

ART OF WRITING

"Writing is a way of discovering ideas as well as a way of expressing them"

We shall look at some techniques and tools for successful writing.

Your Writing:

Think of the topic you plan to write. Don't write anything for few minutes—just visualize.

1. Write down everything that comes into your head about this topic. Write fast; try to capture every thought that comes to mind. Don't stop to erase anything or think.

For example, a student whose topic is scuba diving starts this way:

Scuba diving is exciting you're in a whole new world underwater. Like outer space. Can't here anything except my own breathe..

If your mind goes blank, just write your last phrase over and over until new words come. You can wander off your topic and say outrageous things. Just write nonstop for five minutes. Now shake your wrists and relax before going on to the next step.

2. Write the topic or the theme in the center of a blank page and then think of words or phrases (no sentences) that are keys to your thoughts about this topic. Whenever a word comes into your mind, jot it quickly on the page. Surround your topic with these words. When several thoughts are related to each other, put them together in a cluster, and when a completely new thought comes, put it on another part of the page.

For example, the student interested in scuba diving starts this way:

There are two rules:

- a. Don't try to write out each thought; just jot down a phrase quickly and see what comes next.
- b. Don't reject any thoughts; they are all potentially useful. When you are finished, check to see that related are close together in clusters Move any that need to be closer to each other.

Freewriting (step 1) and **clustering** (step 2) are ways of discovering what you want to say and getting the writing process started.

Techniques for Writing a Topic:

Once you have explored your ideas on a topic through freewriting or clustering you are in a position to select which ideas you'd like to develop. That means shifting your focus from the broad view to a narrower one. If you've been exploring a topic in freewriting, you can circle one or two sentences or phrases and put the rest aside. If you've been clustering, you can circle some clusters for focus and ignore the others.

There are three steps in limiting your topic:

1. Look for connections among the ideas you have recorded.
2. Let some ideas go for now.
3. Find and write a phrase that shows the connection among the ones you keep.

Techniques for Writing: Writing Topic Sentences for Paragraphs:

A **paragraph** is a sequence of sentences that cooperate in supporting one main point. Sometimes that point is so obvious that it doesn't need to be stated, but often a paragraph begins with a **topic sentence** that states the main point directly. Before you can write a topic sentence, you must decide what you want to say and what you don't want to say in your paragraph. In other words, you must first explore your starting topic and then select your limited topic. The next step is to make a statement about the limited topic.

Keep these points in mind:

1. **A starting topic** is usually broad, stimulating many ideas.
2. **A limited topic** is narrow, connecting a few selected ideas.
3. **A topic sentence** makes a statement about the limited topic.

For example, study this progression:

- **Starting topic:** Football
- **Limited topic:** The role that football has played in my education
- **Topic sentence:** If it hadn't been for football, I might never have taken school seriously.

Note: A topic sentence is always a complete sentence expressing an idea about the limited topic. It is not a title (*What football means to me*), or an explanation of the writer's plan (*I am going to tell you about the role football played in my education.*)

Choosing a topic sentence helps to focus the topic still further. Therefore, the topic sentence acts as a tool for organizing the rest of the paragraph.

Techniques for Writing: Giving Examples and Explanations

Giving examples and explanations helps your reader understand what has led you to a conclusion. Whenever you're writing, imagine a reader asking constantly, "What makes you say that?" "What do you mean?" If you heard that question in conversation, you'd probably answer with an example. You need to give examples in writing, too.

Here is a statement that could lead readers to ask those questions:

- Fruit is good for you.

Example of good fruit	Explanations with further information
Apples	contain roughage which helps to clean digestive system

An example may offer further information, a general statement to a specific, or tell a story. Its ' purpose is to tie your idea to other ideas that everyone recognizes.

Techniques for Writing: Using Specific Language

General language describes large categories. **Specific language** describes small categories or individual things and actions. In the diagram below, notice how the language becomes more specific as your attention moves down the scale from general towards specific.

Apply this technique to your writing: Study what you've written about your leisure time activity. Circle three general or abstract words and replace them with specific sensory details.

