

Writing



INSIDE

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Writing



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PROGRAM AUTHOR

Gretchen Bernabei



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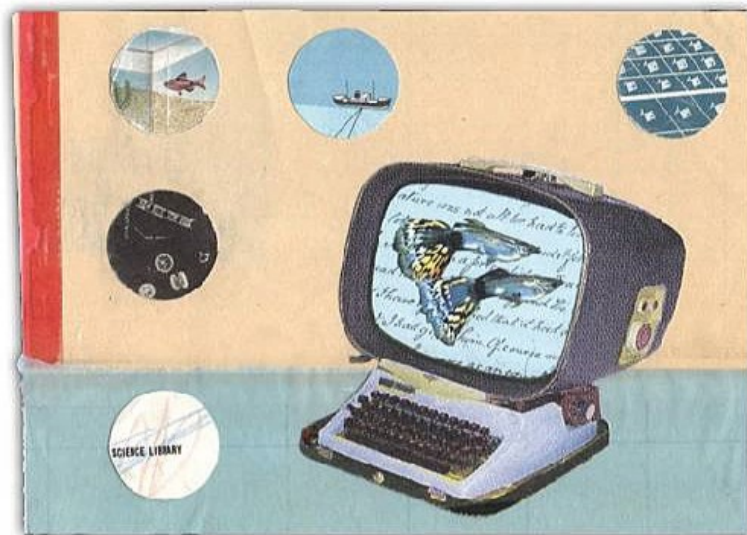
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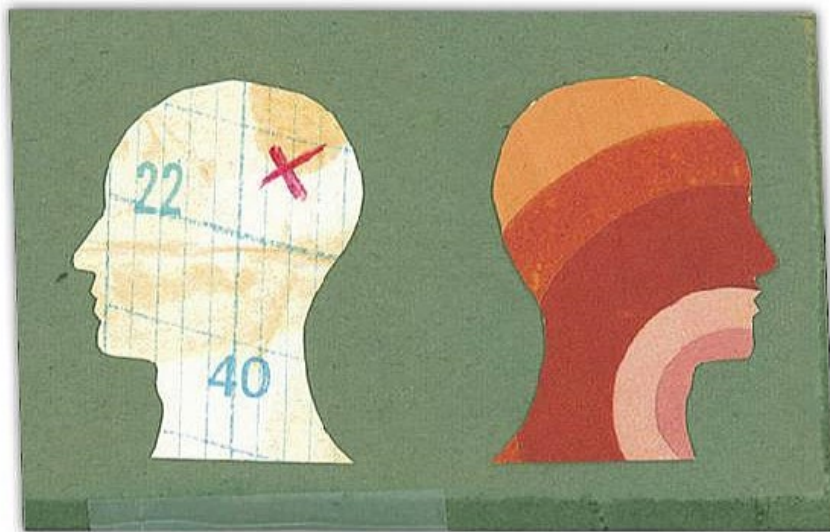
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YOU ARE



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THE Building Blocks OF WRITING

Project 1 Paragraph Structure:

Ways to Organize ■ INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY

Problem-and-Solution Paragraph	6W
Chronological-Order Paragraph	8W
Spatial-Order Paragraph	10W
Compare-and-Contrast Paragraph	12W

Paragraph Structure: Ways to Organize



"I keep a journal so I can write about the good times and the not-so-good times."

—Paul

Model Study

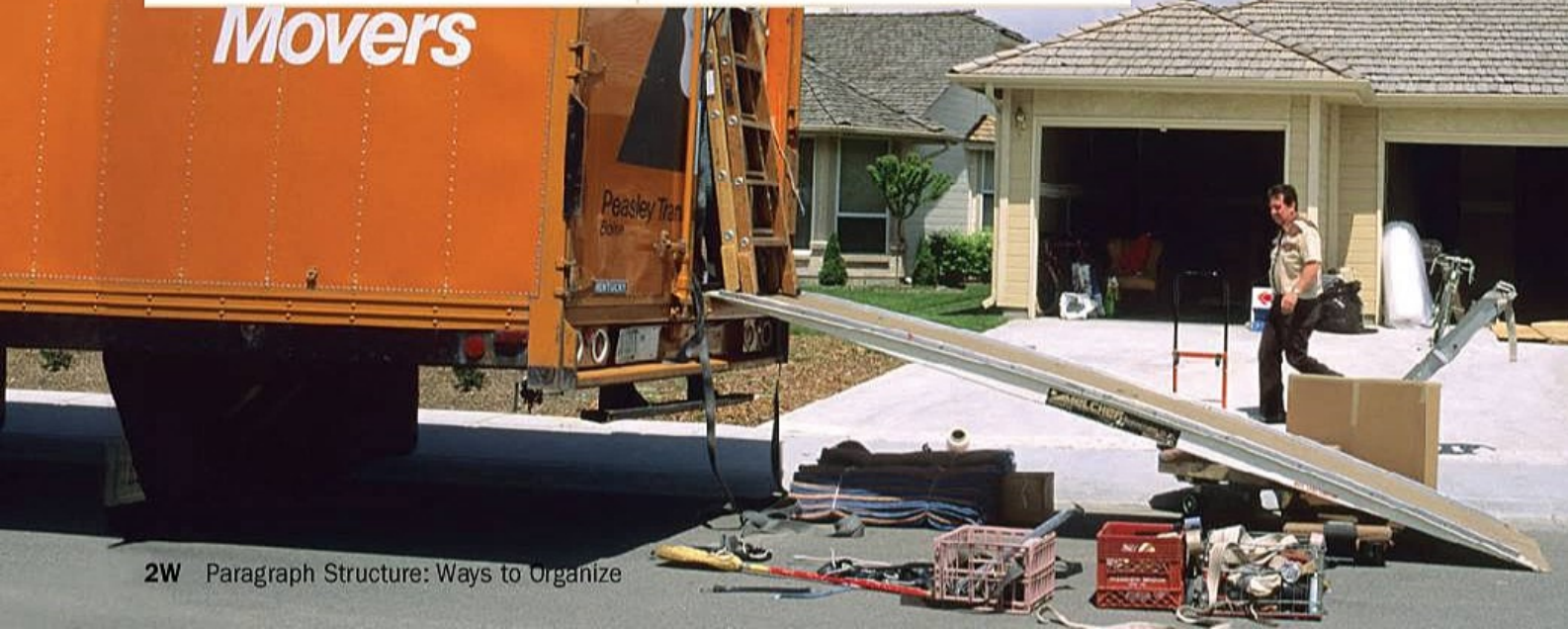
Sentences and Paragraphs

One great way to express your ideas is through writing. When you write, your reader can understand your ideas more easily if they are presented clearly and in an organized way.

