

# Writing Strategies

## Freshman Seminar, Ellet High School

When given a writing assignment, follow the Writing Process.

### The 5 STEP Writing Process

#### 1. PREWRITING

Here are some Pre-writing techniques to gather ideas:

- talking with and interviewing people who know something about a topic
- brainstorm ideas
- focused free writing (i.e., nonstop writing on an intended subject to crystallize ideas and feelings)
- mapping and webbing (i.e. drawing web graphic organizer on the topic)
- writing "leads" (i.e., creating three or more opening sentences as a way of determining the shape and scope of the topic)
- listing
- using reporters' questions (i.e. Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?)
- making similes and metaphors (i.e. asking "What is it like?")
- finding similarities and differences by comparing and contrasting concepts, pictures, and objects
- reading and examining written models to gather information about the topic or to notice genre, style, or tone
- viewing pictures, paintings, television, films, CD-ROMs, or slides
- using visualization and guided imagery
- listening to CDs, tapes, and records
- debating, role playing, and improvising
- exploring ideas in a journal.
- choosing a purpose and an audience
- ordering ideas

#### 2. DRAFTING

- putting ideas down on paper
- exploring new ideas during writing, or different writing formats to express your ideas
- drafting an organizational pattern you will follow

Determine the Writing Format you want to use:

- personal experience narratives
- autobiographies
- biographies
- fictional narratives (e.g., short stories and novellas)
- diary entries
- journal entries
- learning logs
- poetry
- parodies
- essays
- research reports

- reviews
- news stories
- editorials and opinions
- advertisements
- correspondence (e.g., friendly letters; invitations; letters of thanks, complaint, application, sympathy, inquiry, protest, congratulation, apology)
- scripts (e.g., skits, plays, radio plays, TV commercials)
- oral histories
- eulogies and last will and testaments
- speeches
- memoranda and messages
- instructions and advice
- rules and regulations
- minutes and forms
- pamphlets
- résumés and cover letters.

Determine the kind of order you are going to follow in your writing:

- a chronological or step-by-step arrangement of ideas by time or order of occurrence
- spatial, geometrical, or geographical arrangement of ideas according to their position in space--left to right, top to bottom, or circular
- definitive (e.g., is called, is made up of)
- classification and division (e.g., parts and relationships)
- order of importance (e.g., first, second)
- comparison and contrast (e.g., compared to, differs from)
- cause-effect (e.g., consequently, the reason for)
- problem-solution (e.g., problem, alternatives, decisions)
- pros and cons (e.g., strongly support, against)
- inductive and deductive (e.g., specific to general, broad to specific)
- dialectic (e.g., thesis/antithesis/synthesis).

Students could consider constructing a map, a chart, an outline, a visual organizer, or a ladder diagram to organize their main ideas and supporting details, and then just write about the topic.

### 3. REVISING

- Editing: considering ideas and organization
- Proofreading: correcting errors including sentence structure, usage, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization
- Polishing

Revising brings a work to completion. It is a complex process of deciding what should be **changed, deleted, added, or retained**. Revising is the general post-writing procedure which involves editing (revising for ideas and form) and proofreading (revising for sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).

Revising strategies require time and practice; therefore, they are best introduced a few at a time. Different strategies may be required for different kinds of writing.

Useful strategies for revising ideas and form include:

- Students can read compositions aloud and possibly tape them.
- Students can examine compositions in relation to specific questions or guidelines. (E.g. Is my composition clear? Is there something that I can do to make it clearer or more appealing? Do my ideas and form address the needs of my audience?)
- Students can use a revision process which involves them in working through various "passes"

#### **4. PROOFREAD.**

Proofreading involves reading for conventions rather than content. Proofreading and editing are not mutually exclusive. During the editing process, some proofreading may occur and during proofreading, further editing may occur. Proofreading is the process of checking a draft to make sure that the following conventions are correct and appropriate:

- paragraph structure
- sentence structure (syntax)
- word choice (diction)
- usage
- spelling
- capitalization
- punctuation
- appearance (e.g., spacing, indentation, page numbers).

A checklist for students to refer to when revising follows.

#### **Questions for Editing and Proofreading**

Ideas/Content:

1. Do my ideas work together to make my message clear?
2. Do I have enough information?

Organization:

1. Does my paper have an effective introduction and conclusion?
2. Do my words, phrases, and sentences tie my ideas together logically (i.e., transitions)?
3. Are my ideas written in order of importance?

Voice/Tone/Flavor:

1. Is there evidence that I am sincere and concerned about my audience?
2. Is my paper an example of my best effort?

Word Choice:

1. Are my words accurate, concise, and well chosen?
2. Do I feel the need to experiment with any new words?
3. Is my paper enjoyable to read?

Syntax/Sentences:

1. Are my sentences varied?
2. Does my writing flow naturally?

Writing Conventions:

1. Are my paragraphs effective?
2. Does my punctuation enhance the meaning?
3. Have I checked my spelling?
4. Are my capitals where they belong?
5. Do I have subject/verb agreement?

## **5. PRESENTING THE FINAL COPY**

- Sharing writing or final copy

The writing process usually culminates in sharing and presenting. Publishing in its broadest sense, means "making public" or sharing with others. The ways of presenting student writing are numerous: shared reading, bulletin board, individual books, class/school/city newspapers, student anthologies, or literary contests.

Presenting is also turning in your final copy.

### Works Cited

SaskEd. *Writing*. <http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/ela20/teach4>.

Spandel & Stiggins. *Questions for Editing and Proofreading*. Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc.