

Writing and the Process of Writing

3



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn to . . .

- 1 Assess the writing situation—subject, purpose, audience, and genre.
- 2 Direct your writing with a thesis statement.
- 3 Put **I D E A S** to work.
- 4 Practice writing as a process.

Like any project that is worth doing, writing demands discipline and a strong work ethic—solid values for any worthwhile effort. Also, effective writing is the result of a smart writing process. What is your current writing process? How can it improve?

Sometimes inexperienced writers think the ability to write effectively is an inborn talent—that some people just have a knack for writing and others do not. However, strong writers did not acquire the ability to write well from genetics. They became effective writers from study, practice, and discipline. Just as athletes, carpenters, welders, hair stylists, and cooks learn new techniques, strategies, and moves, so do writers. Writers must study and practice to write well.

While not always an easy process, learning to write well is certainly worthwhile because it improves your chances for success in life. In college you will find writing is both a way of learning and a means of demonstrating what you have learned. The ability to write well can also enhance your career opportunities because many employers view it as an asset. People who move ahead in workplaces typically have strong communication skills, and writing well is an important part of that package. Even in your personal life, think about the written communication you do on regular basis such as texting your friends, emailing co-workers and friends, crafting cover letters and résumés, or writing messages in social media.

1 Assess the writing situation—subject, purpose, audience, and genre.

Assess the Writing Situation—Subject, Purpose, Audience, and Genre

If you were to ask successful writers what is important to think about when writing, here are some typical comments you might hear:

- “You have to think about your main point, what you’re trying to say, and what details will help you say that.”
- “You need to ask yourself, ‘Why am I writing this? What do I want to achieve?’”
- “Audience. Audience. Audience. What do readers need to know, and what will make them happy?”
- “Well, what exactly do you have to write? A memo, an informative paper, a report, a review, an email, a persuasive paper? What *kind* of writing will best get the job done?”

Writing is complex because you have to consider many variables. You need to think about your knowledge of the subject and your purpose in writing the document. You have to consider your readers and their expectations. You have to take into account what they may or may not know about the subject, what will interest them, what details are essential, and what kinds of explanation will make your points clear. You also have to consider the best form for presenting this information.

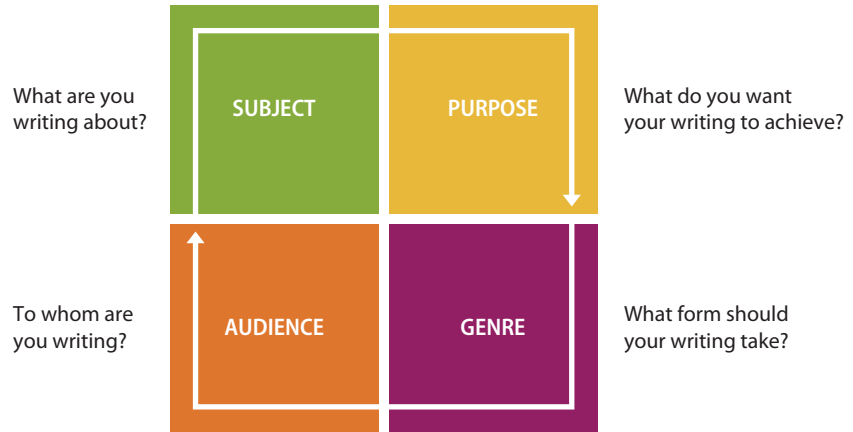


Figure 3-1 Key Writing Concepts

Figure 3-1 shows the key concepts that help writers navigate the various writing tasks they undertake: *subject*, *purpose*, *audience*, and *genre*.

Subject

“What should I write about?” Some people think the hardest part of writing is finding a topic. However, more often than not, you will have to deal with topics professors or employers assign to you. Sometimes, too, situations in everyday life require you to address a subject in writing. Initially, not all of these topics will engage you. In fact, sometimes you may have to write about topics you dislike. So instead of “What should I write about?” the more frequent question is “How can I make this topic interesting for myself and my readers?”

If you find a topic boring or too hard, your reader will likely have the same reaction to your paper on that topic. Challenge yourself to find your own creative ways of making topics and assignments personally interesting. *Begin by having an open mind about the subject and believing that you have something worthwhile to say about it.* Know, too, that you are more likely to become engaged with a subject after you have listened, read, debated, pondered, and explored beyond the surface.

Purpose

A way to think about purpose is to consider *why* you are writing or what you want a piece of writing to accomplish. The very basic **purposes of writing** are these: *to explain*, *to convince*, and *to entertain*.

EXERCISE 3.1 Identify Purposes

MyWritingLab

Directions: Identify the main purpose of each of the following pieces of writing: *to explain*, *to convince*, or *to entertain*. Be prepared to explain your choice.

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| explain | 1. A set of instructions for building a backyard swing set |
| convince | 2. An editorial in the college newspaper calling for a reduction in parking fees |
| entertain | 3. A poem that makes fun of a computer spell-checker program |
| entertain | 4. A tabloid article about the best and worst beach bodies |
| convince | 5. An advertisement for a cell phone provider |
| entertain | 6. A short story about a man who wakes up as a giant bug |
| explain | 7. A set of directions for hooking up a DVD player |
| convince | 8. A letter of reference given to a prospective employer |
| explain | 9. A textbook for an economics course |
| entertain | 10. A Composition I essay describing a childhood memory of a fishing trip |

As you may have realized by completing Exercise 3.1, some writing, such as a textbook or a set of directions, has a very strong focus on explanation. Writing with a primary purpose to *explain* is sometimes called **expository writing**. Other writing—such as advertisements, editorials, and political speeches—has a strong intent to *persuade* or to *convince* readers to take action or change their way of thinking. A great deal of writing—such as gossip magazines, comics, and fiction—simply *entertains* us.

However, once you start digging more critically into the purposes of those documents, the picture becomes more complicated. While a set of directions can be pretty boring and strictly expository, the authors have carefully chosen a format and organization that they think will make the directions easier to follow. So while the primary purpose may be to provide an explanation, the people who write instructions also think about how to make the format pleasing and simple.

Sure, businesses use advertisements to convince consumers to spend money and buy products. However, advertisements also explain or provide *information* about a product. In addition, some of the best advertisements try to be funny or shocking so people will remember them.

Likewise, while a short story may be entertaining to read, it can also explain people, places, problems, issues, and ideas. Through the way it

presents an issue, a story can also convince readers to think about a certain subject or topic in a new way.

In sum, a good piece of writing frequently addresses all three of the purposes: it explains, convinces, and entertains. Keep this in mind as you write papers for this and other college classes. Many of your assignments may seem to have a primarily expository purpose because they will ask you to demonstrate your insights and understanding of a particular topic. However, your writing must also be convincing in that you try to build a good case for readers to accept your points as valid. Finally, you are not going to explain a topic or convince your readers if you cannot keep their attention, so your writing must be pleasing as well.

In later chapters of this textbook you will explore the various methods writers use to achieve their purposes in writing. We refer to these as the **aims of writing**. When you aim for something, you have a goal, something you want to achieve. While your *purpose* is *why* you are writing, the *aim* *points you toward success* in achieving your purpose. Chapters 6–11 are organized around six common aims of writing you will encounter in college, the workplace, the community, and your personal life:

- Describing (Chapter 6)
- Reflecting (Chapter 7)
- Informing (Chapter 8)
- Analyzing (Chapter 9)
- Evaluating (Chapter 10)
- Persuading (Chapter 11)



Audience

Chapter 1 explains the importance of audience awareness in writing situations (see p. 14). Since you are writing for college courses, you already know that professors do not all have the same requirements for their assignments. A biology professor may want a different style of writing than a history professor does.

There is an old saying from the military that “terrain determines tactics,” and this adage proves true with writing. If you think of each person or group of people you are writing to (your audience) as having certain characteristics—values, attitudes, intelligence, and biases—this will take you a long way toward using the right “tactics” to get a good grade, earn a promotion at your job, or influence your community about a certain issue.