Start with Sentences

You start with writing a group of words that relate a complete thought. There are four types of sentences:

Type of Sentence	Example
A statement tells something.	I grew up in Tallahassee, Florida.
A question asks something.	What elementary school did you go to?
An exclamation shows strong emotion.	That's a really cool name!
A command tells you to do something.	Tell Mom I'm staying over at Gary's house tonight. Look at that car!



Build to Paragraphs

When you write, you put sentences together in an organized way to create **paragraphs**. Make sure that each paragraph has a clear **main idea** stated in a **topic sentence**. The other details in the paragraph should support the main idea with **details** and **examples**.

This is the **topic sentence**. It tells the main idea of the paragraph.

This **detail** supports the main idea.

PARAGRAPH

The Move

by Jim Kozlowski

Sometimes moving to a new neighborhood can be difficult, but it is a good way to meet new people and see new places. For example, I met my best friend when my family moved two years ago. At first, I didn't think I would be happy leaving my old school. However, I ended up liking my new school even better.

An **example** clarifies the main idea.

Student Model

PARAGRAPH

A good paragraph

- has a topic sentence that states the main idea
- contains details that tell more about the main idea.

Feature Checklist



Organize Your Paragraphs

What's It Like ?

What do you think of when someone talks to you about his or her “best friend”? You may not know all of the details of the friendship, but you have a good sense of what to expect. A topic sentence works that way, too. It doesn't give away all of the details, but it tells the reader what to expect.



Getting to a Topic Sentence

First, you need to decide what to write about. That will be your **topic**. Then think about what you want to say in general about your topic—that will be your **main idea**. Next, follow these steps to get to a topic sentence:

- Write as many details as you can that support your main idea.
- Look to see how the details are related to each other and to the main idea.
- Write a full statement that expresses your main idea as it relates to the details you plan to cover in your paragraph.

Here's how one student got to her topic sentence.

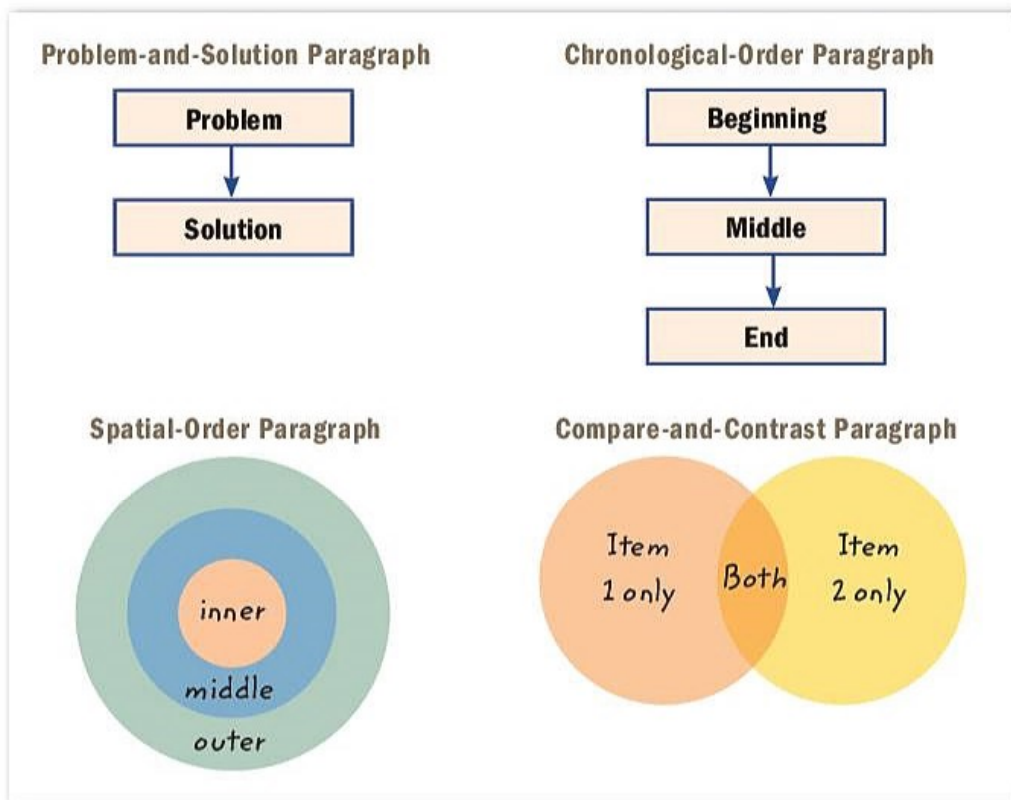
Topic: My best friend Rita
Main Idea: Our friendship and why I like her
Details:

- met in fifth grade
- great listener
- fantastic sense of humor

Topic Sentence:
I am so grateful that Rita is my best friend.

Paragraph Organization

Your topic sentence and supporting details will determine how your paragraph is organized. Below are four common types of paragraph organization. We'll go through each type in more detail on pages 6W–13W.

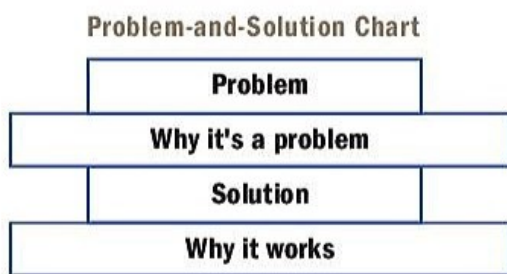


Problem-and-Solution Paragraph

Everyone comes up against tough problems sometimes. People face problems and think about solutions every day. How do you solve problems in your day-to-day life? If you want to write about a problem and its solution, you need to organize your ideas clearly:

- Begin by describing the problem in detail.
- Explain how you think the problem can be solved, or describe how it was solved.

Before you start writing, you can use a problem-and-solution chart to help organize your thoughts.



Read the model on page 7W. It shows the features of a good problem-and-solution paragraph.

PROBLEM-AND-SOLUTION PARAGRAPH

A good problem-and-solution paragraph

- presents a problem
- explains the problem clearly and in detail
- presents a solution
- explains how the solution addresses the problem.

Feature Checklist

PROBLEM-AND-SOLUTION PARAGRAPH

The Surprise Party

by Serena Jones

Belinda decided to throw a surprise birthday party for her friend Alicia. After she had already sent the invitations, she discovered that Alicia's family was leaving town to visit relatives that same weekend. Belinda used her phone and e-mail to contact everyone on her list. Luckily, she was able to change the party date to the following weekend.

The writer describes the **problem** Belinda encountered.

Then, the writer shows the **solution** Belinda found.

Student Model

Problem

Alicia's family is going out of town.

Why it's a problem

Belinda has already sent out invitations for a surprise birthday party.

