

CHAPTER ONE



Introduction to the Writing Process

Writing that communicates effectively is rarely achieved by chance. Most people who try to write are faced with a common dilemma: how to get from point A, those raw and sometimes wonderful ideas, to point B, the finished product that makes the writer smile with satisfaction. Your goal as a writer is to produce writing that is clear; writing that has the effect on the readers that you intended; writing that is interesting and has your special touch to make it unique. But how do you achieve your goal? One way is to use the *writing process*. Writing is thinking, and the writing process will give you ways in which to shape your thoughts with words. In fact, you might not know exactly what you think about a particular topic until you write your thoughts on paper.

In general, the writing process includes three stages:

1. Prewriting (preparing to write the first draft)
2. Writing
3. Rewriting

Specifically, the writing process includes the following steps, not necessarily in this order:

Discovering ideas	}	PREWRITING
Limiting the topic		
Determining a purpose in writing		
Analyzing the audience (your readers)		
Organizing the material		
Writing as many drafts as necessary	}	WRITING
Revising (looking at larger elements such as organization)	}	REWRITING
Editing (looking at smaller elements such as sentences)		
Proofreading (looking at punctuation, spelling capitalization, typographical errors, and so on)		

The writing process is not necessarily a step-by-step procedure; it is flexible and often overlapping. For example, one writer might rewrite sentences as he is writing the first draft. Another might reorganize ideas several times during the drafting process. And another might change her purpose in writing five or six times before she reaches the final version of her paper.

As a beginning writer, you will probably concentrate on one step at a time until you become skillful at writing and rewriting, and until you become comfortable with the decision-making process prompted by writing. Eventually you will be able to combine some of the steps. The important thing to remember is to make the writing process work for you. You do not have to fit the process; instead, use what you can from the process so that it fits your writing needs. Explore, play, manipulate, do whatever you need to develop your own personalized writing process.

Effective writing is not achieved in one day, or one week, or even one semester. However, practice, along with thoughtful exploration of the writing process, can make the road to effective writing easier to travel.

Using the Computer

A computer and word-processing program assist a writer in creating essays, letters, reports, and other kinds of text. Of course, a word processor will not tell you what to say, but it is a sophisticated tool that can help you write better. The benefits of word processing are several. You can write faster, you can revise more easily, you can produce neater writing, and you do not have to retype material. The first step you should take if you are going to compose on the computer is to become accustomed with your computer and the word-processing program you intend to use.

Included throughout this book are Computer Help boxes. All terms designated with full capital letters in the Computer Help boxes are explained in the section on Terms and Definitions in Appendix 6. Also included in Appendix 6 are sections on Document Design and Additional Revising Aids.



COMPUTER HELP

Creating a Document

1. CLICK on FILE on the MENU BAR. Then CLICK on NEW DOCUMENT.
2. SAVE your work every five to ten minutes. Most word processors have an AutoSave function that will automatically save your work as you type. However, it is a good idea to save your work manually, especially whenever you make major changes.
3. Do not permanently delete material too quickly. Allow yourself thinking time before you discard anything.
4. When you are finished, make a backup version on a second drive or diskette.
5. You can use the computer for your first through final drafts of a paper. Always keep a printed copy (hard copy) of each draft nearby so that you can refer to it whenever necessary.



COMPUTER HELP

Working with Files and Folders

1. Whenever you OPEN or SAVE a document, you will be using FILES and FOLDERS.
2. You probably already have a FOLDER named "My Documents" on your hard disk. You can put a subfolder named "Prewriting," "Paragraphs," "Assignment 1," or whatever name you choose under "My Documents."
3. Each time you begin a writing assignment, SAVE all the work in the appropriate FOLDER.

CHAPTER TWO



Discovering Ideas and Limiting a Topic

Suppose you have been given a writing assignment in one of your college classes. If the task seems so overwhelming that your first instinct is to go eat a candy bar or clean out a closet rather than begin writing, try some of the prewriting techniques suggested here. As you will see, this exploratory phase of writing can be one of the most interesting.

Any college student has enough life experiences and ideas to draw upon for writing. Discovering ideas that you can use for various writing situations can be a pleasant surprise, but getting those thoughts on paper can be difficult. The first step in the writing process, discovering ideas, can help you begin writing instead of using an excuse to avoid the project.

All writers compose differently, and what might work for one person will not work for another. Try each of the following methods of prewriting at least once: freewriting, brainstorming, clustering, using the journalists' questions, and journal writing. Then decide which ones work best for you. Some methods work better for some writing tasks or topics than others. Again, you are the experimenter; you must decide which route to choose. When using these idea-discovery techniques, remember you have no audience to please or inform except yourself.

FREEWITING

If it is difficult for you to fill the blank page with words, freewriting can help you because it is writing that is not edited or revised in any way. You can write whatever comes into mind. Follow these guidelines for freewriting:

- **Write continuously.** Do not stop—even if you have to write one word over and over, or if you have to write, “I don’t know what to write” over and over. Writing continuously lets your writing energy flow so that you will not be tempted to block what might turn out to be an interesting idea.
- **Try to write for at least ten minutes.** Do not stop to read what you are writing until your time limit comes to an end.
- **Do not worry about grammar or mechanics.** You do not even have to write in complete sentences. You can concentrate on grammar and mechanics later in the writing process. Right now you want to use freewriting as a device to help you find a topic or ideas about a topic.
- **Be totally honest.** Usually no one else will read your freewriting, so you can be completely open and uninhibited with your thoughts and language.