EXERCISE 3.2 Write to an Audience

MyWritingLab

Directions: This exercise asks you to think about audience. Below are specific purposes for writing, with two or three distinct readers for each. Given your purpose for writing, explain how you would have to adjust your message or information according to the needs of the specified readers.

- Purpose for writing:** Explaining what Twitter is
Readers: a. an eighty-year-old grandmother who doesn't have a computer
b. a state legislator who has never used Twitter but wants to restrict its use by students and teachers
- Purpose for writing:** Persuading someone to enroll in a local fitness center
Readers: a. young singles (ages 22–32)
b. mature adults (50+)
- Purpose for writing:** Explaining what you liked about the concert you went to last weekend
Readers: a. your best friend
b. readers of a college newspaper column that reviews cultural events
- Purpose for writing:** Persuading someone to oppose your community's plans to widen a street in your neighborhood because of safety concerns as the traffic increases
Readers: a. your local government representative
b. your local newspaper
c. your writing instructor who has just assigned a persuasive essay

Overall, you have to think about the purpose of your writing and how that purpose connects to your reader and audience. If you cannot connect to the audience, your writing will be unsuccessful.

Genre—What Type of Writing Is It?

Genre is a fancy way of saying “category” or “type.” For example, think about the different genres, or types, of TV shows you watch. There are probably quite a few, such as situational comedies, crime dramas, reality TV shows, news magazines, nightly news broadcasts, sports events, and documentaries.

In writing, genres are defined by their audiences, purposes, and subjects. Writing genres you have probably encountered in daily life, college, and the workplace include the following:

academic essays	newspaper articles	pop-up ads
spam	lab reports	advertisements
résumés	memos	emails
reports	letters	blogs

For the most part, in college you are going to write what are commonly referred to as “papers”—essays often based on a thesis. But in some disciplines, such as those in the sciences or in engineering or business, your writing will include workplace genres like reports, memos, and letters.

2 Direct your writing with a thesis statement.

Direct Your Writing with a Thesis Statement

The thesis of a paper provides a writer’s opinion or point about a subject that is shaped by the audience and expected genre (format) of the document. Overall, a thesis answers this question: “What’s the point?” A formal definition of a thesis can be stated this way: A **thesis statement** is a *generalization* written in *precise terms* that presents a *controlling idea* about a subject.

A Thesis Is a Generalization

A thesis, first of all, must be a *general statement* because facts or specific statements do not need a whole paper to back them up. Note the difference between the following two statements:

Tuition at my college is \$4,000 per semester.

College tuition should be tax deductible.

The first statement, assuming it is true, is a *fact*. Your readers are not going to ask, “Why do you say that?” A **fact** is information that is known to be true because it can be proven through experiment or observation, so it is not open to question. On the other hand, readers could ask you to support the *opinion* that tuition should be tax deductible. **Opinions** are general statements that express personal beliefs and require reasons, facts, and examples to back them up and to demonstrate their validity.

EXERCISE 3.3 Identify Facts and Opinions

MyWritingLab

Directions: In each of the following sets of items, determine which statements are generalizations that express opinions (O) and which are specific statements or facts (F).

1. F I visited Boston last summer to build homes with Habitat for Humanity.
 O A trip to Boston can enhance one's understanding of the Revolutionary War.
 O Service projects, like volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, should be a mandatory part of every college program.
 F Habitat for Humanity is an organization that builds decent housing for people in need.
2. F I go to college, work twenty hours a week, and help with the care of my elderly grandmother.
 F My college offers a work/study program.
 O Working part-time while attending college has some distinct advantages.
 O Time management strategies can help students balance their time in their work, school, and personal lives.
3. O Playing video games has taught me strategies I can use in my everyday life.
 F I play video games an average of three to four hours every day.
 O The current labeling system for video games is misleading and needs to be revised.
 F According to the Entertainment Software Association, the average game player is thirty-five years old and has been playing video games for thirteen years.

A Thesis Must Be Written in *Precise Terms*

A thesis is a generalization, so you might ask, "How can a statement be both general and precise?"

The following two statements are generalizations. Which one would be a more precise thesis?

My friendship with Sam is great.

Even during the toughest times, I can depend upon my friend Sam.

Great is an overused word and does not give much of a clue as to the kind of friend Sam is. The second statement gives a clearer sense of what direction the paper will take and what kinds of support the writer will use. The second statement is written in precise terms.

Since you want your thesis to give your readers a clear sense of what your paper is about as well as the point you want to make about that subject, use clear, precise words. Avoid broad and vague words that leave your reader wondering just what your point is.

EXERCISE 3.4 Identify Precise Thesis Statements

MyWritingLab

Directions: All of the following statements are generalizations. Check the statements that give you the clearest sense of what direction the paper will take and what kinds of support the writer will use to validate his or her opinion.

- The playground was bad.
 The playground was unsafe.
- The economics class helped me understand why the U.S. economy is so dependent upon foreign markets.
 The economics class helped me understand many things.
- Michael Pollan's book *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is interesting.
 Michael Pollan's book *The Omnivore's Dilemma* has changed the way I shop for food.
- My trip to the Rocky Mountains taught me to appreciate nature's beauty and respect its dangers.
 My trip to the Rocky Mountains was awesome.
- Eating healthy is a good idea.
 Eating more vegetables and grains is cheaper and more nutritional for us.

A Thesis Presents a *Controlling Idea* about a Subject

A thesis needs to have a *single idea or a set of points that directs the action of a piece of writing*. Without a controlling idea, your paper runs the risk of rambling on about the subject, going in too many different directions, and trying to cover too much. One way to focus your subject with a clear controlling idea is to think of a question you want your paper to answer for your readers. *The thesis will be a single, precise statement that answers that question.*

For example, say you have been asked to write a paper about your experiences so far as a college student. You decide that the question you want your paper to answer is “What did I find most surprising about my first semester as a college student?” After doing some thinking and talking with other students and writing down some thoughts, you come up with the following answer: “During my first semester, I learned that being responsible for my own learning was my biggest challenge.” Now you have a thesis with a controlling idea about your subject.

Now imagine a business teacher has asked you to write a memo to a company proposing a particular charity for the company to support as its annual service project. You decide that you will propose that the company support a local food bank. Your memo needs to answer the following question:



“Why should the XYZ Corporation support the community food bank?”

The answer to that question is the thesis that will drive the action of your memo:

“We should support the community food bank because it is a local organization with a proven reputation that meets a growing need in our community.”

This controlling idea focuses your memo on the three strongest reasons for supporting the food bank.

Using this approach of deciding what question about the subject you want your paper to answer will help you avoid thesis statements that may produce a “So what?” response from your readers.

The following chart provides boring thesis statements contrasted by thesis statements that answer the question, “So what?”

So What? Thesis	Question I Want My Paper to Answer	Thesis with a Clear Controlling Idea
I love all things chocolate. (Why should readers care about my personal preference?)	<i>Why should I not feel guilty about loving chocolate?</i>	A lot of my readers also love chocolate and may be interested in knowing it has health benefits. Thesis: Even though it seems to be only a delicious treat, chocolate has physical and mental benefits.
My boyfriend is wonderful. (Why should readers care about my relationship?)	<i>What makes my relationship with my boyfriend so successful?</i>	Many of my readers may be in relationships and looking for ways to make them better. Thesis: My boyfriend and I have a successful relationship because we have learned the importance of compromise.
Many people have car accidents. (Everyone knows this. Can I tell readers something they do not already know?)	<i>Why do so many of my friends have car accidents?</i>	Maybe there is a common reason or pattern we can learn from and thus avoid future accidents. Thesis: Many car accidents <i>could be avoided</i> if drivers pay closer attention to the road and other drivers.

