

Pre-Writing For An Essay

Getting Organized BEFORE you write your first draft

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Know Your Assignment

- ▶ 1. Analyze your assignment or essay **PROMPT** by highlighting or circling all **VERBS** and underlining all DIRECT OBJECTS. Note conjunctions (e.g., or, and, but). Number steps.

- ▶ Example:

- ▶ *Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma – anything of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.*

Analyzing the Prompt

- ▶ **Describe** a problem you've solved **or** a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma – anything of personal importance, no matter the scale. **Explain** its (1) significance to you **and** (2) what steps you took or could be taken to **identify** a solution.
 - ▶ Problem I've solved = *intellectual challenge, research, ethical dilemma, etc.*
 - ▶ EXPLAIN Significance = make it personal
 - ▶ EXPLAIN Steps = took or could be taken to IDENTIFY a solution

Identify how you will answer (your topic)

- ▶ **Problem I've solved** > how to get my homework done more efficiently
- ▶ **EXPLAIN Significance** > procrastinating = cramming and doing shoddy work; always feel guilty for not being ready; feeling confused and overwhelmed and not knowing where to begin. Feel good when things have been done in an orderly manner.
- ▶ **EXPLAIN Steps** >
 - ▶ (1) Break down each assignment into chunks divided by the time/days I have to complete it,
 - ▶ (2) Schedule the chunks onto a daily, weekly, or monthly schedule,
 - ▶ (3) schedule in all the other “life” jobs I have to do as well,
 - ▶ (4) doing each day's assigned chunk with mini-breaks in between,
 - ▶ (5) marking off “done” chunks with as little “carry-over” as possible.

Brainstorming/Mind-Mapping

- ▶ **Graph your main subject in the center or top of paper or markerboard:**
 - ▶ *“Getting homework done more efficiently”*
- ▶ **Write in the 5Ws and 1H:** who, what, when, where, why, and how
 - ▶ Start BRAINSTORMing using your prompt analyzer worksheet notes
 - ▶ Use a mind-map or any other graphic organizer that helps you sort and connect relationships with your main subject.
 - ▶ Gather your SOURCES and select the ones you will use. Keep all citation information for these select sources on notecards with all location information tagged for identification of EACH item and its source.
 - ▶ Examples, anecdotes, quotes, statistics and data, illustrations, procedures
 - ▶ Title of article, Title of major work, author(s), Publisher and location, copyright date, page #, Date accessed if online, URL if online, “Web” if online. (See Citation Instruction for Research Papers)

Before, During, or After Brainstorming: SOURCING and TAGGING your information

- ▶ Gather your SOURCES and select the ones you will use. Keep all citation information for these select sources on notecards with all location information tagged for identification of EACH item and its source.
 - ▶ Examples, anecdotes, quotes, statistics and data, illustrations, procedures
 - ▶ Title of article,
 - ▶ Title of major work,
 - ▶ author(s),
 - ▶ Publisher and location,
 - ▶ copyright date,
 - ▶ page #,
 - ▶ Date accessed if online,
 - ▶ URL if online, “Web” if online.
 - ▶ (See Citation Instruction for Research Papers)

ORDERING: Inserting Selected Brainstorming Notes into KEYWORD Outline Template

- ▶ **Get new paper and plot out Paragraph Structure Template.**
 - ▶ Intro (Hook, Set-up, Thesis/TopicSentence/Claim, Transition)
 - ▶ Three points: Pt A, Pt B and Pt C Claim Elements
 - ▶ Supporting Details for each
 - ▶ Source entries w/citations (when and where required)
 - ▶ Transition Sentence for each(for essays)
 - ▶ Conclusion (Review or Summary, “Clincher”, “Take-away”)
 - ▶ Use KEYWORDS first. Keep all brainstorming notes! Do NOT throw away!
 - ▶ This step is for ORDERING your brainstorming ideas, NOT writing!
 - ▶ Check to get rid of “filler” (non-essential information)
 - ▶ Ensure that you have more than enough information to plug into your outline!!

PRE-DRAFTING: Turn keyword outline into SENTENCE outline

- ▶ Use a clean page per paragraph at first (essays).
- ▶ For paragraphs, draw five BOXES on your paper—3 on front, 2 on back, etc.
- ▶ Write sentences, borrowing details from the mindmapping papers and your selected sources.
 - ▶ DO NOT TRY TO WRITE BEAUTIFUL SENTENCES!! Get it down!
 - ▶ DO NOT write “new” information that is not on your Keyword Outline or Mindmaps.
 - ▶ **DO write FROM your keyword outline and mindmaps.** You must!
 - ▶ ***If you need to add or switch, go back to working on the pre-writing step BEFORE. Do not revise at this step. ****
 - ▶ You may check again for “filler”, but you should ALREADY have more than enough information to keep the essential information “plump” without it.