Techniques for Writing: Making Paragraph Breaks

In an essay, each paragraph contains a group of sentences that discuss one limited topic. Paragraph breaks show readers where new limited topics begin. When introducing a new point in an essay, a writer indents a few spaces at the left margin of the page or skips a line. The patch of white space gives readers a chance to stop and think about the last limited topic before starting in on the next one.

Techniques for Writing: Using Transitional Expressions

Transitional expressions, such as *therefore*, *however*, and *in addition*, show readers how one idea relates to another.

Consider these two sentences:

The river was gradually changing its course.

The cliff continued to erode.

Is the river causing the erosion or not? Adding a transitional can help the reader to know the answer:

The river was gradually changing its course; *therefore* the cliff continued to erode.

Different transitional modifiers imply different answers:

- The river was gradually changing its course. *In addition*, the cliff continued to erode.
- The river was gradually changing its course; *however*, the cliff continued to erode.

Study the following chart of transitional modifiers. These expressions can be used within paragraphs to show the relationships between clauses and sentences, and they can be used within essays to show how paragraphs relate to each other.

Transitional Expressions
<p>To show time and sequence: meanwhile, eventually, soon, later, first, second, then, finally, also, besides, furthermore, moreover, in addition, too.</p>
<p>To compare and contrast: likewise, similarly, in the same way, however, nevertheless, still, on the other hand, on the contrary, even so.</p>

To show cause and effect:

therefore, as a result, accordingly, consequently, thus, hence, otherwise.

To offer examples and conclusions:

for instance, for example, after all, in fact, of course in conclusion, in other words, on the whole, in short.

Techniques for Writing: Writing Thesis Statements for Essays

An **essay** is a group of paragraphs that support a main point, or thesis. Often the reader will understand the ideas in the paragraphs best if the essay's main point is stated directly in the first paragraph. A thesis statement does for an essay what a topic sentence does for a paragraph; it helps the reader to understand the main point. A **thesis statement** can tell the reader how a large idea will be broken down into smaller ones.

Thesis Statement: Nowadays, people stay at home for many of their business and entertainment activities.

Topic Sentence #1: Mail order catalogues and the Internet eliminate the need for shopping trips.

Topic Sentence #2: Giving a credit card number over the phone or modem line can bring goods and services to the door.

Topic Sentence #3: A VCR and a tape deck can turn the average living room into a private theater.

If you were going to develop this three-paragraph essay, you would then write even more specific sentences to support each topic sentence.

Techniques for Writing: Writing Conclusions for Paragraphs & Essays

A conclusion lets your reader know that you've finished developing your ideas, and it allows the reader to look back at what you've said as a whole. A conclusion can:

- Return to the main point, stating it in a new way to show what's been gained by writing about it,
- Discuss the results or implications of what has already been said,
- Raise a question or suggest some action based on what's been said,
- Summarize the main ideas.

Conclusions for Paragraphs

When you write a paragraph that stands alone, not part of a larger essay, it is useful to give the paragraph a concluding sentence.

Conclusions for Essays

When you write an essay, your whole last paragraph needs to wrap up the essay and hand it to the reader as a finished package.

Techniques for Writing: Giving and Receiving Peer Responses

Reading and responding to someone else's writing makes you a better critic of your own compositions. Getting someone else's response to your writing helps you to see what works and what needs to be changed in your paragraphs. A peer response is a set of comments by somebody who is in a position like yours. Most published writing has been through many readers' responses. An author shows drafts to family, friends, colleagues, and editors, and gathers responses from them all as the revision process moves forward.

If you want to respond more systematically to a peer's writing, start with these six steps:

1. Read the paper carefully, ignoring mistakes in grammar and usage.
2. Note how each part of the paper fits together, supporting the main points.
3. Suggest new ways of handling the keys to the paper's structure.
4. Explain to the author any observations you've made in the study above. At this stage, you can also explain corrections in grammar in usage.

When you have received a peer response to your writing, take these two steps:

1. Accept and reject responses carefully.
2. Review your paper and decide what to change.

Techniques for Writing: Return to Your Writing

Read aloud the paragraph you've been writing. Do the explanations and details work well together, and are the transitions clear? Now that you've written a conclusion, do you have a new perspective on your topic sentence? Your partner's response has given you an idea of how your paper looks in someone else's eyes. How does it look in yours now? Revise the paragraph to make it meet your own standards.