EXERCISE 3.5 Identify Clear Controlling Ideas

MyWritingLab

Directions: In each of the following sets of items, decide which thesis offers a controlling idea—something that points the paper in a clear direction.

- b 1. a. Young children should eat more nutritious foods and fewer junk foods.
b. Parents can follow several steps to teach their children healthy eating habits at an early age.
- b 2. a. You can enjoy using social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter.
b. Users of social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter should take precautions to prevent unwanted contact with Internet predators.
- b 3. a. Teachers' PowerPoint™ presentations can be boring for students.
b. Teachers can make PowerPoint™ presentations more engaging for students by avoiding five common mistakes.

- b 4. a. College offers far more challenges than high school, but being prepared helps.
- b. Poor study habits picked up in high school can make the adjustment to college more difficult.
- a 5. a. As I navigated campus with my broken leg, I found that it was not accommodating for people with disabilities.
- b. People with disabilities face many obstacles that the rest of us don't even think about during our daily lives.

EXERCISE 3.6 Write Effective Thesis Statements

MyWritingLab

Directions: Compose an effective thesis statement for each of the following writing assignments. Think of the question you want your essay to answer as you create a thesis statement with a clear controlling idea. *Answers will vary.*

1. An essay that shows the role you play in your family
2. An essay that tells the story of an important lesson you learned outside the classroom
3. An essay that proposes a solution to a dangerous situation that exists in your area
4. An essay that explains the benefits of your favorite pastime or hobby
5. An essay that explains the process you followed in enrolling in your first college classes

3 Put IDEAS to work.

Put **I D E A S** to Work: The Essentials of Good Writing

MyWritingLab Visit Ch. 3 Writing and the Process of Writing in MyWritingLab to access the IDEAS videos.

The acronym **I D E A S** stands for **I**nterest, **D**etails, **E**xplanation, **A**udience, and **S**tyle. Successful writers use all of these components to their advantage to inform, persuade, and entertain readers. In Chapter 2, you learned how to use IDEAS to take apart and analyze the work of other writers. As you begin the process of composing your own papers, you can also use the IDEAS template as a way to think about the writing situation as it applies to your particular writing assignment. As you will see in the “Put IDEAS to Work” sections in Chapters 6–11, you can use IDEAS to generate support for your paper as well as to make sure you are thinking about the essentials needed to successfully complete writing assignments.

Developing Content Using the **I D E A S** Tool

Here is a general template for using **I D E A S** as preparation for most kinds of writing. Always remember that most assignments include particular guidelines that you must consider as you generate support for your papers.

Interest

- How can I capture my readers' interest with a thought-provoking title?
- What introduction strategy will work best with this topic? (see pp. 128–135)
- What about this topic most interests me, and how can I share that interest with readers?
- Why should my readers be interested in this topic? How can I help them see its importance?

Details

- What strong, specific, concrete, and vivid details can I provide?
- How can I “make this subject real” through good details?
- Do my paragraphs support the controlling idea of my essay?
- Do my details work together to support the controlling ideas of the paragraphs?
- What organizational strategy best suits my topic and purpose?

Explanation

- Which examples best *show* what I want my readers to understand?
- Can I provide anecdotes and any personal examples?
- Do I use abstract terms or concepts that the reader may need clarified?
- Do I use specialized words or expressions that the readers may not understand? What is the best way to define them for the readers?

Audience

- What do the readers need to know to better understand or appreciate this topic?
- What could bore the readers? If this information is necessary, how can I make it more appealing?
- What attitude or tone is appropriate for the readers?
- What specific words will work best to convey this attitude?
- What level of language will best convey the appropriate attitude to readers?

S tyle

- How can I use sentence variety (different lengths and types of sentences) to make the writing flow effectively from one idea to another?
- What point of view will work best to convey this attitude?
- How will I keep my “voice” as a writer distinct yet appropriate?
- Where can I cut the clutter in my writing?
- What are the kinds of distracting errors I tend to make? How can I avoid them?

4 Practice writing as a process.

Practice Writing as a Process—Embrace the Messiness and Discoveries Before the Finished Product

As many researchers have learned through the years, the best writing comes from a strong **writing process** through which a writer creates multiple drafts. As readers, we see the finished products of writers: their final drafts. What we do not usually get to see is the messiness of the early efforts or the discoveries that preceded the final product. We do not see the failed attempts at an introduction, the rearranging of paragraphs, the boring thesis the writer began with in the first draft, the cutting of details and examples that did not clarify the topic for the reader, or the mechanical and spelling errors the author did not worry about until the editing stage.

By using a process of writing in several stages or steps, writers discover important points, ideas, and details they had not considered at the beginning of the process. In fact, writers often discover what they know and think through the act of writing.

The Writing Process

Author and former Professor of English, Michael E. Adelstein recommends you think of your paper as “your offspring—to nourish, to cherish, to coddle, to bring up, and finally, to turn over to someone else.” He says you will be proud of your paper “only if you have done your best throughout its growth and development.” Adelstein recommends that writers spend certain amounts of time on specific aspects of the writing process, as shown in Figure 3-2.



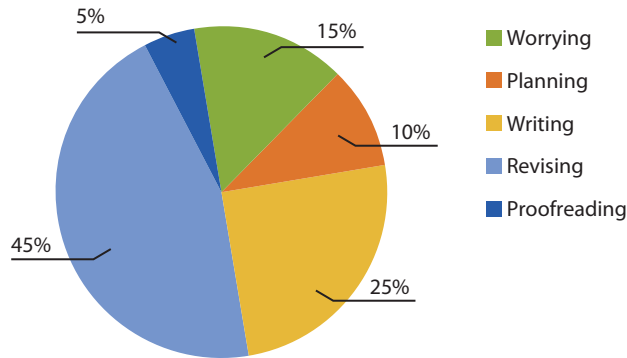


Figure 3-2 Adelstein's Recommendations: The Writing Process

EXERCISE 3.7 Thinking about Your Own Writing Process MyWritingLab

Directions: With Adelstein's recommendations in mind, complete and label your own chart that shows what percentage of your time you spend on these five parts of the writing process: *worrying*, *planning*, *writing*, *revising*, and *proofreading*. Then answer the questions that follow.

1. In which parts do you exceed Adelstein's recommended percentages, and where are you below them?
2. At what stage do you spend the most time and why?
3. If you were to spend *more* time on one stage of the writing process above, which stage would it be and why?
4. If you were to spend *less* time on one stage of the writing process above, which stage would it be and why?
5. Where do you question Adelstein's recommended percentages? Which ones seem to include too much time or too little time?

Taking our cue from Adelstein and other scholars who have done research on the writing process, we have provided similar categories for you to think about the writing process. We think worrying happens throughout the whole process, so it is not in our scheme. However, when you worry too much, your writing is likely to suffer. Sometimes you must put pen to paper or type your thoughts and clean up afterward. You have good ideas and you can express them well—just get them down on the page or screen.