Computer Help

Invisible Freewriting

1. Either turn down the contrast or turn off the monitor so that you will not be tempted to edit or reread your freewriting.
2. When you have finished your freewriting, either turn up the contrast or turn on the monitor and read what you have written.
3. Use this same method for focused freewriting (the following section in this chapter).

Your first attempt at freewriting might not produce an interesting topic. Do not worry; perhaps you need to try it again later or in a different setting.

Remember that everyone's freewriting will be unique. Certainly similarities will be present, but your freewriting will not sound exactly like anyone else's—and it should not. The following is an example of freewriting:

I don't know what to write. I don't know what to write. I feel stressed, full of anxiety. I feel like a real idiot. How does this work — I don't know. I've got to write something that sounds good or doesn't sound good — makes sense or no sense — I hear the light buzzing, it's driving me crazy. I didn't think college would be like this. I was so scared. When I enrolled the counselor said I shouldn't take too many hours so I enrolled in 4 classes. I bet English will be my worst — I don't like to write very much. I wonder how much time has passed? I feel like such an amateur. The woman sitting next to me seems friendly enough. She looks about 20. I guess I should talk to her after class. She writes and writes — her pen moves twice as fast as mine. I wonder why she enrolled in this class, if she's like me and never really learned all this basic stuff. I can see out the window & the sky is so blue today — the blue of Robert's eyes. It reminds me of when I was a little girl and we used to have picnics in the summer. My sister and I would look at the sky and make up stories about the clouds — some looked like monsters and some like women and some like horses — and I always had a great time with Jane, but we don't see each other much now. She lives in Omaha & is so busy & so am I — not much of an excuse. Damn, I've always been too skinny — maybe I should take up bodybuilding like my neighbor Kristen. I can't believe I'm writing this much — it's funny how my mind works

FOCUSED FREEWITING

Once you can single out a freewriting topic you find interesting, you can use focused freewriting to generate additional ideas about it. Focused freewriting singles out a particular topic rather than exploring all topics that come to mind. To develop a focused freewriting, begin by reading your freewriting carefully once or twice. Next, write about your freewriting for ten minutes without stopping. Use the same guidelines you used for freewriting, and add more details. Now examine what you have written, looking for ideas that you might want to explore further—ideas about which you have something more to say. You can repeat this process as many times as you want. You should continue this method of focused freewriting as long as you can produce ideas that seem worth exploring. If you meet dead ends, you should stop.

Here is what the author of the preceding freewriting wrote for her focused freewriting:

I can't believe I wrote about being afraid of going to college, or maybe I can — it's something I didn't want to admit to myself I guess. My first day at the university was like being in first grade — I didn't know where to go and I just seemed to quit thinking. I must have walked ten miles in one day all over campus. I began to wonder why I was trying to get a degree at all. I had a pretty good job, but I was bored — and panicked — someone smarter would get my job — I couldn't learn anymore — I jumped every time anyone said anything to me, so I decided to get a degree in business. I had the odd notion that everyone in my classes was more intelligent than I was — I know that's not true now after being here for a semester. I'm a good student myself. I had to learn to take a couple of deep breaths before I walked into a classroom & I had to learn to talk in class — God, that was hard! The first time I stuttered and my face began to perspire. I wanted to disappear. The 2nd time was almost as bad but the 3rd time was a little easier. Finally I could do it with only small butterflies in my stomach, not 2-pound moths! I think most students are as nervous as I was — we all hide it as well as we can. I ended the semester with a B average and I'm proud of what I accomplished not bad for an "old" student of 24.

The writer could have expanded one of several other ideas from her freewriting, for example, her relationship with her sister, or her desire to begin bodybuilding. She chose the topic of her fears in going to college because it caught her eye when she read her freewriting. Her focused freewriting is not a polished piece of writing and is not meant to be, but it has produced more details and limited her topic.

PRACTICE WRITING: Freewriting and Focused Freewriting

Freewrite for ten minutes. Then select one topic from what you have written in order to develop a focused freewriting. Give yourself at least half an hour to think about the topic. Then write about it for a ten-minute focused freewriting session.

BRAINSTORMING

Another idea-discovery method is brainstorming, a listing method that lets you focus intently on a topic. When brainstorming, as when freewriting, you should be spontaneous. But rather than writing in continuous lines, left to right, you can make random, quick lists of words and short phrases that occur to you about a topic. The first item in the list suggests another, and so on, until you have exhausted your thoughts on a particular topic. Again, you do not need to be concerned with grammar or mechanics. Just get your ideas on paper. Brainstorming can work well in a small group, as well as on an individual basis.