Solution

Belinda contacts everyone by phone and e-mail.

Why it works

She is able to change the party for the following weekend.

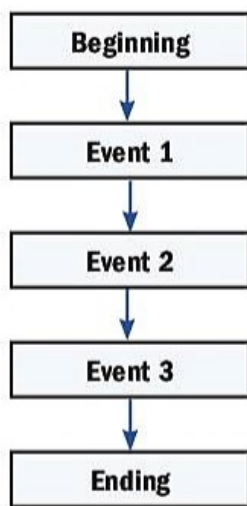


Chronological-Order Paragraph

You often tell about things that happen to you. When you retell events, you usually tell them in the order they happened. If you mix present and past events, your listener will have a hard time following what you are saying.

When you want to write about a series of events, retell the events in the sequence in which they occurred. This sequence is called **chronological order**. Start with what happened first, and lead the reader to the final event. When you write events in chronological order, use words such as *first*, *then*, *after*, and *finally*.

Read the student model on page 9W. It shows the features of a good chronological-order paragraph.



CHRONOLOGICAL-ORDER PARAGRAPH

A good chronological-order paragraph

- tells events in the order they happened
- uses words like *first*, *next*, *then*, *after*, and *finally* to show the sequence of events.

Feature Checklist

CHRONOLOGICAL-ORDER PARAGRAPH

Cooking with Katrina

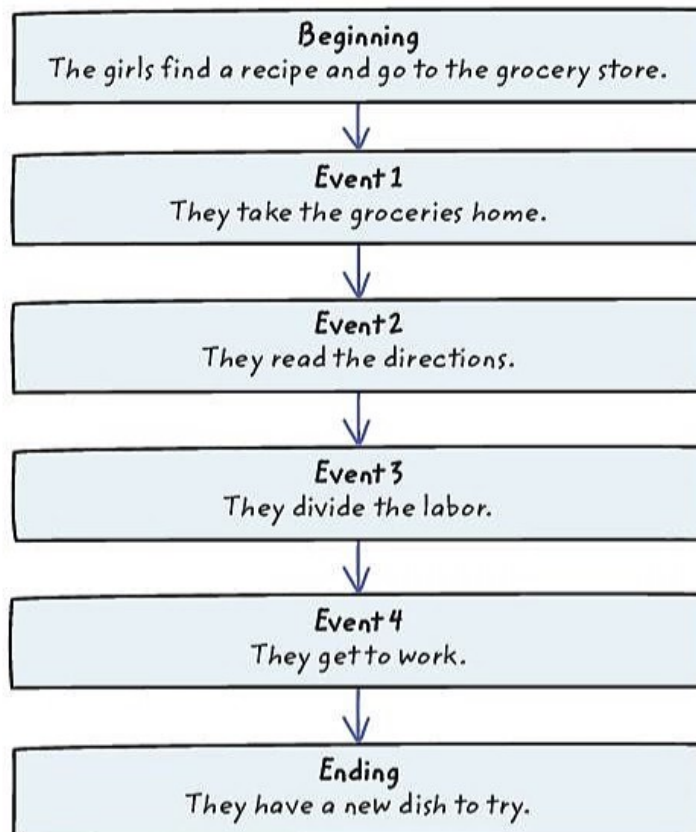
by Priya Mehtani

Once a month, my best friend Katrina and I use the Internet to find a recipe we've never tried before, and then we walk to the grocery store to buy the ingredients. After we purchase what we need, we go home and start on our new creation. Then we read the recipe's directions carefully. Next, we decide how to divide the labor so the process goes smoothly. Finally, we get to work, measuring and pouring and slicing and dicing. Soon we have an interesting new dish to try.

These two events are in **chronological order**.

Signal words help the reader understand when something happened.

Student Model



Spatial-Order Paragraph

How would you describe the way someone was dressed on a special occasion? You might start by describing the person's hairstyle or hat. Then you'd move down, describing each item of clothing until you got to the person's shoes. To do this a different way, you could start with the shoes and then move up.

When you write to describe something you see, choose a starting point and then move in a clear direction. Use **spatial order** to describe something so your reader can picture what it's like. Proceed from inside to outside, left to right, or top to bottom.

You might want to begin by drawing and labeling a picture. This will help you organize the details of your description.

Read the student model on page 11W. It shows the features of a good spatial-order paragraph.

SPATIAL-ORDER PARAGRAPH

A good spatial-order paragraph

- proceeds from a visual starting point to an ending point
- takes the reader logically from one place to the other
- uses signal words like *over* and *beyond* to show spatial order.

Feature Checklist

My Neighborhood

by José Torres

The writer describes his neighborhood from the nearest area to the farthest area.

As you approach the main street of my neighborhood, the first thing you see is the cars—lots of them, lining the wide street. Light poles on the other side of the street tower over the trees. There are houses and shops all along the busy street. Farther back, in the distance, you can see the bay, with sailboats cruising in the breeze. Beyond the bay are high, grassy hills.

Student Model



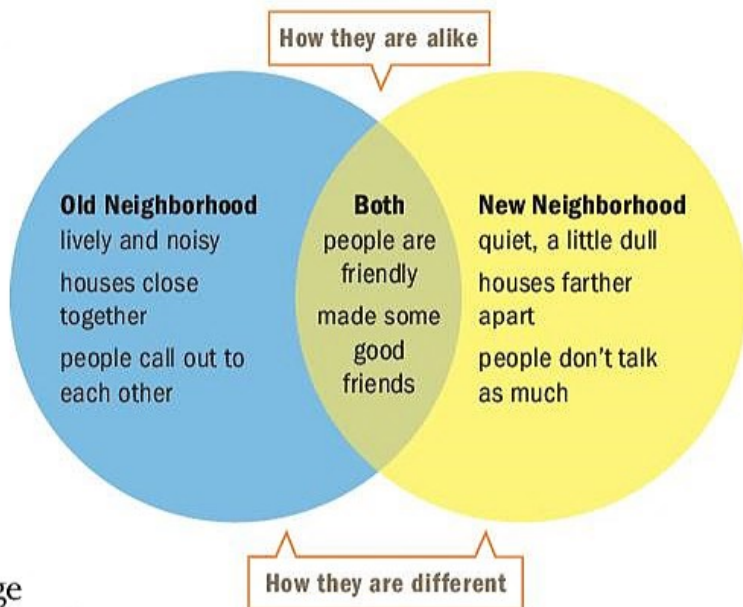
Compare-and-Contrast Paragraph

When you want to bring attention to the similarities or differences between two things, you write a paragraph that compares and contrasts.

When you **compare**, you write about how two things are similar. When you **contrast**, you write to show how two things are different.

You can use a **Venn diagram** to show the similarities and differences between two things. A Venn diagram uses overlapping circles to organize these details.