PRE-READING PRE-DRAFT

- ▶ Read your sentence outline aloud.
- ▶ While still on the “one page per paragraph”, make revisions FROM YOUR NOTES at this point.
 - ▶ Do NOT write your draft at this point.
 - ▶ Do NOT improve sentence style at this point.
 - ▶ Check for:
 - ▶ Sufficient content (all elements are present)
 - ▶ Logical sequencing of points
 - ▶ Sufficient support
 - ▶ Fluid transitions
 - ▶ Amp up choice of hook and connection to topic
 - ▶ Ensure conclusion repetition and take-away (make sure there is interest and closure)
 - ▶ Ignore minor errors but DO ensure names and data are accurate NOW.

WRITE THE DRAFT!!

- ▶ Ensure first that ALL elements that must be included are IN!
- ▶ Ensure that you will NOT need to look back on your outline or notes! All elements should be IN! That includes diagrams, etc.
- ▶ Clean paper (or on laptop):
 - ▶ Ensure all formatting is set-up: Double-space, Labeling paper, font size and style, margins (1” all sides), page numbering (see professor’s style guide)
 - ▶ It sometimes helps to use subtitles in an essay to keep your sections clearly marked. You can remove them (optionally) before final draft.
- ▶ Write the sentences as you finalized them in your sentence outline.
- ▶ DO NOT try to write gorgeous sentences. Write naturally—not too simple, but not “dressed up” just yet. We’re still after logical CONTENT.

LET IT GO COLD!

- ▶ “Cold” means you leave it alone for a while (hours or at least 24 hrs).
- ▶ Plan ahead for this step so you are not “cramming”
- ▶ The goal is to free your mind of what you THINK you said, so you can read what you ACTUALLY said for revision purposes.
- ▶ During this “resting” phase, you may let someone else read it and give only logical content feedback (not grammar or minor details).

REVISION #1: Revising Content Quality

- ▶ You will NOT be adding new information! (That is to be done at the Keyword or Sentence Outline level!).
- ▶ **Print out** a clean copy (photocopy a handcopy, so you keep an original beside your revised copy). Read with pen in hand! Mark your notes on your paper.
 - ▶ You may re-locate information for better order.
 - ▶ You may juice up your hook and conclusion
 - ▶ You may give more descriptive power to your anecdotes.
 - ▶ You may clarify the reasoning of your statements. Sometimes this includes grammatical sentence structure re-arrangements, and this is good.
 - ▶ You may continue to delete or re-phrase non-essential information! CAVEAT: What you delete, you can NOT add back in new information! You check for “filler” at the Keyword and Sentence Level first!

Revision #2: Make a Clean Copy, Get Feedback

- ▶ Make all Revision #1 notes on a clean copy.
- ▶ Run Spell-check **AND** Grammar-check. Look up anything in doubt.
- ▶ Give final consideration to your final title (revising it from your working title for interest and pizzazz).
- ▶ Print out or write out 2-3 clean copies for Revision #2 (AFTER spell/grammar check!), and one for yourself.
- ▶ Give at least 2-3 people a clean copy (their own) to review and ask for 1-2 main issues
- ▶ Collect your own fresh notes and the 2-3 feedback notes and judge their feedback. Be prepared to (rightly) defend your own writing purpose, but also be prepared to consider the options given to you.
- ▶ Make your final revision notes into the master document and reprint.

REPEAT REVISION #2 as often as needed.

REVISION #3: Proofing final submission

- ▶ Assuming that all is well with wording and content, ensure all formatting is correct.
 - ▶ If this is a research paper or a cover page and appendices and bibliography are required, ensure that these are correctly cited, tagged, and formatted and that they are located correctly in the body of your paper.
- ▶ Ensure that your paper is paginated as required.
- ▶ Ensure that your paper is labeled fully (Name, date, Professor, Course, Assignment, Title).
- ▶ Ensure that if the paper has multiple pages that the paper is clean and bound appropriately (as required): a 3-pronged portfolio cover, staples, 3-hole punched.
- ▶ Unless otherwise specified, all FINAL Drafts should be presented in final printed form. You should keep an exact copy for yourself; you can never be sure you will get your paper back!
- ▶ Submit your paper in the manner you are required!

THE END

- ▶ Research papers are more complex with more formatting and supplemental page requirements, and more detailed source-gathering and citing of sources, but the general procedure for drafting is to be followed.