Computer Help

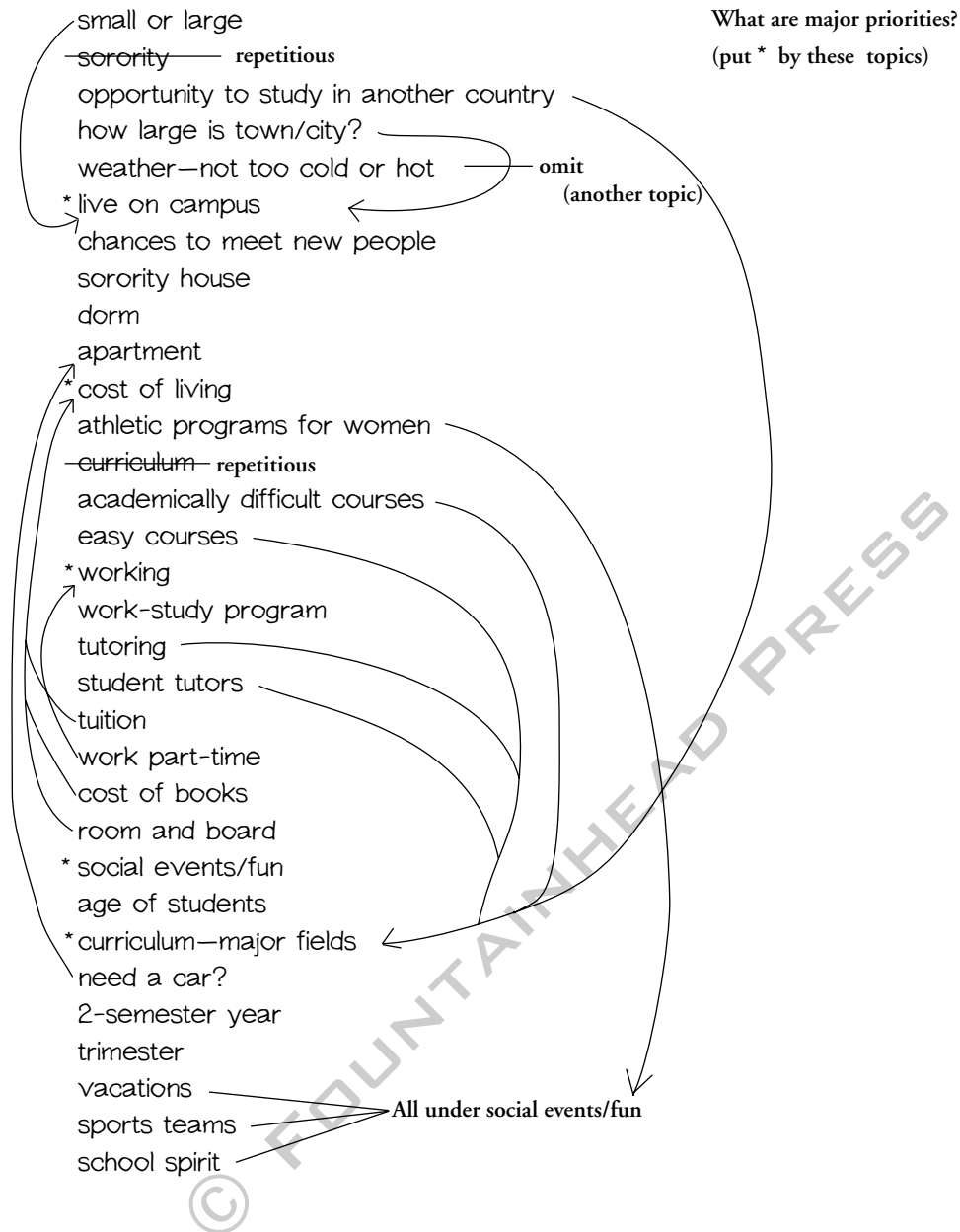
Invisible Brainstorming

1. Either turn down the contrast or turn off the monitor so that you will not be tempted to edit or reread your freewriting.
2. When you have finished your brainstorming, either turn up the contrast or turn on the monitor and read what you have written.

Look at the following sample on the topic of choosing a university:

small or large
sorority
opportunity to study in another country
how large is town/city?
weather—not too cold or hot
live on campus
chances to meet new people
sorority house
dorm
apartment
cost of living
athletic programs for women
curriculum
academically difficult courses
easy courses
working
work-study program
tutoring
student tutors
tuition
work part-time
cost of books
room and board
social events/fun
age of students
curriculum—major fields
need a car?
2-semester year
trimester
vacations
sports teams
school spirit

After you have a list, read it and look for connections between ideas. You might see one or two main ideas, each of which encompasses minor ideas. Here is the way the writer of the sample brainstorming list made connections:



From this list the writer selected details that work together and, therefore, limited the topic. She saw one main idea: the major priorities of a student choosing a university. Then she saw five minor ideas and put asterisks by them. She drew arrows between related topics and decided to omit some topics. Here is her more selective brainstorming list:

main idea--major priorities of a student choosing a university

minor ideas--

live on campus

small or large campus

how large is town/city?

Chances to meet new people

sorority house

dorm

apartment (need a car?)

cost of living

tuition

cost of books

room and board

curriculum--major fields

2-semester year

trimester

opportunity to study in another country

academically difficult courses

easy courses

tutoring

student tutors

working

work part-time

work-study program

social events/fun

age of students

vacations

sports teams

athletic programs for women

school spirit

This list is more focused than the first. Although the writer will need to further organize and develop the ideas, she has taken a major step in limiting her topic to one main idea and several minor ones.

PRACTICE WRITING: Brainstorming

Make a brainstorming list. Then try to make connections between ideas from your brainstorming list. Mark words and phrases, draw arrows, do whatever you need to find a main idea and minor ones. Then make a more selective brainstorming list.