Read the student model on page 13W. It shows the features of a good compare-and-contrast paragraph.



COMPARE-AND-CONTRAST PARAGRAPH

A good compare-and-contrast paragraph

- names the items being compared
- describes ways the items are similar
- describes ways the items are different
- includes signal words like *both*, *same*, *different*, and *however* to show similarities and differences.

Feature Checklist

COMPARE-AND-CONTRAST PARAGRAPH

A New Place

by Cassie Edwards

The writer names the things being compared.

The writer tells how the neighborhoods are different.

The writer tells what the neighborhoods have in common.

My new neighborhood is very different from my old neighborhood in some ways, but also similar. My old neighborhood was always lively and noisy, while my new neighborhood is quiet and a little dull. In my old neighborhood, the houses are close together, and people call out to each other whenever they're working outside. Here, however, the houses are farther apart, and people don't talk to each other. People in both places are friendly, though. I've made some good friends here, just as I did in my old neighborhood.

These signal words cue the contrasts.

These signal words cue the similarities.

Student Model



Write a Paragraph



WRITING PROMPT There are more things to write about than there are people in the world! Now that you have learned about different ways of organizing paragraphs, pick a topic related to your life and write a paragraph. You can choose any of the four structures you have learned about.

Be sure you include

- a topic sentence
- a clear text structure
- interesting details that support your topic sentence.

Plan and Write

Here are some ideas for how you can plan and then get started on your writing.

1 Choose a Topic

Decide what to write about. You can't tell everything about your favorite animal in one paragraph, so what is it that you want readers to understand? This will be your main idea.

My Life

- grew up in Austin, Texas
- love playing the piano
- have lots of great friends

2 Get Some Details Down on Paper

After you choose your topic and decide what you want to say about it, list some details and examples that support your main idea.

- started taking lessons when I was five
- had my first solo recital when I was nine
- want to go to music school when I'm older

3 Choose an Organization and Write a Topic Sentence

Think about how your details relate to one another and to the main idea. Your main idea and details will usually suggest a specific organization. Write a topic sentence that expresses your main idea fully and reflects your organization.

Topic Sentence for Chronological-Order Paragraph

Playing the piano has always been an important part of my life.

- 4 Turn each detail on your list into a supporting sentence to flesh out your paragraph. Each sentence should explain the main idea or give an example of it. A graphic organizer might help you arrange the sentences effectively.

Playing the piano has always been an important part of my life. I was only five years old when I started taking lessons from old Mr. Aiello down the block.

started lessons at five

first solo recital at nine

plan to go to music school

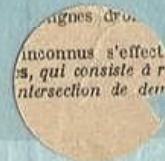


Reflect

- Is your main idea clear in your topic sentence?
- Are all of your details connected?



A



Z

THE Writing Process

Project 2 Use the Writing Process ■ NARRATIVE

Stages of the Writing Process	18W
Prewrite.	20W
Draft	32W
Revise	42W
Edit and Proofread.	48W
Publish, Share, and Reflect.	60W

Use the Writing Process



"Writing isn't scary!
Just take it step by step
and you'll come up with
something good."

—Magdalena

Writing Strategy

The Writing Process

Learning to write well is like learning to play the guitar. It takes a lot of time and practice to become really good at it. And there's a process. You figure out the basics first—what you'll write about and how you'll organize it. Then you put your ideas together in a creative way and fine-tune them until they sing.

What Are the Steps of the Writing Process?

Writers follow a process to make their writing the best it can be. The writing process usually involves five stages—**prewriting**, **drafting**, **revising**, **editing and proofreading**, and **publishing**.

1 Prewrite—Get Ready to Write

Prewriting is what you do before you write. You choose a topic, think about what to say, and develop a plan. What is the plan that works best for you? You can write notes, make an outline, or even sketch drawings.

2 Draft—Get It Down on Paper

Drafting is the next step. Writing down that first draft is sometimes the hardest part. But it can also be the most exciting. Remember, your first draft doesn't have to be perfect. You can make changes later, so relax and enjoy the work.

3 Revise—Get It to Sing

After you finish your draft, put it aside for a while. Then you can come back to it with fresh eyes. You might end up making major changes! You might move sentences around or add new ideas.

4 Edit and Proofread—Get It Right

Once you've made the big changes, work on getting the details right. This is when you correct your sentences and fix any mistakes in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.

5 Publish, Share, and Reflect—Get It Out There

Do you want other people to read your work? Then publish it! Writers share their work in newspapers, magazines, and books. More and more writers publish on the Internet, too. Sharing your writing with your family, friends, and classmates is another form of publishing. Don't forget to reflect on your writing yourself—think about what you have worked so hard to create!

Your Job as a Writer

Good writers have many trade secrets. One of them is using the writing process. Try it on this project.

Write a Personal Narrative



WRITING PROMPT Everyone has stories to tell about his or her life. What are the most important events of your own life? How have they influenced or changed you, and what have you learned from them?

Think about an important event from your own life. Then write two or three paragraphs about it. Your paragraphs should

- tell a true story with a beginning, middle, and end
- present events in chronological order
- use specific details, including sensory details, to help readers imagine the event
- express your thoughts and feelings about the event.



Prewrite: Collect Ideas

Where can you get ideas for your writing? Look around you. What you see, hear, and read will give you ideas. You can get ideas from inside, too—from your feelings and imagination. Once you start looking for inspiration, you'll find it everywhere.

Ways to Come Up with Ideas

Rev up your idea engine. Think about:

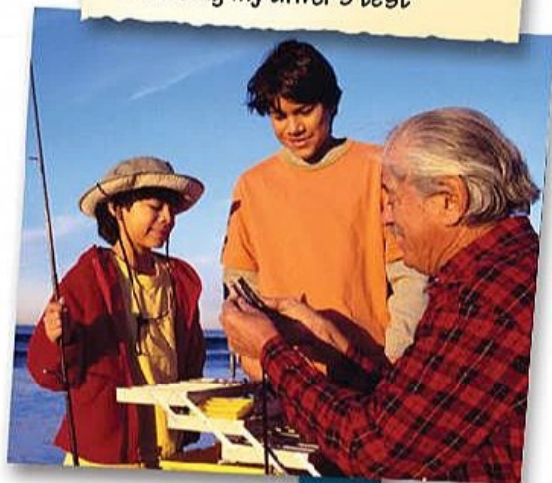
- funny, strange, or confusing situations in your life
- the music you love
- places, objects, or events that mean a lot to you
- your top ten favorite memories
- your favorite people
- your favorite fictional or historical characters
- an imagined or overheard line of dialogue
- times when you felt really sad, nervous, or thrilled
- why you've kept things like tickets, letters, photographs, or souvenirs
- quotations you feel strongly about

"To love someone deeply gives you strength. Being deeply loved by someone gives you courage."

