

The Stages of Writing

The basic rule of writing says that you need to think about what you are going to write BEFORE you write and go over your writing a few times BEFORE sending it out or publishing it. In order to produce written material more efficiently, these processes can be broken down into stages. There are following six stages:

1. planning
2. drafting
3. revising
4. editing
5. proofreading
6. presenting

1. The Planning Stage

It is very difficult to think about WHAT you want to write and HOW you want to phrase it in the same time. In planning, it is about what you want your final text to look like, using the following points:

- Define your writing topic and content area. Narrow your topic down to a specific topic. Research and analyze information sources if needed.
- Calculate the time needed to complete your writing task.
- Brainstorm ideas, thoughts, arguments, words, and phrases you think are relevant to your text and topic.
- Organize your preliminary arguments into an outline following a logical order that would suit the general essay structure of opening, body, and ending. Put ideas in sub-groups that will later develop into paragraphs.

2. The Drafting Stage

When writing the first draft of your text, focus on content only and FORGET about language and mechanical aspects such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation. You must write freely and try to find the best way to communicate your ideas. Remember the following points:

- The opening paragraph (introduction) should present the text's topic. Refrain from using the first person when doing this (No: "In this essay I will present...") and prefer a stronger opening technique. For example, present interesting facts on the topic.

- The body (discussion) paragraphs should each present one idea or aspect of the general topic and begin with a topic sentence that will orient the reader to what follows within the paragraph.
- Provide enough supporting sentences for the topic sentence, using examples, explanations, facts, opinions, and quotes.
- Use connecting words (conjunctions such as and, or, but, so, because, however, moreover, for example etc.) to logically unite arguments, sentences and paragraphs.
- The ending (conclusion) should present concluding remarks and repeat the text's key idea or thesis in other words. Try to finish with a strong statement that will have your reader asking for more...
- Try to use various words and phrases, using synonyms, descriptive and figurative language.
- If time permits, read your draft very generally and redraft, making immediate global changes you feel are urgent. Don't be too harsh.

3. The Revising Stage

No text should be sent out or published without going over it at least once! Twice is even better. You must reread even the shortest business email to prevent any embarrassing mistakes (such as sending the wrong email to the wrong person, to start with). Revising means evaluating your text's content and making sure you actually wrote what you intended in the planning stage. Revising should take as much time as drafting! Go through the following checklist when revising:

- Did you write on the required topic and used relevant arguments and examples?
- Is each piece of information relevant to the paragraph it is in? Is your text cohesive and unified around one theme?
- Does each paragraph and sentence logically follow and relate to what's written before it? Is there enough or too much support to each topic sentence? Change accordingly.
- Did you use different sentence types and lengths (from simple to complex, short and concise to long and elaborate)?
- Did you avoid from repeating the same ideas and words or vocabulary? Did I mainly use my own words?
- Do not attempt showing-off with a fancy word you do not know how to use properly.

4. The Editing Stage

Editing is sometimes considered part of revising, but refers to judging your text for language and technicalities (grammar accuracy) rather than content.

- Your sentences should adhere to proper word order rules, each containing a subject and a predicate. Use a variety of verb tenses correctly and appropriately (simple, progressive, perfect, and perfect-progressive tenses).
- Use a variety of language constructions to make your writing more precise (comparative structures, not too much of the passive voice etc.)
- Use a dictionary or spell checker when not sure about spelling. (there-their-they're).
- Use a variety of punctuation marks accurately.
- Edit for text mechanics: capitalization, numbering, italics, and abbreviations.

5. The Proofreading Stage

Proofreading comprises that one extra step you need after revising and editing in order to locate any small mistake you missed out on until now. It is about some content change or some spelling and punctuation that escaped your attention.

6. The Presentation Stage

After the text itself is ready, it is time to work on some finishing touches with aesthetics polishing your text to perfection.

- If you are handwriting your text, use a ruler to create margins on both sides of the page. Remember to double-space if required by a teacher. Write neatly and legibly!
- When using a computer, be consistent with font usage, spacing, and heading levels.
- In academic papers, adhere to the strict citation conventions, dictated by your style manual.
- Consider the space between paragraphs.

The writing process may seem long and tiresome, but it is a guaranteed path to success. So these are the basic six stages for writing.