Possible Topics

a person who influenced me (parent, sibling, friend, teacher, etc.)
my first day in college
my first day on the job
selecting a college major
living in a small town, large city, a suburb, or in the country
working and going to school
buying a car
interviewing for a job

CLUSTERING

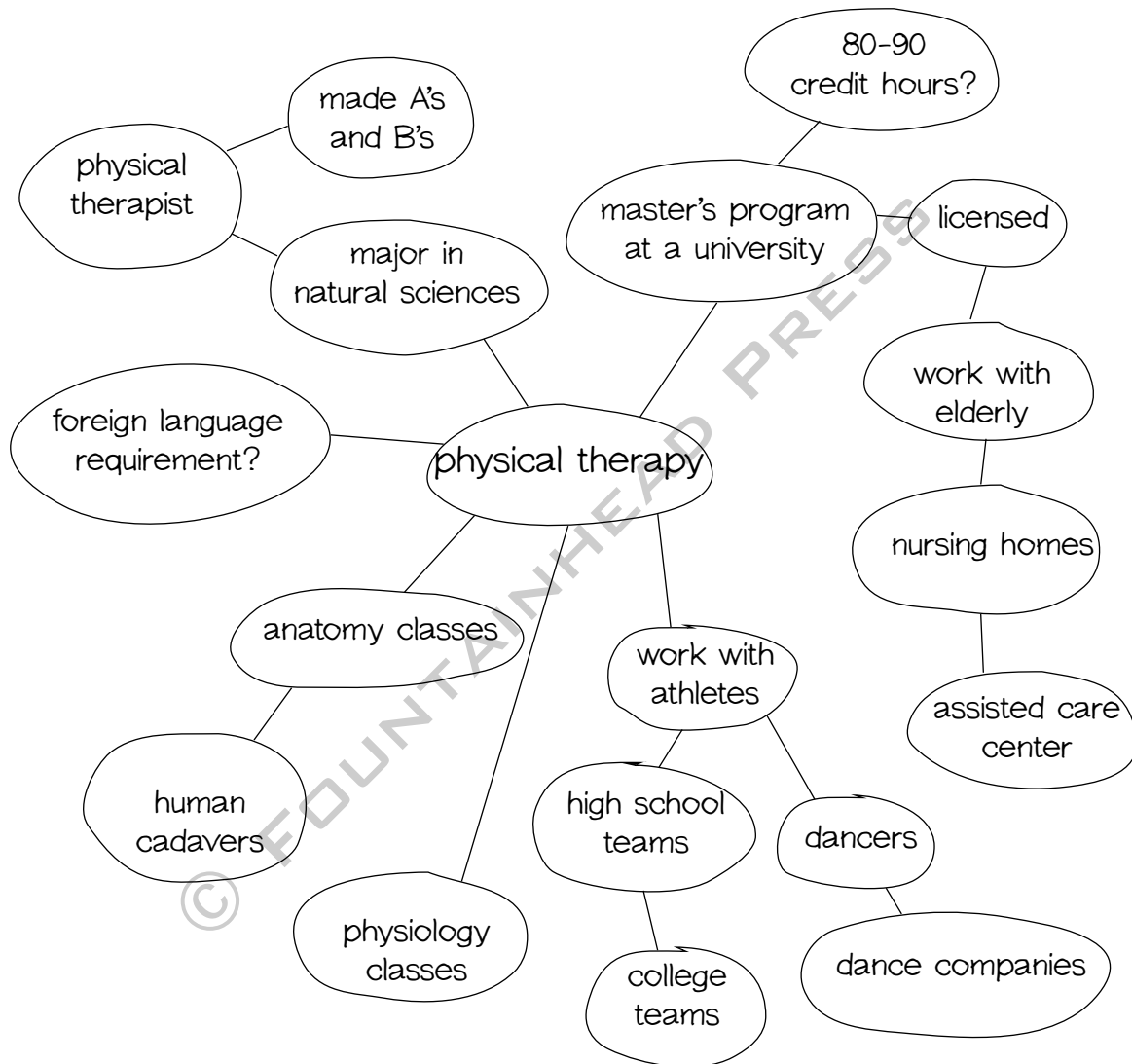
Clustering is a method of brainstorming that lets you map your ideas in order to visualize connections between them. You can leap from idea to idea while using circles and lines to show your thinking process. The guidelines for clustering are these:

- Using a blank sheet of paper, write a word or phrase in the middle of the page and circle it.
- Now relax and let your mind go. As with freewriting, you do not need to be concerned with grammar or mechanics. Around the word you have circled, in any way that pleases you, write any word or phrase that you think of next. Circle this word or phrase.
- Draw arrows or lines to show connections between what you have circled. Allow each new word or phrase to suggest the next word or phrase.
- Continue to write words or phrases until you feel the need to write about one particular thing in more detail. Then you can cluster around a new center to gather specific details. You can cluster several times until you feel ready to write.
- Then write freely and quickly, much as you would do in focused freewriting.