—Lao Tzu

Top Ten Memories

1. The day my baby sister was born
2. My fishing trip with Uncle Julio
3. Going to the prom with Emily
4. Passing my driver's test



Where to Keep Your Ideas

Start an idea file to keep your ideas together in one place. Just about any kind of container will do.

- Put your ideas inside a cereal box or in a basket.
- Keep a journal of your thoughts and feelings.
- Fill a file folder with interesting articles, stories, and photos.



- Make a section in your Writer's Notebook just for collecting your ideas.
- Keep a special Writing Ideas file on your computer.
- Send voice-mail idea messages to yourself.

On-the-Go Inspiration

When you don't have your idea collection with you, try asking yourself questions like these:

- What would a perfect day be like for me?
- What would my best friend's perfect day be like?
- What would a perfect day be like for Tom Sawyer?
- What's the most important value I want to teach my children?
- If I could travel anywhere in the world, where would I go?
- Where would my sister like to travel?
- What's one action I would go back and undo if I could?
- What action would Scout from *To Kill a Mockingbird* undo?

Prewrite: Collect Ideas, continued

Some things, like science or spelling, you know in your head. Other things, about people or the world, you know in your heart. That's your truth. When you write about one thing you believe in your heart, your writing will sing.

Speak Your Truth

What do you believe is true about people or the world? You may already have an idea in your head, but sometimes looking at a photograph can help you discover your truth. What truth would you add to this list?



Truths

1. Everyone needs help to learn new things.
2. Families spend time together.
3. Not everyone can get things right without some help.
4. People change as they get older.
5. There are many ways to define a family.

Something that is true for one person is not necessarily true for others. When you look at these photographs, does a different truth come to mind?



Working together is so much better than working alone.



Communication mistakes can cause serious problems.



Sometimes you have to look from a distance to see something clearly.



Shopping is like searching for treasure; you never know what you're going to bring home.

Prewrite: Choose Your Topic

You can use your idea collection to come up with a topic—the subject you want to write about. Make sure you narrow your topic so that it is not too general, or broad, for the kind of writing you'll do.

A specific, or smaller, topic is easier to write about and is much more interesting for your readers. Take a look at how one writer narrowed the topic “Friendship” for a three-paragraph essay.

Friendship

This topic would take pages and pages to cover. Why?



Broad

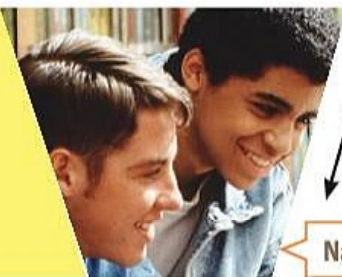
My best friend

This is better, but still too broad. How many things are there to say about a best friend?



The day I almost lost my friendship with Carlos

This topic is interesting because it's specific. Would it be easy to tell what happened in three paragraphs?



Narrow

Your Topic is Too Broad When . . .

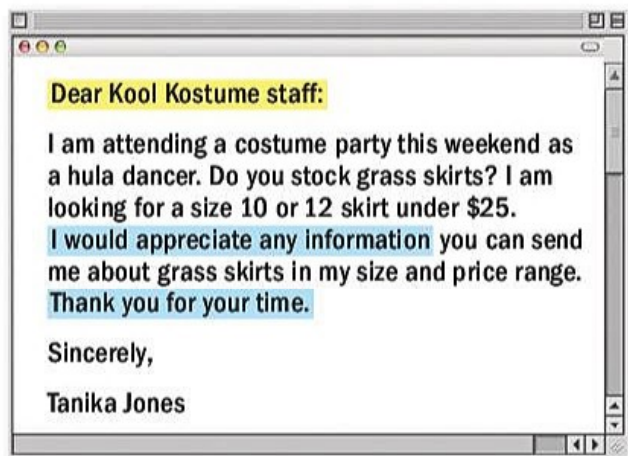
- you type key words into a search engine and get thousands of hits
- you search a library database and find hundreds of books
- there are so many main ideas, you don't know where to start

Choose Your Audience

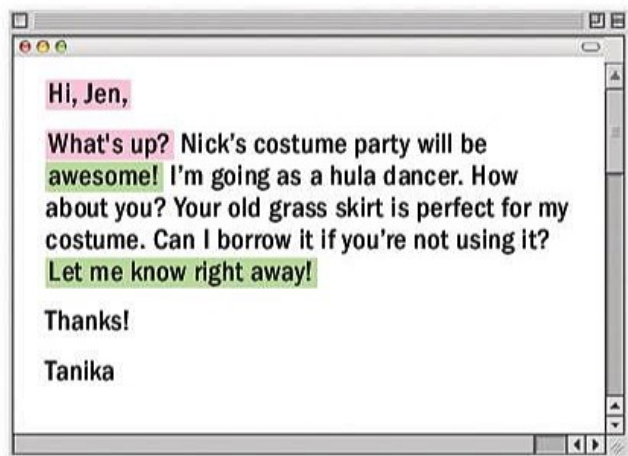
After choosing a good topic, you need to think about your audience—the people who will read your writing. That will help you choose the appropriate style and tone for your writing.

Audience	Tone	Language
your best friend or someone your own age	very informal	Hey, Karen— What's up? You ready for Frank's party on Thursday?
an older relative	somewhat informal	Hi, Uncle Terry, Do you have any Hawaiian shirts I could borrow? I need one for a party Thursday. Thanks.
your teacher	somewhat formal	Dear Mrs. Smith, I wonder if it might be possible for me to turn my paper in on Monday instead of Friday. I have an important after-school event on Thursday night.
someone you don't know	very formal	Dear Tropical Paradise Staff: Do you carry Hawaiian shirts in size Large? I'm looking for something under \$25.00. I'd appreciate any information you could give me. Thank you.

Who is the audience for each of these e-mails?



The writer uses a **formal greeting** and language that gives her message a **polite, businesslike tone**.