To get to a strong finished product, here is a basic writing process that many people use:

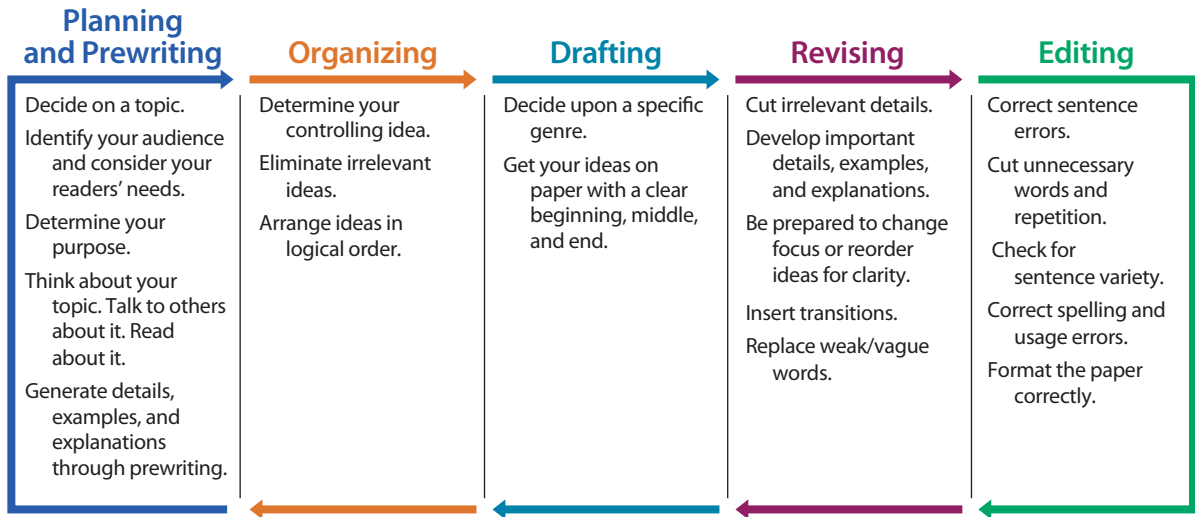


Figure 3-3 The Writing Process

Keep in mind that every writing situation can be different, so on one paper you may spend more time organizing because you might be working with source material, and on another you may spend much more time brainstorming to understand what you are trying to say about your experience or to come up with the specific and concrete details. Your writing will stumble and sputter along at times, but creating “advance planning” through prewriting and organizing will save you a lot of time in the long run.

Also remember that the writing process is **recursive**, meaning that you can go back at any point at any time to revisit points in the process in order to clarify ideas for your readers. Even if you have written a full rough draft, you can return to the prewriting, organizing, and drafting stages during revision. Overall, though, you need to **embrace the messiness and the discoveries** of the writing process.

To illustrate this process, we will follow student Marcus Adams as he writes an essay. His writing instructor created the following writing situation:

A Best Practice for First-Year College Students

Advisors would like current students to share their experiences with beginning students coming to campus next fall. The advisors are compiling a short booklet entitled “Best Practices for First-Year Students” and would like you to contribute a short essay that describes a “best practice” you have discovered. What have you done as a college student that has helped you succeed in your studies? Use your own experiences and/or those of students you know to explain this practice and to show how it has helped you become a successful college student.

Planning

Marcus begins by identifying the components of the writing situation: *topic*, *audience*, *purpose*, and the *genre* or form the final paper will take. All of these will determine the type of work he will have to do before writing the first draft of his paper. His *topic* is a best practice that has helped him be successful in college. His *audience* is incoming college freshmen. His *purpose* is to *inform* them of a practice that could help them succeed. The *genre* is an essay.

Before writing, Marcus spends some time just thinking about the topic. He talks to some of his classmates and friends who are first-year students to get some of their ideas on possible best practices. Marcus knows he can also go to the campus writing center to talk with tutors about his ideas and to brainstorm the topic.

Eventually, it is time for Marcus to get the words and ideas out of his head and on paper. Many writers—even very good ones—find this first step extremely difficult. The prolific and successful writer of fantasy and horror Stephen King has said, “The scariest moment is always just before you start [writing]. After that, things can only get better.” We agree with King. Once you can start to get words and ideas on paper, the process will get better.

During this stage of the writing process, Marcus uses the **I D E A S** template to connect the writing situation to his specific assignment. Exploring the **I**nterest, **D**etails, **E**xplanation, **A**udience, and **S**tyle he will bring to the assignment also helps him to begin prewriting and generate support to use in the paper.

Marcus’ IDEAS

<u>Interest:</u> How can I create interest for the reader? I need to think of something a little different—something that will surprise readers who are expecting to hear the same suggestions for success they have heard before. At the same time, I want to give them good advice.
<u>Details:</u> What strong specific, concrete, and vivid details can I provide about my knowledge of how to handle all the responsibilities and work? How can I make the first semester experience real through good details? I need to make sure that my description of the practice is clear enough that those without college experience can follow it.
<u>Explanation:</u> What examples and explanation can I provide to make the best practice clear? Can I provide anecdotes from my own experiences? I should be able to use my friends’ experiences to back up what I have

learned. Again, these readers may not know some of the college jargon, so if I use any, I'll have to include short definitions.

Audience: *Many of these students are going to be right out of high school, so I don't want to sound too preachy—like a know-it-all. What tone is appropriate for this audience while keeping in mind my instructor is also my audience? Maybe I can use a little humor. I'd really like to tell these readers something they didn't expect to hear.*

Style: *How can I use sentence variety (different lengths and types of sentences) to make the writing flow effectively from one idea to another? Where can I create strong transitions within paragraphs and from paragraph to paragraph? I probably need to avoid overusing "I think that" in the final essay. My instructor has warned us about that wordy construction. I should use strong action verbs in addition to descriptive adjectives.*

Prewriting

To get his ideas on paper Marcus uses various methods of prewriting. These methods all share a goal of freeing up his creativity and letting ideas flow on the page. During the prewriting stage of the writing process, Marcus does not worry about getting everything down in a perfectly organized form. He doesn't worry about spelling, grammar, and punctuation. During the prewriting stage, writers like Marcus should follow the advice of another famous author, James Thurber: "Don't get it right, just get it written."

Here are some methods Marcus uses that might work for you. First, Marcus does some general **brainstorming** just to come up with some ideas of best practices. He commits himself to coming up with at least ten to fifteen ideas before stopping.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming involves listing important details or examples or points that you want to make in a piece of writing. For example, if you are writing an argument, you could list possible objections that readers might have and then show how those readers' objections are off base or illogical. If you are writing a descriptive essay about a place that is important to you, you could list specific and concrete details, painting a verbal picture for your

readers and making them see, hear, and smell that place so they feel like they are there.

Here is Marcus' brainstorming on the writing process:

Marcus' Brainstorming

<i>regular class attendance</i>	<i>participate in class</i>
<i>take notes</i>	<i>don't be afraid to ask questions</i>
<i>keep up with homework</i>	<i>don't procrastinate</i>
<i>manage time</i>	<i>get to know instructors—visit during office hours</i>
<i>balance work and school</i>	<i>treat school like a job—important investment</i>
<i>study a little every night—no cramming</i>	<i>use the library</i>
<i>learn reading and test-taking strategies</i>	<i>find a boss who understands demands of college work</i>
<i>learn to navigate registration process</i>	<i>don't take on too much</i>
<i>meet deadlines</i>	<i>take advantage of any extra credit opportunities</i>
<i>get to know people in class for study groups</i>	
<i>take advantage of free resources like the writing center</i>	

Marcus looks over his brainstormed list and immediately rules out some of the topics because he thinks that a lot of other students would also think of them, and he wants his essay to stand out. He notices that several of his points have to do with work: managing time, balancing work and school, treating school like a job, and finding a boss who respects a student's work.

From talking with his friends, Marcus knows that many students both work and attend college, as he does. However, he also knows that writing about the importance of managing time to balance work and school will be a pretty common approach, and he wants to do something different. So he does a little **freewriting**.

Freewriting

A method both college and professional writers use is **freewriting**. When freewriting, you should not get caught up in correcting grammar or spelling. Nor should you try to organize or stop to judge the worth of the ideas as you write them down. You just write quickly to get ideas onto the page or screen. You should write non-stop, meaning that whatever is going through

your head goes onto the page or screen. If you are thinking, “I don’t know what to say,” for example, you should literally write, “I don’t know what to say” because that is what is in your mind.

This chaotic and messy writing process, in many cases, helps you free up your creativity and discover ideas you might not have discovered if you were carefully crafting a piece of writing. Usually, you should freewrite for anywhere from five to fifteen minutes, and then go back and read what you have written. As you read, underline or circle valid, important, or interesting sections of writing that you might use in your paper. Most of the freewriting may look quite ugly in places, but the point is for you to get ideas out there.