- Look at this example:

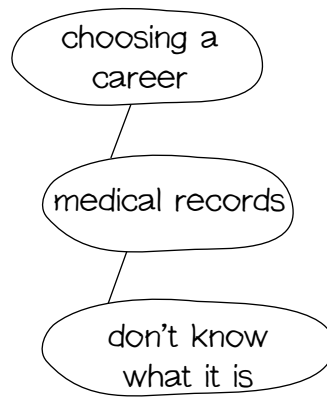


- Now the writer uses an idea from his first clustering to develop a more limited idea:



The writer now has enough details to focus on a limited topic: considerations to face when choosing physical therapy as a career.

Occasionally, you might meet a dead end when clustering. In that case, stop and try a different topic. Here is a nonproductive clustering effort from the same writer:



Since he wanted to write about choosing a career, this attempt at clustering took him nowhere he wanted to go.

PRACTICE WRITING: Clustering and Focused Freewriting

Cluster on a topic you select. You might need to cluster more than once. When you reach a point at which you can focus on a more limited topic, write a focused freewriting on that topic.

Possible Topics

hope
fear
happiness
anger
joy
sadness

a goal
a dream
a challenge

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USING THE JOURNALISTS' QUESTIONS

Using the six journalists' questions is an idea-discovery technique that allows you to ask and answer questions about your topic. These questions can be especially useful when you need to approach the material in an objective way. Use the following questions:

- Who was/is involved?
- What happened/happens?
- Where did/does it happen?
- When did/does it happen?
- Why did/does it happen?
- How did/does it happen?

Look at the following example written by a student who had heard and read a little about taking an online college course:

Who is involved? Faculty, staff, and students are involved. Faculty should have degrees from accredited universities. Faculty and staff could be full time or part time. Students usually don't meet faculty and staff in person.

What happens? Students enroll online and take the entire course online to complete courses required for various degrees. It's called "distance learning." Students don't go to a classroom. They attend lectures, get homework assignments, and take tests on their computers.

When does it happen? Every semester at some schools. Sometimes a student can finish the course early.

Where does it happen? Courses are available at accredited schools, but sometimes they're also offered by schools that don't really exist—a scam. So students need to check out all the details first to see if the school is legitimate.

Why does it happen? Some people can't attend regular classes. They may be working and need more training in their profession. They may travel a lot. They may have many responsibilities like a working parent who can give time to class work only after the kids are in bed. They could be people who need a course that's not offered at any local college or university.

How does it happen? The student develops a routine—checks message boards, e-mail, chat rooms. He has to be disciplined and motivated to keep up with the course. He has to meet all the deadlines. He really has to adjust his way of thinking.

Now the student has some details to consider using in a paper about taking online courses.



COMPUTER HELP

Using the Journalists' Questions

1. Print out the answers to your questions so that you can look at them while you write your paper.
2. You may even move passages from your original answers to the draft of your paper by using the COPY and PASTE commands.

JOURNAL WRITING

Journal writing gives you an opportunity to examine language, ideas, and impressions more thoroughly than you can in other forms of prewriting, although you can include a piece of freewriting, a brainstorming list, or a cluster in a journal. You can even include a drawing, a quotation from something you have read—anything you consider interesting.

Journal writing is not the same as writing in a diary. A diary usually logs daily events. On the other hand, a journal is exploratory; it gives you a method for making discoveries about your ideas and reactions. A journal used as a form of prewriting gives you a chance to recreate an experience or examine in depth your reaction to a situation. Your emotions and thoughts become vivid details on the page. You write mainly for yourself, but you write with the intention of eventually using those vivid details in a piece of polished writing that others will enjoy. Follow these guidelines:

- As with other forms of prewriting, you do not need to be concerned with grammar or mechanics—just write. Allow yourself free rein.
- The length of each journal entry is up to you; try to use enough details and specific words so that you can read the entry later and know what it means.
- Write regularly. You do not have to write in a journal each day unless you have an idea to explore, but try to devise a workable schedule for yourself, such as three entries a week, two entries every weekend, or whatever you can produce.
- Always date each journal entry.
- Use a notebook you like. It can be loose-leaf or spiral, one with a fancy cover or a humorous one. It can have lined or unlined paper, whichever you prefer. If you compose on a computer, you may still want to keep your journal entries in a notebook.

What should you write about in a journal? Try this list of suggestions:

- **Personal experiences:** For example, what were some of the best moments of your past year? What were the worst moments? Which experiences had the most impact on you or changed you in some way? Try to recall every detail.
- **Sensory perceptions:** What appeals to your sense of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch? What makes these things memorable?

- **Observations about other people:** How do your friends and family act in different situations? How do strangers act when standing in line for a movie or eating in a restaurant? What can you deduce about their personalities from their behavior?
- **Conversations:** Try to record, as closely as possible, a stimulating conversation you had with someone. Why was it interesting to you? Did you learn something from it?
- **Ideas you want to know more about:** Perhaps you are interested in landscape design. You have tried to make your yard attractive, but you know only what you have learned through trial and error. What was your experience and what did you learn from it? What else would you like to know? A list could work here.
- **Ideas you have trouble understanding:** You have heard your general science instructor discuss mountain biomes, but you do not quite understand the concept completely. What parts are confusing?
- **Reactions to what you read or view:** What are your reactions to newspaper articles, magazine articles, stories, books, poems, television programs, movies, and so on? What do you like or dislike? What do you agree or disagree with? Does what you have read or seen relate to any of your own experiences?
- **Anything of importance to you:** For example, what are your academic goals or career goals? What are your short-term and long-term goals? How will you achieve them? Have you had any dreams that you particularly want to remember? What is a problem you are facing? How will you deal with it?



