Additional strategies you might use include:

- Any or all of those you used for generating ideas
- Revising your outline: this can be useful when you have lots to say but aren't clear about how you'll present that material
- Remember that outlines need to be flexible, not restrictive.
- Create a visual representation of your topic instead of a written one: use a sketch pad, black/white boards, note cards, etc.)
- You may start listing the sources you have used, which your "Works Cited" list will contain

Step Five: Multiple Drafts - Revising

As you continue writing, keep in mind that:

- Your essay is progressing but may still require changes
- Revising requires making major changes (for example: when you realize that 'real' start of the essay is on page 3 not on the first two pages; you realize that you've been repeating yourself on pages 2 and 4 and that it's possible to group these parts together)
- At this stage you can have as many as two, three, or four drafts before you write your final draft.

Additional strategies you might use when revising:

- Any/all of those you used for generating ideas and drafting
- Ask for feedback: this is valuable. Make an appointment at TWC or exchange drafts with your peers/classmates
- Review your drafts: write in the margins a brief description of each paragraph's content; this ensures that you're not repeating yourself. If descriptions are difficult to write, this could mean that your paragraph is unfocused or consists of too many topics.

Step Six: The Final Draft - Editing/Proofreading

The final draft of an essay is the one that you are completely satisfied with because it answers all of the questions you have been asking from the beginning:

My essay:

- answers or addresses my assignment question
- is clear about its topic
- is clear about its purpose for being written
- is clear about who my readers are and provides them with the right amount of information about my topic
- is similar to past essays I have written and have been satisfied with
- is structured in the best way for my topic

Strong (comments?)	Satisfactory (comments?)	Weak (comments?)

For more information on academic writing, please visit The Writing Centre at <http://ctl.utsc.utoronto.ca/twc/webresources> , which has handouts on, among others, Brainstorming, Developing an Outline, Thesis Statements, and Editing and Revising Essays.