Here is Marcus’ freewriting:

Marcus’ Freewriting

Working and going to school is hard. Most of us don't have a choice. It's something we have to live with. Is it going to do any good to rehash how hard it is and how we have to learn how to manage both? Will others be taking this same approach? What is a different angle? I like my job. I think besides the pay check I have a lot of other benefits from this job. I remember hearing somewhere that students who work do better than students who just go to school. I guess it depends on how much work. Maybe take the approach that working a reasonable number of hours can actually be beneficial. Working and going to school—hard, hard, hard! Is trying to do both even worth it? I don't have a choice. Need the money for bills and to help with college costs. So the money is an advantage—obvious. What else? Managing time. Having a job forces me to manage time—maybe better than if I didn't have a job. I have to stay organized in both places, so work helps school and school helps work. I think it's the same with communication. I work on a team at work and I do group work at school. Working with people all the time helps me use speaking skills. A lot of what my communications teachers talked about made sense when I thought about work. I was able to write up an accident report at work a little better because of my writing class—at least I wasn't too nervous about it. School helps with work and work helps with school. Well, work didn't help with the algebra test I didn't do so well on. I had studied

	<i>and still didn't do well on that test. I wish I could have done as well as I</i>
	<i>did on the safety first test I took at work. Aced it! Even got a perfor-</i>
	<i>mance raise at work. Take that algebra. Doing well at work kind of helps</i>
	<i>me not feel so bad when I don't do well at school. Working and going to</i>
	<i>school might be hard but has a lot of advantages—maybe more than not</i>
	<i>working at all.</i>

By using freewriting, Marcus gains a better sense of what he wants to write about. Now that he has a topic, Marcus does some more focused brainstorming and freewriting as he tries to think of examples of his own personal experiences, since that's what the assignment called for.

Here is Marcus' focused freewriting and brainstorming:

Marcus' Focused Brainstorming and Freewriting

	<i>Benefits of working and going to school</i>	
	<i>Get paid—can afford necessities and education costs. Even though this is obvious maybe I can use it as a starting point. Financial benefits now and in the future.</i>	
	<i>Working gives me job skills I can add to my resume and I'll also make contacts in the workplace. Didn't my friend Amy meet someone at her job who got her an interview after she finished her degree? So maybe I can move from something most readers know to something they haven't thought so much about—better preparation for future career—networking and references.</i>	
	<i>Learn to budget time—multi-task handle many responsibilities</i>	
	<i>Sense of pride in taking care of one's own responsibilities</i>	
	<i>Learn about the real world—better connection to what's learned in classes</i>	
	<i>Better people skills—bosses/coworkers teachers/classmates</i>	
	<i>Builds confidence—capable at work—capable with classes</i>	
	<i>What about the hard and soft skills my business teacher talked about?</i>	<i>Pride and confidence might be something a lot of students don't think about. I am proud</i>
	<i>I'm definitely learning hard skills I can use at work in my writing and speaking</i>	<i>that I am working my way through school—paying my own way. Doing a good job in</i>

Marcus' Focused Brainstorming and Freewriting (cont.)

<i>classes and some in my business class.</i>	<i>both places. This makes me feel I can succeed</i>
<i>But soft skills are really important</i>	<i>in my chosen career which will have all my</i>
<i>to employers, and work and school</i>	<i>focus. I know I can learn and be recognized.</i>
<i>both teach and reinforce these:</i>	<i>Maybe not good at everything I try but I</i>
<i>• showing up on time</i>	<i>know my strengths and capabilities. Not</i>
<i>• following directions</i>	<i>feeling bad about the algebra test because</i>
<i>• working with people</i>	<i>the same week I did so well at work</i>
<i>• meeting deadlines</i>	<i>• good point because it shows how work picked</i>
<i>• handling stress</i>	<i>me up when I'm down</i>
<i>Both work and school reinforce what</i>	<i>• pay my own way</i>
<i>I learn—hard and soft skills.</i>	<i>• recognized for achievements at work and</i>
	<i>school</i>
	<i>• know I'm capable of success</i>

As you can see, Marcus truly embraces the messiness of the writing process as he uses prewriting to find his topic and to generate supporting details and examples.

Once Marcus has generated enough prewriting to have a clear focus and enough support, he moves on to organizing his material. To do this, he must first determine what the point of his essay will be, so he can write a strong **thesis statement** that lets his readers know the **subject** and **controlling idea** of the essay.

One way to compose a thesis is to think of the question you want your paper to answer. The thesis is a clearly stated, one-sentence answer to that question. Here is the question Marcus wants his paper to answer:

Question: What best practice has helped me succeed as a first-year college student?

Answer: Holding a part-time job has helped me succeed in my first year of college.

Now that Marcus has a thesis, he can organize his main points and supporting details and examples.

Organizing

Depending on the way you learn, you might be more open to certain ways of organizing your writing before you get to the drafting stage, so this section will explore various methods of organizing ideas.

Clustering/Idea Mapping

Many people are “visual learners”; they learn better when they can see concepts. For visual learners, the **clustering** or **idea mapping** method of organizing thoughts or points for a paper helps immensely. As you can see in Figure 3-4, using bubbles with basic details in them, Marcus creates sections for his paper while providing specific details for each section. Clustering or idea mapping lets writers space out their ideas and identify relevant and irrelevant support for their thesis.

Formal Outlining

In a **formal outline**, you create a hierarchy of your details and points, organizing your ideas using Roman numerals, letters, and numbers and varying indentations to indicate the importance of each point; the closer to the left margin, the more important the point.