COMPUTER HELP

Journaling

You may want to move passages from your journal entries into the draft of your paper by using the COPY and PASTE commands.



Look at the following journal entry written by a student:

Yesterday at our family reunion, I gave Aunt Mae an address book like the one I have because she had seen mine a few weeks earlier and really liked it. She's always been one of my favorite relatives — kind, sweet, funny, and really witty too. We had the reunion in the gathering hall of her church — there were so many people. There were lots of people I didn't even know. The air was cool but humid, I guess from the combination of air-conditioning and cooking moisture, and all the people crowded into a small space. Outside, the weather smelled of summer heat, dry, no rain in sight. My cousin had the cutest baby girl — it was the first time I had seen her and she's already six months old. I got to hold her while we took group pictures. Fun! I took a lot of time to visit with Aunt Mae — she's 80 years old. I never really think

that she might die some day, she seems so alive and energetic. She was injured in a car accident — not her fault! — a few months ago. I couldn't believe it because she seems invincible. Anyway, she was thrilled with the address book and said it was just the right size. As we talked, I told her I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with life — how confused I get. She told me that she saw life as a journey and any goals-to-be should have no limitations unless they are self-imposed. She said there are goals to be set, goals to be reached, and then new goals to be set, no matter what someone's age is. Her words meant a lot to me.

The writer has captured some vivid details.

Following is the section she selected from her journal because it was detailed enough to be developed further. She used parts of the initial entry, then added more details:

Aunt Mae said any goals-to-be should have no limitations unless they are self-imposed. There are goals to be set, goals to be reached, and then new goals to be set. My first goal is to become a college graduate, and then to become a certified public accountant. But my life's highway detours and exit ramps could (and probably will) lead to other interests and goals ... backpacker, pianist, mountain climber, photographer, decorator, daydreamer ... I have dreams of being a witty conversationalist, of being famous, of being a hermit, of being a hang-glider expert. My dreams are like hundreds of brilliant butterflies emerging from hundreds of cocoons — hundreds of wonderful possibilities flutter by. As I think these things, I can see the sun setting while I sit here on my patio. I can hear birds and smell the evening fragrances. Everything is settling down and becoming still. I guess some things don't need goals — they just happen. I need to be wise enough to figure out how to attain the important goals in my life without becoming so stressed and frustrated that the destination (goal) is more important than the journey. I need to let some things just happen. Maybe my confusion wasn't such a bad thing — it's made me see that I can do all kinds of things and I can do them in my own time — what feels right for me.

The writer now has the limited, detailed information she could work with to produce a polished piece of writing.

The second sample journal entry deals with one student's personal experience with journal writing. Her entry is for both the writer—Rosemary Bachle—and her daughters:

You never know where you are heading when you first sit down, open a book of blank pages, and begin to write in a journal.

I wish I had encouraged all of you, including your brother, even more than I did, to keep a journal of your feelings, thoughts, and activities throughout your lives. It's not too late to start.

Get a blank notebook with plenty of pages to start your journey into self-knowledge. write every day, if possible, but don't do it as a chore. Write your thoughts, not just "I went to school today." You will find yourself working out aggressions, feelings of inadequacy, exploring fantasies, or solving business problems. Writing your thoughts down to your husband and children (never intending for them to read it) will be better than the psychotherapist's couch, and cheaper too.

Keeping a journal is best done in private. For certain periods, you must shut out spouse, offspring, or job for 15 to 30 minutes of solitude. Be as consistent as you can. I find it difficult to play catch up, as I never remember that feeling or thought as vividly as the day I felt or thought it. You can do this without anyone ever knowing it, or if you want, you can share it at a later date as I am doing now.

Do be a little cautious, of course. Discretion is still the better part of valor. I TRIED putting some of my private thoughts that might perhaps be damaging in a code — a sort of longhand, shorthand, backhand. It didn't work. Even I couldn't decipher them at a later date, and since my writing is so poor anyhow, I figured that would have to do.

I read somewhere that within the pages of your journal is a secret world of romance, where you can express your fears, sins, and silly thoughts without danger of discovery, for your journal is your silent partner in whom you will be able to confide with confidence.

Writer Anaïs Nin asked in one of her journals, "Why does one write?" Because it is a world for others ... in the end. When you make a world tolerable for yourself, you make a world tolerable for others.

As you can see, a journal entry can be more than just a way of developing an idea for a writing assignment. It can be an accomplishment in itself.

Other methods of prewriting exist, although this chapter has focused on only five. You, your classmates, and your instructor might explore other methods. One method of collecting ideas that does not actually involve writing is giving yourself thinking time, those precious moments—perhaps even an hour—during which you can relax and think about your topic. For example, you might carve out of your busy day half an hour during which you can silently observe and pay attention to the world around you, as well as to the memories, insights or realizations that come forth. You may be surprised at how many interesting ideas are waiting for their moment in the spotlight.

If you can experiment with freewriting, brainstorming, clustering, using the journalists' questions, and journal writing, you can begin to make your writing tasks easier to approach. Remember that you can use any of these methods at any stage during the writing process.

PRACTICE WRITING: Journal Writing

Begin writing in a journal on a regular basis. Schedule your writing time, and put a copy of your schedule in your journal notebook.