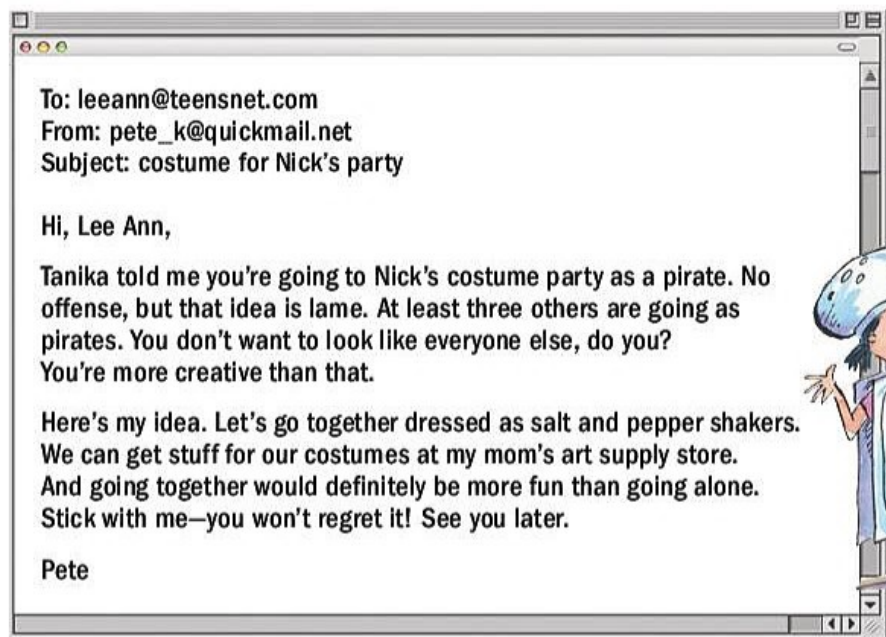
The writer uses an **informal greeting** and **casual, friendly language**. Her words show **strong emotion or feelings**.

Prewrite: Choose Your Purpose

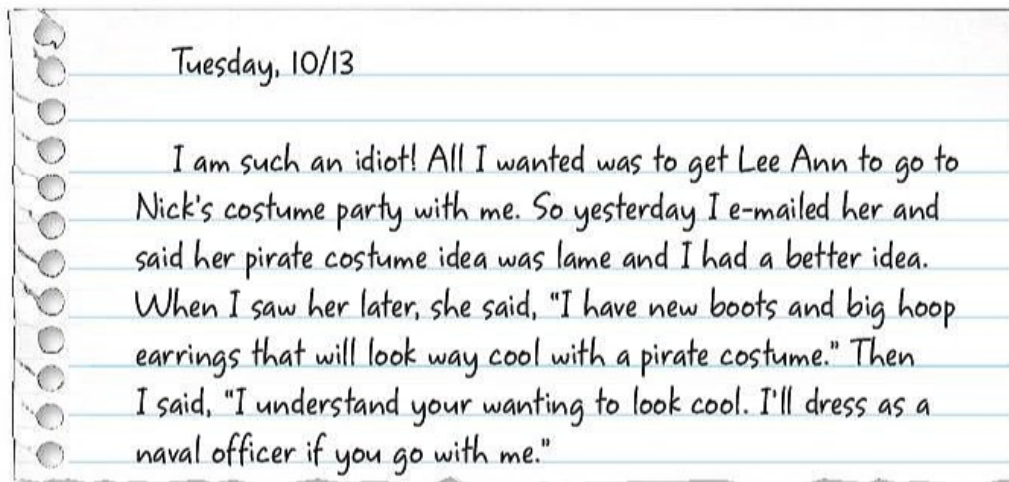
What do you want your audience to know or do? That'll be your **purpose**, or reason, for writing. When you write, choose a tone that fits your purpose.

What is the writer's purpose in the e-mail below? What is the writer's purpose in the journal entry?

E-mail



Journal Entry



Pete wrote the e-mail to argue why Lee Ann should change her costume and go with him to the party. He wrote in his journal to narrate what happened as a result of what he had done. What is his purpose for writing this letter to his friend Gabe?

Letter

October 16, 2008

Dear Gabe,

You know that girl Lee Ann who came to the beach with us last summer? She's been one of my best friends ever since we met in third grade. Well, I almost blew it!

You see, I asked Lee Ann to go with me to Nick's costume party. She wanted to be a pirate, but I told her pirate costumes were lame and unoriginal. She was so mad. But we talked later, and Lee Ann explained why she wanted to dress as a pirate. When I said that was cool, she agreed to go to the party with me.

Are Your Audience and Purpose Connected?

Yes. Your audience and purpose are related to each other. One way to get clear about your purpose is to consider how you want your audience to react to what you have to say.

If You Want Your Audience to . . .	Your Purpose Is . . .	For Quick Topic Ideas, List . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> learn something new understand something better 	to inform or explain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ten things people can learn from you ten things you can do really well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> laugh feel a deep emotion enjoy reading your work 	to narrate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ten funny situations five opening sentences that would get a reader hooked on a book
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> believe something do something take action on an important issue 	to argue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ten claims about things you'd like to change five clear reasons and relevant evidence to support one of your claims

Prewrite: Choose Your Purpose, continued

Does Your Form Connect to Your Purpose?

You can change how and what you write to fit your purpose. Look at the examples on these pages.

To Inform or Explain

Write to tell readers something they need to know or to explain how to do something.

Directions to My House (from School)

1. When you leave the parking lot, turn right onto Hurffville Road.
2. Go through two traffic lights.
3. Make a right onto Greentree Road.
4. Make a left onto Haines Drive.
5. My house is number 20, on the right.

Directions

My house is all the way at the end of the street. It's a red house with a brown roof and brown trim. There's a big vacant lot right before my house. A brown station wagon and a black pickup truck are parked in the driveway.

Paragraph

Healthy Birthday Snacks

With so many overweight kids, it's important to provide healthy choices when planning the menu for your birthday party. No, you don't have to feed your guests celery and carrot sticks. Making a few healthy substitutions can go a long way. Instead of fried potato chips, serve baked sweet-potato chips. Put out low-fat cheese and hummus with broccoli, snow peas, baby corn, and whole-grain crackers. With all these healthy choices, your guests won't feel guilty about treating themselves to some of your cake.

Informative Paragraph

Why Choose Healthy Snacks?

Astonishingly, over 50 percent of Americans' calories come from processed and refined foods, which contain no fiber and tiny amounts of vitamins and minerals. By replacing them with whole foods—which are loaded with fiber, vitamins, and minerals—you will feel better right away. You won't have any of those yo-yo spikes in your blood sugar and insulin levels. Once your energy levels have straightened out, your body won't store as much fat, and the pounds will drop off.

Explanatory Paragraph

To Argue

Write to make a claim. Support the claim with reasons and evidence.

THE PRICE OF A GOOD PARTY

The amount of money people spend on parties is totally out of control. One child's celebrity parents spent \$100,000 on her second birthday. A non-celebrity mother spent over \$10,000 for a princess-themed party for her daughter's birthday. People don't need to buy expensive presents, flashy clothes, and fancy decorations. After all, the purpose of a party is to have fun with your friends, not to try to impress them.

Editorial

Dear Parents:

It is time to curb the skyrocketing costs of hosting birthday parties for our children. According to Minnesota Department of Family Social Science, splurging on parties sets a bad example for our kids. They become very materialistic, wanting more than they need. Not getting everything they want also generates feelings of disappointment and envy because someone always gets more.