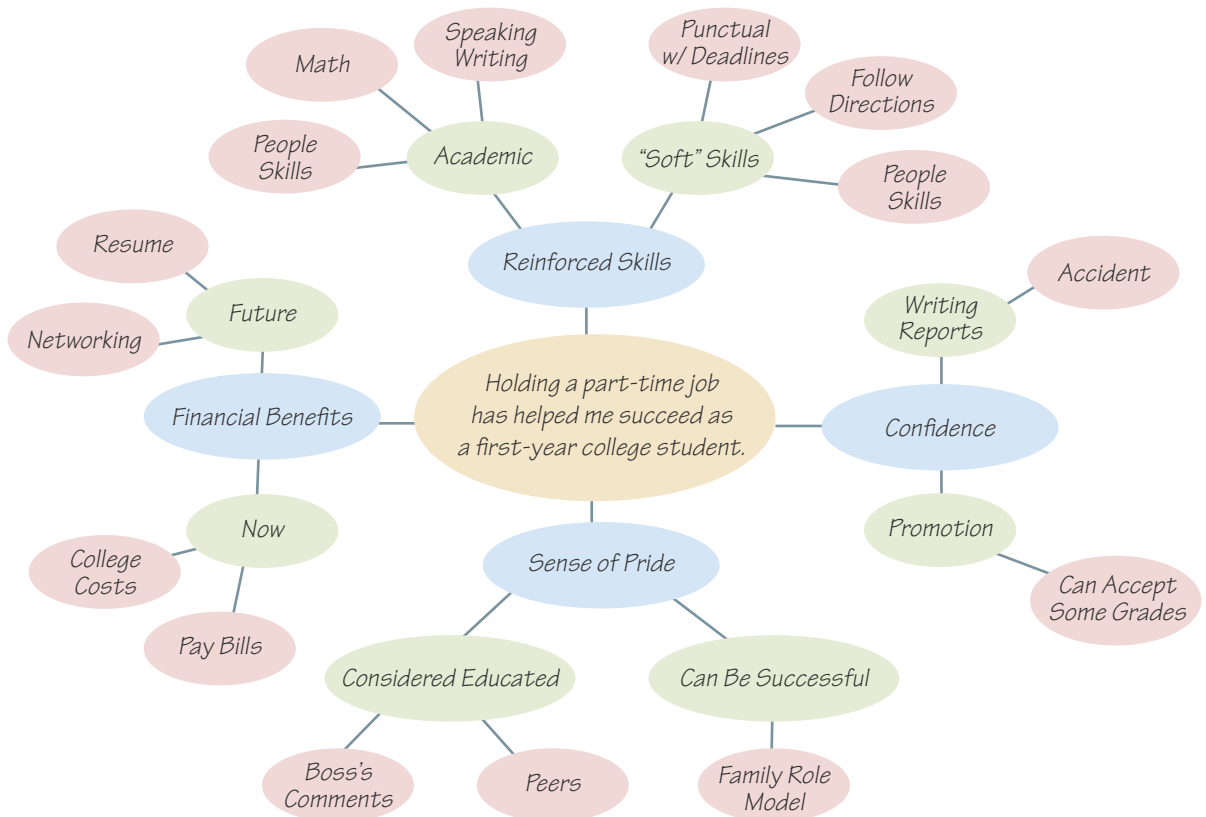


Figure 3-4 Example of Marcus' Clustering

Formal outlining is a valuable tool because it encourages you to create your thesis statement and many times write complete sentences. A formal outline also uses numbers and letters to indicate the different levels of support. This approach may also help you generate more ideas and keep you on track. Furthermore, you can experiment with different organizations for your paper in using formal outlines. Since you probably write using a computer, moving your points around using the “cut” and “paste” functions in your word processing program is quite easy.

Here is Marcus’ formal outline for his paper, which he wrote on his laptop:

Marcus’ Formal Outline

Thesis: Holding a part-time job has helped me succeed as a first-year college student.

- I. Financial benefits are immediate and long-term.
 - A. Now I can cover expenses.
 - B. Work experience will help in future job searches.
- II. Skills are reinforced at work and in school.
 - A. Academic skills are used in both places.
 - B. “Soft” skills are used in both places.
- III. Having a job and going to school builds confidence.
 - A. I’m more confident about writing and speaking at work.
 - B. Promotions at work keep me confident at school.
- IV. There’s pride in being able to do it all.
 - A. People at work consider me “educated.”
 - B. I’m a role model in my family.

Sketch or Scratch Outlining

In contrast to formal outlining, **sketch outlining** is less rigid. Instead of using upper and lower case letters, Roman numerals, and numbers, you simply sketch your ideas in an order that makes sense to you. You can come back to it and change your organization if you think of a better way to organize your thoughts. The important aspect of outlining is putting down descriptive phrases and thoughts that will make you remember what you want to say in the paper.

Here is the scratch outline Marcus wrote before typing the more formal one above:

Marcus' Scratch Outline

Thesis: <i>Holding a part-time job has helped me succeed as a first-year college student.</i>
<i>Financial</i>
<i>Now—cover expenses</i>
<i>Future—help with job search</i>
<i>Reinforced Skills</i>
<i>Academic</i>
<i>“Soft”</i>
<i>More Confidence</i>
<i>Workplace</i>
<i>Classes</i>
<i>Pride</i>
<i>Considered educated at work</i>
<i>Family role model</i>

First Drafting

Once you have taken the best ideas generated through prewriting and organized them in a logical way to support your thesis or point, it is time to begin drafting. During the drafting stage of the writing process, your ideas began to take the shape of the kind of paper you are writing, whether it is an essay, a single paragraph, a letter, or some other genre. Unlike chaotic prewriting, a draft follows the plan of your outline and has a clear beginning, middle, and end.

When drafting, you should give yourself plenty of time to work, and it helps if you have your pre-writing work in front of you as you compose. Do not worry about grammar and proofreading just yet because the important function of this stage in the writing process is to get a draft done. If you manage your time right, which is always important for successful writing, you can go back and redraft sections of the paper. Depending on how large your writing project is, the first draft stage could take one hour of straight writing or it could involve your writing various sections on several different days.

Following is the first draft of the essay Marcus wrote. As you read the draft, notice the instructor's suggestions for revising the essay.

Marcus' Formal First Draft

You have a strong thesis. Can you do more in the introduction to generate interest?

You repeat your thesis here.

Work on using stronger transitions throughout your paper.

Look for places in this paragraph that get off track and do not support your controlling idea.

This is a good example.

You use good examples here.

Avoid overemphatic words.

Can you make the transition more clear?

Notice how many sentences start with "I." Vary your sentences.

Holding a part-time job has helped me succeed as a first year college student. I work about twenty hours a week at a hardware store. Combining this job with my college work has benefitted me several ways. The job helps me financially, academically, and gives me pride and confidence.

For one thing, there are financial benefits now and in the future. I still live at home, so I am lucky not to have to pay for my living expenses. But I do have to pay for my car and cell phone. Also, helping with college expenses like tuition and books. I was shocked how much my books cost my first semester. The money I can contribute helps out my parents because they have my brother and sister to help through college to. In the future my work experience will pay off by giving me experiences to include in my resume. I am majoring in business and hope to manage a store some day. Maybe even start my own business. I can also do some networking at my job that could get me contacts for a job in the future. I meet all kinds of suppliers and business people almost every day at my job. My friend Andrea met an owner of a graphic arts company while she was working at a coffee shop. Andrea was able to go to work at the company after she graduated.

Second, what I learn at college I can use at work what I learn at work I can use in college. I use my math skills a lot when I help customers decide how much lumber they need for a project. Or how many tiles they need for their kitchen floor. Communication skills are useful to. At work I have to communicate effectively, so the speaking and writing skills I learn in my college classes can apply directly to my job. I have had to write an accident report and a suggestion to my manager. I did great on both of those. I even talked to my manager about a promotion idea I got from my business class, and he is going to talk to the store's manager about using it. It helps in my classes to know how I might use what I'm learning in a real job. My business teacher talks about "soft skills" that employers look for, I learn these skills at work and in school. My job has taught me the importance of being on time and following directions. I have to follow directions at work, so I know to read those carefully for all my assignments. I also have to be on time at work and at school. I can lose pay or even my job if I'm late too many times for work. I can also be penalized at school because

I might miss important information at the beginning of class. I have learned to work with supervisors and co-workers. Not to mention customers who occasionally are angry. I also learned how to budget my time carefully having a job and going to school full-time. Unlike some friends who don't.

You need a stronger transition and a clear topic sentence here.

— Third is confidence. One of my friends at work was cut very badly and had to spend time in the hospital. I was with him when the accident occurred so I wrote the report. I would've been nervous about doing that before, but my writing class helped a lot. My boss said I did a great job on the report.

I recently earned a merit promotion at work. My supervisors call me dependable and capable and customers ask to work with me. I now I am valued I know I have strengths and skills that aren't measured by test scores. This picks me up when I take those classes over subjects that don't come easy for me.

Your last two body paragraphs are not as well developed with explanation and examples.

— Finally, there is a sense of pride having a job and going to school gives me. I know I am capable of managing my time and handling multiple responsibilities now and in the future. I like that my boss calls me "the educated one."

They know I'm in college and even when they tease me, I know they respect what I'm doing. At home my parents talk about me to their family and friends.

My dad always says, "He's working hard to pay his way through school."

I am the first in my family to go to college. I know my aunts and uncles tell my cousins to look at how hard I work. I am proud that I am a role model for them.

This, too, is an overused transition. Can you do better?

— In conclusion, some students think that having to work while going to college will make things hard. I hope I have convinced you that just the

You need to sound more confident of your ideas.

opposite is true. I have fewer financial concerns. I learn better because school and work reinforce each other. I have pride and confidence. Just

Did you cover this in the essay? Avoid bringing up new ideas in the conclusion.

— don't work too many hours, and I guarantee school and work can help you be successful too.

Revising and Redrafting

There is an old saying among writing teachers that "Learning to write is really learning how to revise." You may recall that even Adelstein recommends that writers spend most of their writing process revising. Revising and redrafting are *essential* for you to become a better writer.

You should not fall in love with your first draft, and you should not turn in a first draft as though it were your final polished paper. You have to go back and look at your own writing as a skeptic and as a doubter. *True*

revision is what you need to shoot for, not simply using a spell checker and turning in a paper after you have drafted it. *True revision* is literally *re-seeing* your work.