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CHAPTER THREE



Determining a Purpose and Analyzing Your Audience

Why do you write? You might have any of several goals in mind. You might want to make an A on a class assignment, or perhaps you want to learn something about your feelings and thoughts on a certain topic. Your goal—whatever it might be—is necessary to motivate you to write. All writers have personal goals, or they would not put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard. Aside from personal goals, each writer must have a purpose for communicating something to an audience.

WRITER'S PURPOSE

Determining a purpose in writing is a crucial part of the prewriting stage in the writing process. You will probably have one or more of the following purposes:

- **To express yourself**—to look at your feelings or thoughts, perhaps in a journal or a personal letter
- **To inform**—to explain something to an audience so that your readers will gain knowledge of a topic unfamiliar to them
- **To persuade**—to convince an audience to make a decision, have a change of mind, or perhaps take action
- **To entertain**—to interest or amuse the audience so that they will feel pleasure or a sense of escape

Each purpose in writing has a particular emphasis:

Purpose	Emphasis
to express	the writer's attitudes
to inform	the topic
to persuade	the audience's attitudes
to entertain	the audience's attitudes

Consequently, you must always consider three elements when determining your purpose in writing: yourself (the writer), the topic, and the audience.

For example, if you are writing an autobiographical account, a form of expressive writing, you place emphasis on you, the writer. If you are informing the audience how to grow miniature roses, you emphasize the topic by explaining the process in detail. If you are persuading the audience to write letters to the college president requesting reduced rates for senior citizens at your college, you place emphasis on the audience's attitudes. What do the readers think? Will you have to change their minds? If you are writing to entertain the audience by relating a humorous incident you witnessed in the cafeteria, then you place emphasis on the audience. What do the readers think is funny? What do they identify with?

The four purposes in writing can overlap. Usually, you write with one dominant purpose that might include others. For instance, while persuading the audience to write letters to the college president, you are informing your readers of statistics and facts.

Determining a purpose in writing is an early step in the writing process. Your purpose will guide you as you work on each writing project. Do keep in mind, though, that your purpose might change as you write. You can alter your purpose as changes in your thinking occur.

Of course, along with your purpose, you must consider the audience. Different audiences require different types and amounts of information, differences in emphasis, and variations in your approach. In order to analyze your audience, you can look at both interest level in a topic and information level.

INTEREST LEVEL OF AUDIENCE

How interested is the audience in your topic? You should consider the following two questions:

1. *What is your relationship with the audience?* You could be writing to a friendly audience like family members, friends, or classmates, or you could be writing to an audience you do not know. A friend probably would be more interested in a personal letter from you than a stranger would.
2. *Is the audience objective or subjective?* An objective (neutral) audience is less likely to jump to conclusions. If the audience is subjective, the readers will see the topic from their own points of view, which can be either positive or negative. A senior citizen might have a very positive attitude about your idea for reduced tuition rates for senior citizens at your college. However, the president of the college might have a negative outlook because the school is experiencing financial difficulty and cannot afford to cut rates.

INFORMATION LEVEL OF AUDIENCE

Another element to consider is how much information the audience possesses on your topic. Audiences fall into two broad categories: general and specialized. A general audience might know little about your topic, but you should view those readers as intelligent. If you give clear, complete information, they will understand you. A specialized audience will know something about your topic. For either audience, consider the following:

- *What is the audience's educational level, occupation, and age?* A person who has taken several online college courses probably knows the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning. On the other hand, a recent high school graduate might know little about the topic and need a great deal of information, including definitions, explanations, and examples.
- *What are the concerns of the audience?* For example, parents of young children might be concerned with the safety of certain toys. Regardless of the parents' educational levels, occupations, or ages, they probably would be equally concerned.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS AND PARAGRAPH

Analyzing an audience can be difficult, so always keep in mind your purpose in writing. Even if you are writing for a general audience whom you do not know, your purpose will help keep you on track.

Look at the following purpose, audience analysis, and paragraph written by student Jean Hendrickson:

What am I trying to say?

Restricting a privilege is a good way to discipline children.

What is my purpose?

Main—to inform

I will explain how to use privilege restrictions.

Other—to persuade

I will convince the audience that privilege restriction is better than spanking and can be an effective teaching tool.

Who is my audience?

General

Subjective—bringing up children is a touchy subject.

All educational levels and occupations

Probably in their 20's and 30's

Concerned with their children's health and safety

Notice the underlined details in her paragraph below; she has let her audience analysis, as well as her purpose in writing, guide her in selecting these pertinent details:

Restricting a privilege is one effective disciplinary technique. In order to reinforce the learning process, the privilege should be one that is related in some way to the cause of discipline. Then a child is forced to accept responsibility for his actions in a very logical way. An example is a child who leaves his bicycle in the street instead of in the garage. The obvious restriction would be to deny the child the use of his bicycle for a specific length of time. This method is easily adapted to children of all ages. A teenager who ignores pleas to hang up the telephone would face removal of his phone privileges for a specified period, or perhaps he would have to live with a time limit on all calls. A toddler who colors on the walls instead of paper would be required to do without crayons for a while. A parent should be careful that the sentence is not stricter than conditions warrant, however. If the restriction is too strict, the parent runs the risk of losing the lesson to resentment just as surely as if spanking had been used instead. After all, one week is an eternity to a three-year-old. Care should also be taken that the restriction is an obvious result of the undesirable behavior and follows a logical sentence. For instance, no lesson is learned, if, after leaving his bicycle in the street, Junior is forbidden to visit his best friend for a week. The two have no logical connection. When used with common sense, though, privilege restriction is an effective teaching tool.

