

The Writing Process

Stage	Purpose	What to do	What to avoid	Mark of Success	Questions to Ask
Prewriting <i>(conception through pregnancy--9 months)</i>	<i>(Expand)</i> To gather details	Write as much as possible without worrying about errors or meaning Use techniques for generating details: freewriting, listing, brainstorming, reporter's formula, cubing	the blank page	lots of details	What details have I omitted that another reader might need in order to understand this? Have I included sensory details: touch, taste, smell, hearing, sight?
Drafting <i>(birth--less than one day)</i>	<i>(Limit)</i> To create meaning through structure	Organize details around some central idea or focus--an idea that seems very important or at the heart of what is written Techniques include focused writing, clustering, or mapping: main ideas, subordinate ideas, supporting details	rambling	a draft that has one thing to say	What is my main idea? What seems to be most interesting? What is most important to me? Why did I want to write about this?
Revising <i>(life--where the real work begins--70 years on average)</i>	<i>(Refine)</i> To clarify meaning for the reader (through unity, coherence, cohesion, development, sentence structure, and word choice) To seek to interest and engage the reader To correctly format (edit) the draft according to appropriate rules for English usage	*Read the essay quickly to see if it focuses on a single idea which the essay develops clearly, the sentences flowing smoothly as if spoken by a single "voice." Read the essay again, more slowly, paragraph by paragraph--the lead should catch the reader's interest and give a clear indication of where the essay is headed; the body paragraphs should be complete, with details persuading the reader of the "truth" of the thesis, and presented in an effective order; the conclusion should leave the reader satisfied that what the essay has promised was delivered. Read the essay again, sentence by sentence, word by word, to see that each sentence and word is appropriate for the meaning and purpose set in the lead. Finally, edit by reading the essay slowly--bottom to top--for grammar, punctuation, spelling, typographical, or formatting errors.	ineffectiveness * in clarity * in organization * in language * in detail * in correctness (grammar, punctuation, spelling, format)	a clear, meaningful, compelling, correctly formatted final draft.	Does the essay have a single focus which each paragraph develops? Does each paragraph move the essay towards the principle goal the essay sets forth in the thesis; that is, does each paragraph develop some aspect of the central idea, making it clearer, more understandable, and/or more appealing to the reader for which the essay is intended? Is each declarative sentence clear? Is each supportive sentence compelling or "convincing evidence"? Is each word the best word possible: necessary, precise, appropriate, or compelling? Does the essay follow appropriate conventions for English usage?

*The first three ways of reading an essay are adapted from Murray, Donald M. "Making Meaning Clear: The Logic of Revision." *Learning by Teaching: Selected Articles on Writing and Teaching*. Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1982. 88-95.

©BILL STIFLER, 1995 The author grants Chattanooga State faculty and staff permission to use this material in the teaching of their classes and related duties.