Here are three categories of revision to keep in mind:

Deep Revision

- Creating new paragraphs
- Cutting whole sections
- Changing focus
- Adding examples and support
- Cutting examples and support
- Changing your thesis or controlling idea for the paper
- Drafting a new introduction
- Drafting new support paragraphs
- Drafting a new conclusion

Middle Revision

- Reorganizing
- Adding specific and concrete details to paragraphs
- Modifying a thesis
- Addressing the audience more
- Cutting certain details

Surface Revision

- Cutting unnecessary words
- Combining sentences
- Varying sentences in length and type
- Adding needed words

As you can see, all three categories of revision involve a great deal of work. But that is writing. Although you may have thought good writers just write quickly and then check for grammar and spelling errors, that is not true. Most of the time you do not get to see the messy drafts and big changes that professional and successful writers had to make to arrive at their final polished writing.

EXERCISE 3.8 Analyze Your Own Revision Process

MyWritingLab

Directions: After looking over the descriptions of the various kinds of revision, answer the following questions about your own writing process.

1. How much of your typical writing process time is spent revising? Has this been enough? Why or why not?
2. Which category of revision do you think most of your revising falls under?
3. If you are not already doing deep revision, what do you need to be doing more of in your current revising?

4. Revision involves cutting, adding, and changing or modifying. Which of these do you find the most difficult to do with your drafts? Why?
5. Notice that editing sentence errors appears in none of the categories of revision. Why do you think it is important not to worry about editing when you are revising?

Revision involves thinking about a document from the reader's perspective. The piece of writing you produce has to connect to the reader. By using questions such as the following, you can determine whether you have made all your points clearly enough.

Questions for Revision

- Do I need to go into more detail at certain points of the paper?
- What is not necessary in this paper?
- How can I appeal to my reader more effectively?
- Is this piece boring? How can I make it more interesting?
- Do I need to be more serious or more informal?
- What does the reader absolutely need to know?

You may know the subject of your paper really well, but the crucial test is whether that subject is clear and entertaining to the reader. That crucial test drives strong revision and redrafting.

Editing and Proofreading

Revision, as you have seen, includes all the ways you can improve the *content* of your writing. In contrast, **editing** focuses on *correcting sentence-level errors*.

While using the spell checker and grammar checker on the computer can be helpful, it is only the beginning of serious and successful editing. Here are some guidelines to follow in the final stage of the writing process: the proofreading and editing stage.

Editing Guidelines

- **Use Effective Time Management:** Giving yourself adequate time to edit is crucial for successful, strong writing. Once you have finished writing a paper, it is a good idea to let the paper rest a while (an hour,

four hours, a day) and come back to proofread it later. It is easier to see grammatical and stylistic glitches if the paper is not fresh in your mind. Focus on the style, grammar, and spelling in every single sentence.

- **Beware of the Spell-Check Trap:** If you rely only on spell checkers and grammar checkers, you will probably have many errors in a paper. Spell checkers miss all kinds of usage errors (*they're* vs. *there* vs. *their*, for example) and grammatical problems. These simple errors hurt the readability of an essay by distracting your reader, which in turn damages the paper's credibility.
- **Read the Paper Out Loud:** Reading a document aloud is a common technique used by both beginning and professional writers. Reading a paper out loud slowly helps you catch phrases that just do not “sound right” and lets you focus on what is actually on the paper, not what you *meant to say* in the essay.
- **Read the Paper Backwards:** Another helpful technique used by professional writers is reading a paper backwards. You start by proofreading the last sentence, making sure there are no misspellings and mechanical errors. Then you move on to the next-to-last sentence, and so on. Reading a document backwards puts the paper out of context, so you are able to isolate the sentences and their grammatical issues without being distracted by content.
- **Read the Paper Out Loud and Backwards:** Use this combined method by incorporating both techniques discussed above.
- **Use the Pencil or Ruler Method:** Some writers use a pencil or ruler as a guide to focus on each individual sentence as they proofread. This technique prevents you from looking ahead and helps you concentrate on the sentence at hand.

An especially helpful editing resource you can use is Chapter 15: Correcting Sentence Errors. This chapter should be your go-to resource when you are nearing the end of the writing process, the time when you are editing to create a strong and polished paper.

EXERCISE 3.9 Edit and Proofread a Paper

MyWritingLab

Directions: Here is the revision of Marcus' rough draft. Use some of the editing techniques described in this chapter to go through this draft and see what sentence errors you can find.

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Marcus Adams

Prof. Copeland

Introduction to College Writing

The Benefits Of

Being a Working Student

Those of us who work and take college classes are not alone. According to the 2011 U.S. Census, 72% of undergraduates worked during the year, and 20% worked full-time (“New Analyses”).

I sometimes hear students complain about balancing work, and school. I understand their complaints, because I work twenty hours a week at a hardware store, and I have just begun my second semester as a full-time college student. While working and going to school is not always easy, I have found that holding a part-time job has helped me succeed as a first year college student.

The most obvious benefit of working is financial. I live with my parents, who are helping me pay for college, but I am able to help with some of the expenses. Like the \$350 I paid for books my first semester. My job also allows me to pay for my car and cell phone, so I can establish a good credit score, which will pay off in the future. Working now can have future benefits, too. I will be able to use my current work experiences in my resume after I graduate and begin looking for a place to start my career in business. I can also do some networking at my job and maybe find contacts for future work. My friend Andrea, for example, met the owner of a graphic arts company while she was working at a coffee shop. After Andrea graduated, the company owner offers her a job. I meet all kinds of suppliers, contractors, and other business people almost every day at my job. After I graduate, one of them may be the door to my future career.

A real advantage of working and going to school that I didn’t expect were how the skills I learn in both places are reinforced. I use

▶ do not capitalize

▶ no comma

▶ no comma

▶ fragment

▶ misplaced modifier
This describes the owner,
not Andrea.

▶ verb tense

▶ subject-verb agreement

Adams 2

▶ fragment

my math skills a lot when I help customers decide how much lumber they need for a project. Or how many tiles they need for their kitchen floor. At work I have to communicate effectively, so the speaking and writing skills I learn in my classes can apply directly to my job. For example, I had to write up an accident report at work. My boss complimented me on how clear and well-written my report was. I even talked to my department manager about a way to promote one of our products based on an idea I got in my business class now she is going to take my idea to the store manager. Then there are what my business teacher calls the “soft skills” that employers look for and professors appreciate too. Showing up on time is important at work and at school. I can lose pay or even my job if I’m late too many times for work. I can also be penalized at school because I might miss important information at the beginning of class. My job has also taught me the importance of following directions, so I know to read and listen to those carefully for all my assignments in my classes. Since working with supervisors, co-workers and customers, I know how important people skills are, I now enjoy the group work I have in my college classes.

▶ run-on

▶ awkward phrasing

▶ wrong word

▶ comma splice

▶ dangling modifier

Learning all these skills, my confidence at work and school has increased. For instance, before taking a writing class, I would have been really nervous about writing that accident report. I might even have been too unsure of myself about sharing that suggestion for product promotion with my boss. It’s probably because I am applying these skills at work and impressing my supervisors that I was given a merit raise. That raise lifted my confidence and showed me I am a valued employee who has strengths and skills that aren’t all measured by test scores. This confidence picks me up when I take classes over subjects that don’t come easy for me. If I don’t do well on a test, I’ll try harder, I won’t give up.