To reverse this trend, I suggest that we have "presence without presents" parties.

Formal Letter

To Narrate

Write to tell about your experiences by using descriptive details and logical sequence.

The Worst Party Ever

The birthday cake lay on the ground where I had dropped it. Then the doorbell rang, and I stepped right in the cake on my way to answer it. Now my foot was covered with chocolate icing! I greeted my friend anyway, but my foot slipped and kicked her in the shin. When we both looked down to see if she was OK, we bumped heads—ouch!

"Welcome to my party," I said. And that was only the beginning!

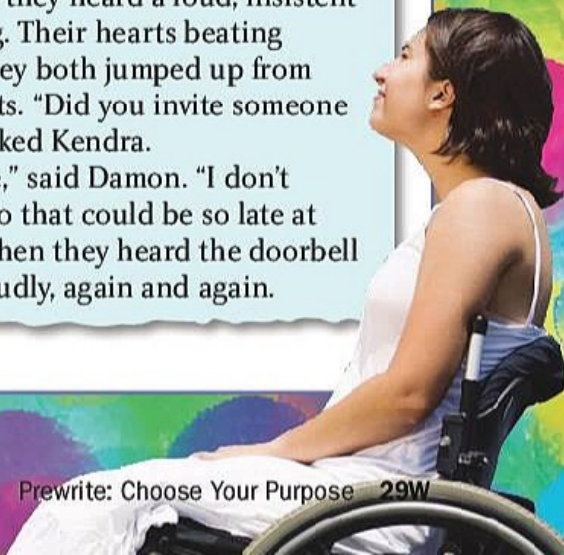
Essay

An Uninvited Guest

Kendra and Damon stared wide-eyed at the movie on TV. Something terrible was about to happen to the main character. Right at that moment, they heard a loud, insistent knocking. Their hearts beating wildly, they both jumped up from their seats. "Did you invite someone over?" asked Kendra.

"Nope," said Damon. "I don't know who that could be so late at night." Then they heard the doorbell chime loudly, again and again.

Short Story



Prewrite: Organize Your Ideas

You know your topic, your purpose, and the form. You know who your audience will be. Sum them up in an FATP chart.

FATP Chart

Form: personal narrative

Audience: classmates

Topic: my friendship with Carlos

Purpose: to tell how friendships can change



You can organize the same information in different ways, depending on what you want your readers to understand.

1. Maybe you want to explain a central idea by discussing related ideas. You could use **logical order** to organize your ideas.

Carlos and Me

Carlos has always been more outgoing than I am.

Whenever there is a new kid at school, Carlos is the first one to say hello. The other day in gym class, Carlos invited the new kid, Eliot, to join our basketball team. I envy Carlos's ability to make friends so easily.

The **topic sentence** shows the main idea.

The writer discusses a **related idea**.

2. Maybe you want to describe how an event or problem developed over time. Then you would use **chronological order**.

Carlos and Me

Last year, I sensed that the friendship between Carlos and me was changing. At first, I thought it was just because we were both busy with school and sports. By the end of the year, Carlos and I hardly ever hung out.

Time words and phrases help to show chronological order.

3. Maybe you want to describe a scene, so that readers can picture it in their minds. Then you would use **spatial order**.

Carlos and Me

One thing that Carlos and I used to do is build skate ramps. We used cement blocks to build the base of each ramp. Then we would lay down flat pieces of plywood, slanting upward from the ground to the top of the cement blocks. We bolstered up the sides with more cement blocks. The ramps were various heights and widths depending on the size of the wood scraps we found.

The writer describes the ramps from **bottom to top**.

4. You might want to describe how two people, places, or things are alike or different. In that case, you would use a **comparison-and-contrast** structure.

Carlos and Me

We may be best friends, but Carlos and I are nothing alike. Carlos never cracks open a book but somehow manages to get straight A's. As for me, I struggle just to scrape by with B's and C's. Carlos is cool and confident—always the life of the party. I'm quiet and kind of shy.

The writer describes **ways he and his friend are different**.

Check out the graphic organizers in the Writer's File at the back of the book. They'll give you some tools for organizing your writing.

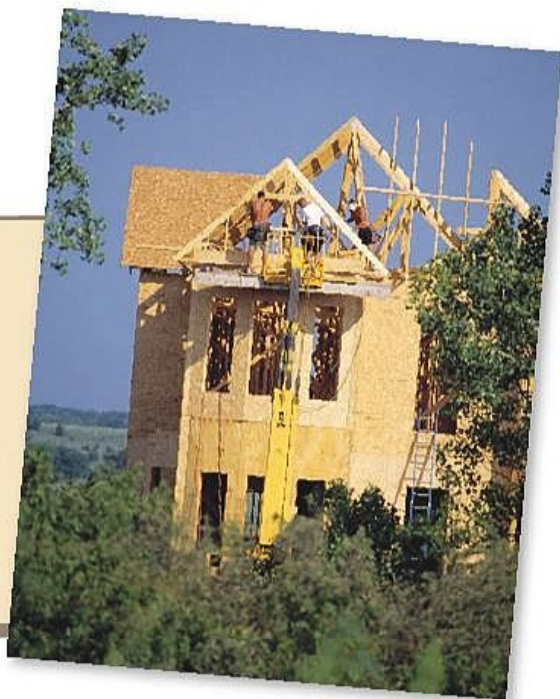
Reflect

- What do you want your audience to understand about your narrative?
- How can you explain events clearly?

Draft

What's It Like ?

When you look at just the framework of a house, you can't tell exactly what it will look like when it's built. You can see it start to take shape, slowly, as each new piece is added. Drafting is like that. Once you have a framework, you start building! Get your ideas down on paper and, over time, the "shape" of your draft will become clearer.



How Do You Face a Blank Page?

Now that you have a plan, it's time to start the first draft of your personal narrative. Sometimes, the hardest part of writing a paper is getting started! As you will see, there is no one right way to write a first draft.

All drafts start with a blank piece of paper—or a blank computer screen. Here are some ideas to help you get started:

- Gather all the tools you need. Get pencils and paper. Collect the notes and graphic organizers that you made during prewriting. If you are using a computer, create a folder for your files.
- Find a good place to write. It doesn't have to be a desk, but make sure there are no distractions.
- Start writing! Remember, a draft does not have to be perfect. Just get your ideas down on paper!

Look at Jeff's draft on page 33W. What makes it a good start? How much does it matter if there are spelling mistakes in the first draft?

A Good Friend

Jeff Kominsky

Jeff wrote without worrying about little mistakes. Now he has a draft to work with.