PRACTICE WRITING: Determining a Purpose and Analyzing an Audience

Select a topic you could expand from your freewriting, brainstorming, clustering, answers to the journalists' questions, or journal writing. Then determine a purpose in writing and analyze a possible audience for your chosen topic.

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CHAPTER FOUR



Developing a Working Outline

Based upon your purpose in writing, your audience analysis, and your limited topic, you can see the direction your ideas are taking. You can now group those ideas and develop a *working outline*. A working outline is meant to work for you. It is an informal, tentative plan that you can change, add to, or delete from at any point in the writing process. It simply allows you to shape your material so that you can see how your ideas can be grouped and how they are logically related to each other.

IDEA TREE

One way to begin your outline is by making an idea tree. Use these guidelines:

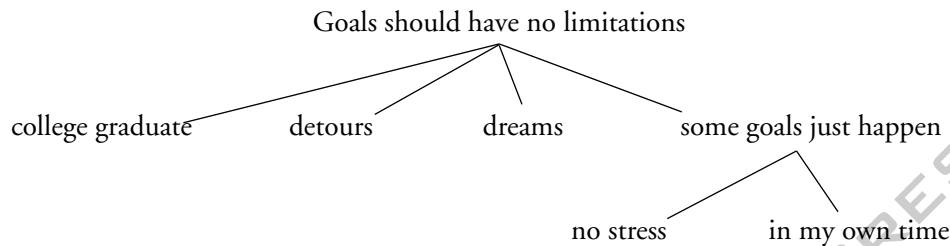
- Review your purpose in writing, audience analysis, and limited topic.
- Write your limited topic across the top of a piece of paper.
- Identify the main points of your limited topic by reviewing your prewriting.
- Copy these points across the page below the limited topic. Do not worry about the order of the topics. Draw a line from each point to the limited topic.
- Ask yourself if any of the main points can be divided into subcategories. If so, copy the subcategories across the page. Then draw lines (like the branches of a tree) to the main points.
- Divide information into more and more specific categories as necessary. Always draw the connecting branches.

The following example is taken from a student's second journal entry about goals. The limited topic of her journal entry is that goals should have no limitations. In the idea tree that follows the journal entry, she has identified the main points of her limited topic and then divided one of them into subcategories.

Aunt Mae said any goals-to-be should have no limitations unless they are self-imposed. There are goals to be set, goals to be reached, and then new goals to be set. My first goal is to become a college graduate, and then to become a certified public accountant. But my life's highway detours and exit ramps could (and probably will) lead to other interests and goals ... backpacker, pianist, mountain climber, photographer, decorator, day-dreamer ... I have dreams of being a witty conversationalist, of being famous, of being a hermit, of being a hang-glider expert. My dreams are like hundreds of brilliant butterflies emerging from hundreds of cocoons — hundreds of wonderful possibilities flutter by. As I

think these things, I can see the sun setting while I sit here on my patio. I can hear birds and smell the evening fragrances. Everything is settling down and becoming still. I guess some things don't need goals — they just happen. I need to be wise enough to figure out how to attain the important goals in my life without becoming so stressed and frustrated that the destination (goal) is more important than the journey. I need to let some things just happen. Maybe my confusion wasn't such a bad thing — it's made me see that I can do all kinds of things and I can do them in my own time — what feels right for me.

Idea Tree



WORKING OUTLINE

From the idea tree, the writer can develop a working outline. The main points from the second line of the idea tree become the subjects of the Roman numeral entries in the working outline. The subcategory points from the third line of the idea tree become the subjects of the capital letter entries in the working outline. Although the sample idea tree has only two levels, many of your ideas will require additional levels of information. Or some topics might require more than just two subheadings. For example, Roman numeral I might have A, B, and C subheadings.

- I. First main point
 - A. First subcategory
 - B. Second subcategory
 - C. Third subcategory
 - 1. First sub-subcategory
 - 2. Second sub-subcategory
- II. Second main point

Although it is usual for any divided heading in an outline to be divided into at least two parts, such formalities are not always necessary in a working outline. If you have an A without a B, you should not worry about it at this point.

Working Outline

Topic: Goals should have no limitations

- I. College graduate
- II. Detours
- III. Dreams
- IV. Some goals just happen
 - A. No stress
 - B. In my own time

As you can see, the outline is basically another version of listing. For a short piece of writing like a paragraph, a short working outline is usually all you need. For a longer piece of writing like an essay, your outline will probably have more entries. In either case, as you write and revise your paper, you might decide to rearrange the material, to omit something, or to add more information. As you do so, your outline should change along with your thoughts.

PRACTICE WRITING: Idea Tree and Working Outline

Make an idea tree and write a working outline.



COMPUTER HELP

Outlining

Try the outlining program of your word processor to see if it is valuable to you. The outline function can automatically indent and make rearrangement of information easier; however, some outline functions can be confusing or difficult to use. To try one, select Outline or Bullets.