▶ apostrophe

▶ comma splice

▶ shift in person

All the confidence working and going to school has given me makes you proud. I know I am capable of managing my time and handling multiple responsibilities now and will be able to do the same in the future. I feel respected when my boss calls me “the

Adams 3

educated one." They know I'm in college, and even when they tease me, I know they respect what I'm doing. At home my parents talk about my accomplishments to family and friends. Not only am I the first in my family to go to college, I am helping to pay my way. My dad always says, "he's working hard to pay his way through school." I know my aunts and uncles tell my cousins to look at how hard I work. I am proud that I am there role model

▶ pronoun reference

▶ capitalize

▶ wrong word

Some students complain that they have to work while attending college, but I wouldn't have it any other way. I have fewer financial concerns. My job helps me in my classes and my classes help me at my job. I have confidence in what I can do and pride in my accomplishments. For me, working while going to school is a blessing, not a curse.

▶ add comma

Adams 4

Works Cited

"New Analyses of Census Bureau Data Examine Nation's 65 and Over Work Force, Working Students and Changes in Self-Employment." United States Census Bureau. 24 Jan. 2013. Web. 20 March 2015.

ADDITIONAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Extended Analogy Essay: Writing Is Like . . .

Your Task: An **analogy** compares two unlike things. You may have heard the famous analogy from the movie *Forrest Gump*: “Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get.” Looking at the common elements of two very different things can lead to new insights and understanding.

For this assignment you will write an *extended* analogy essay about the writing process. This means you will explain the writing process in some detail by comparing it to a process that is entirely different yet shares some common elements.

A logical strategy in writing is to move your readers from what they know to what they don’t know. So following your introduction, in the first part of the essay, explain the process that is like writing—a process your readers should likely be able to readily visualize and understand. In the second part of the essay demonstrate how writing is like the first process, showing how the steps correspond in an imaginative way. Be sure to keep the essay fairly balanced in its explanation of each process. End the essay with a short conclusion that emphasizes a key insight about the nature of writing.

Your Role and Audience: Imagine that this paper will be read by aspiring writers who do not yet know much about the writing process. Therefore, your goal is to both inform them about the writing process and entertain them with the insights of your comparison. Another reader is, of course, your instructor, who will gain some insights about your writing habits and your attitude toward writing. You will also share this paper with your peers in class who will both enjoy and learn from your take on an experience you will all share this semester.

Here are some guidelines for writing a successful extended analogy paper:

A Successful Extended Analogy Paper . . .

- Offers an interest-generating introduction by surprising the reader with an unlikely comparison.
- Provides a clear thesis that reflects the whole essay—“Writing is like . . .”
- Makes the comparison explicit with specific details and examples that lead to an insightful understanding of the writing process.
- Connects ideas through the use of a logical and effective organization with appropriate and effective transitions.

- Has strong paragraph unity—each paragraph has a specific purpose.
- Ends with a clear sense of closure, perhaps leaving the reader with a final thought or insight.
- Exhibits strong sentence variety—varied sentences of different lengths and types.
- Provides a medium level of tone and diction—not too formal but not too informal.
- Does not have editing errors that distract the reader or disrupt the meaning of sentences.

Writing a Development Plan Paper

Your Task: Your task is to write a paper detailing a writing development plan that will help you improve as a critical thinker and writer.

Students write a lot in college, whether it is scientific reports, reading journals, essays, PowerPoint™ presentations, or research papers. Based on your experience with writing so far and thinking about what you might want to do after you graduate, what are specific aspects of writing you need to work on and how will you go about addressing them? Here is how to get started:

1. **In the first part of the paper**, its introduction, explain what you feel is essential for effective or quality writing (one or two paragraphs).
2. **In the second part of the paper**, transition to *what you need to do*, essentially relating your goals for this course and how you will go about becoming a stronger writer. You must provide a thesis early on to introduce your writing development plan for the next few years of your life, and then you need to develop the various areas of the plan with details, examples, and explanation in the body of your paper.
3. **To create your writing development plan**, use these questions to aid you in the prewriting, organizing, and initial drafting stages of the writing process:
 - How can I prepare myself to write in college and my potential career?
 - What aspects of writing do I need to work on and why? What will I do to develop them?
 - What components of the writing process do I need to develop more fully? Why, and what are my plans for change?

All of these questions should prepare you to reflect on and support your assertions with specific details and examples.

Your Role and Audience: This paper is assigned to benefit your education, and it should provide direction for your writing in this course, in other classes, and in the future. In addition, the paper serves as a formal document in which you reflect on writing and establish goals in your education.

Here are some guidelines for writing an effective development plan paper:

A Successful Writing Development Plan Paper . . .

- Details what you believe are the components of effective writing, which acts as an introduction before the thesis of the paper.
- Provides a clear thesis that reflects the whole essay—your writing development plan and why those goals are important.
- Presents a clear writing development plan that connects to your academic writing and possible career paths.
- Presents your areas of development as a writer with specific details and examples while relating what you need to do—the tactics and strategies you will use to make yourself a stronger writer.
- Connects ideas through the use of appropriate and effective transitions.
- Has strong paragraph unity—each paragraph has a specific purpose.
- Exhibits effective sentence variety—varied sentences of different lengths and types.
- Provides a medium level of tone and diction—not too formal but not too informal.
- Does not have editing errors that distract the reader or disrupt the meaning of sentences.
- Is relatively free of mechanical and proofreading errors.

USING IDEAS

Here is the **IDEAS** template as you might adapt it to this particular assignment:

Interest

- How can I create interest for the reader?
- What does the reader need to know and what could bore him or her?
- Can I remember any good advice about writing that I can relate from experience?
- What have people told me about my writing ability, and what do I already know about writing and the writing process?

Details

- What strong, specific, concrete, and vivid details can I provide about my knowledge about writing?
- How can I “make it real” through good details about writing in general and, most importantly, my writing development plan that addresses where I need to grow as a writer?
- What writing weaknesses do I need to work on?
- What do I do well in writing, and how can I further enhance those strengths?
- What stages of the writing process do I need to develop more fully?
- What do I need to do to be better prepared to write in my potential career?

Explanation

- What have I been told about my writing before this course? What did I need to work on, and what did I do well? Who told me this?
- What examples from personal experience (positive and negative) can I provide in the paper?
- How has my writing process proceeded in the past? How should it change and why?
- What techniques and methods detailed in this chapter do I want to try and why?
- What types of writing will I do in the future, and how can I prepare myself to do this writing?

Audience

- What tone is appropriate for the instructor I’m writing for?
- What understanding of writing is my instructor most interested in seeing me demonstrate?

Style

- How can I use sentence variety (different lengths and types of sentences) to make the writing flow effectively from one idea to another?
- Where can I create strong transitions within paragraphs and from paragraph to paragraph?
- Am I using strong verbs in my sentences?

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

Learning Objectives . . . How they connect to learning, reading, and writing at college . . .

- 1 Assess the writing situation.

When writing a paper, you need to consider these core components:

- *Subject*: Gain knowledge of, generate content for, and reflect on the topic.
- *Purpose*: Focus your writing by considering the document's purpose.
- *Audience*: Consider what evidence and points will work effectively for the reader.
- *Genre*: Use the correct format the writing situation demands.

- 2 Direct your writing with a thesis statement.

An effective thesis statement should be a generalization, use precise terms, and have a controlling idea.

- 3 Put **I D E A S** to work.

You can use the **I D E A S** tool (Interest, Details, Explanation, Audience, and Style) to generate content for your papers and to analyze other people's writing.

- 4 Practice writing as a process.

You should know and be able to work in these stages of the writing process:

Planning

- Considering the subject, purpose, audience, and genre of a paper.
- Using **I D E A S** to generate content.

Prewriting

- Brainstorming
- Freewriting
- Focused Freewriting and Brainstorming

Organizing

- Clustering/Idea Mapping
- Formal Outlining
- Sketch/Scratch Outlining

First Drafting: Writing a provisional first draft to get the paper started

Revising & Redrafting: Understanding the levels of revision and implementing them into your process

Editing & Proofreading: Using effective editing and proofreading techniques

MyWritingLab Visit **Chapter 3, "Writing and the Process of Writing,"** in MyWritingLab to test your understanding of the chapter objectives.