All friendships have their ups and downs. Relationships can be complicated even between the best of friends. Sometimes its hard to tell who you're real friends are.

Carlos asked me to go to an ice-hockey game with him. I was really exsited. I even bought a jersey with the goalies number to where. Well, Carlos let me down. He asked the new kid Eliot to go with him instead. I showed up at Carlos's house. There were three of us and only two tickets. I was pretty annoyed. I just left.

Carlos and I have been best friends since fifth grade. He helped me meet new people when I moved. He invited me to play in the neighborhood football games. He is the guy I can always count on.

It turned out I totally misunderstood the situation. Carlos wanted to invite Eliot since he's new at school. He doesn't really know anyone yet. And Carlos is kind of scatterbrained. He didn't plan ahead.

Drafting Checklist

In a good draft:

- the title shows the main idea
- the writing includes the main points from beginning to end
- the message is clear, and the writing sticks to the topic
- writers set down ideas quickly, without worrying about spelling or grammar mistakes.

Draft, continued

Writing is like playing sports. You don't have to be perfect. You just need to do your best. On the next few pages are some ideas about writing a first draft. Which ideas sound familiar? Which ideas seem like they would work for you?

Getting Started

Q: What do I need to get started?

A: Find a quiet place where you can work. Make sure you have enough pencils and paper, or a computer. You should also have your notes and your graphic organizers. These materials will help you when you are unsure about how to organize your writing.

Q: What's the right way to start a draft?

A: Writers are like snowflakes. No two are exactly alike. While there's no "right" way to start, here are some ideas:

- Draw pictures to get yourself thinking. You can also write whatever comes into your head to get your ideas flowing. It's like doodling with words.
- Write your ideas down quickly. Don't worry about finding exactly the right word.
- Spend some time working on the first paragraph. This will help you find a direction for the body of the paper.
- Work out of order if you need to. Write the parts you feel more comfortable with. Then move to the other paragraphs.



How Do You Start Writing a Draft?

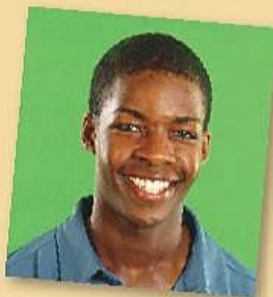


“ I write down every idea I have about my topic, even if it seems silly. If I get a whole bunch of ideas on paper, I know some of them will be good ones.”

—Katya

“ I make a storyboard to plot out the events of my narrative. That helps me picture what happens.”

—Darrell



“ I talk to my friends about my ideas. If I’m writing about something that happened to us, I ask them what they remember about it. It helps to get other people’s perspectives!”

—Ricardo

“ I write my ideas on sticky notes and post them on my wall. That way I can move them around and figure out the best way to organize my thoughts.”

—Meg



Draft, continued

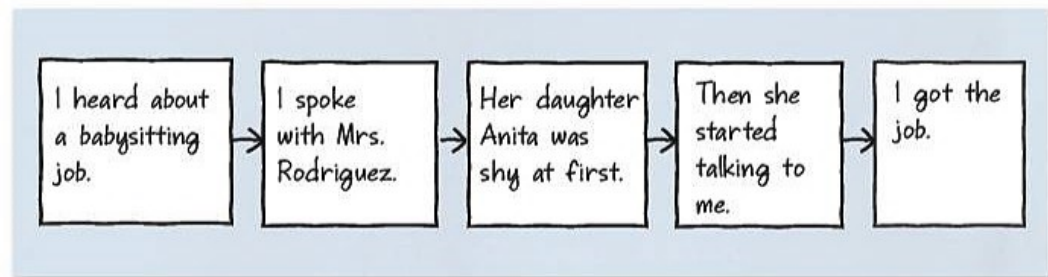
Staying on Track

Q: Sometimes while I'm writing I get distracted or lose my train of thought. How can I stay on track?

A: You can try working with a writing partner first—someone you trust. You can ask your partner to read your work, or you can read your work aloud and ask for feedback.

Another approach is to write a “kernel essay” first, before you begin your real essay. A kernel essay shows just the main points of your essay, without any details. See how this writer used the ideas from her kernel essay in her composition.

Susan's Kernel Essay



From Susan's Essay

I was tired of always being broke. Then my friend Mark told me his aunt was looking for someone to babysit for his four-year-old cousin, Anita. The next day, I went to meet Mark's aunt, Mrs. Rodriguez, and her daughter. Anita was a little shy with me at first, but after I was there for a little while, she started talking to me. Actually, she started babbling to me about her books, her dolls, and her drawings.

Q: Sometimes I run out of things to say right away. How can I keep myself going?

A: Don't stop even when your writing seems to be flowing very slowly. Write about not having anything to say, if you have to!

How Do You Stay on Track?



“ I need quiet when I write. I look for a private space where I can put all my notes up on the wall. I keep them all in front of me and look at them when I need to.”

—Eva

“ I usually write for five or ten minutes and then reread what I’ve written. If I like it, I go back and write for ten more minutes. If not, I take a short break. Then I decide how I want to fix it. Maybe I need to add more details. Maybe I need to cut out a chunk.”

—Marcus



“ I just let myself get distracted sometimes—but I try to control my distractions so that I will finish. Sometimes I just need to empty my head of my writing so that I can go back to it feeling fresh.”

—Carmen

“ I focus on getting my draft out of my head and onto the page as quickly as possible. That way I have something there to work with and polish.”

—Bassam



Draft, continued

Knowing When You're Done

Q: How do I know when I'm done with the draft and I can move on to the next step?

A: You know you are finished when your ideas are all down on paper (or on your computer). Reread your essay and ask yourself some questions:

- Is my opening paragraph interesting? Will it make a reader want to know more?
- Does my writing say what I want it to say? Do I need to add any details? Is there something I should cut?
- Does the ending flow smoothly? Does it seem tacked on?

The Truth About Drafting

FICTION: You should write your entire draft at once.

FACT: Sometimes you can write a draft all at once. But most drafts will take more time. Take a break if you need to!

FICTION: You should use a pencil and lined notebook paper for a draft.

FACT: Use whatever works best for you. Some writers take notes on lots of scraps of paper. Others write on plain paper with colored pens. Some people use a computer to write. The important thing is to keep writing.

FICTION: You should never, ever write a draft without doing prewriting first.

FACT: Prewriting is a good way to organize your ideas. But sometimes the best way to figure out what you want to say is to just start writing! That way, you have some ideas down on paper. You can always go back and reorganize your ideas later.

FICTION: You should always stick to your plan when you're writing.

FACT: It's a good idea to stick to your writing plan. But that doesn't mean you can't change your mind. As you write, you might come up with new and better ideas. Don't be afraid to be flexible and change your plan if you need to.