

USE THE TOOLS OF A SKILLED RHETOR

At the end of one semester, one student reflected on what she'd learned during the semester. She said:

I used to sit down to write, and whatever ended up on the page was what I typed and handed in. I had no concept of the invention process and the difference it could make in the content of the essay. This became clearer when I completed our final essay. The invention work was instrumental in helping me remember vivid details, people, even my feelings, all of which were important components of the paper.

This student is on the path toward becoming a skilled rhetor. Already, she has learned how spending time on activities *before* writing can help her writing. She is learning methods that can help improve her writing, similar to how students of rhetoric in ancient Greek and Rome studied the art of composition as a way of learning to be effective orators, an essential skill for a citizen in those cultures.

THE FIVE PARTS OF RHETORIC

Greek and Roman rhetoricians divided rhetoric into five parts or “faculties” that correspond to the order of activities involved in creating a speech: **invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery**. These five parts, or “**faculties,**” of rhetoric are described in many handbook of rhetorical instruction, including the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* which was composed by an unknown author between 86 and 82 C.E.:

The speaker ... should possess the faculties of Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, and Delivery. Invention is the devising of matter, true or plausible, that would make the case convincing. Arrangement is the ordering and distribution of the matter, making clear the place to which each thing is to be assigned. Style is the adaptation of suitable words and sentences to the matter devised. Memory is the firm retention in the mind of the matter, words, and arrangement. Delivery is the graceful regulation of voice, countenance, and gesture.

Today, classes in composition or writing studies still emphasize the necessity of **invention**, now interpreted as pre-writing activities that enable writers to develop the logic and words needed for effective arguments. **Arrangement** currently involves organizing an argument into a logical format that leads the reader easily from the thesis to the conclusion. **Style** has to do with the author's voice, tone, and structure of sentences and paragraphs. **Memory** is used somewhat differently today, as students are no longer required to memorize compositions for oral presentation. Instead, memory is utilized in ways such as remembering how and where to retrieve information from the Internet, books, and other reference materials. Finally, **delivery**, which once involved gestures and tone of voice in an oral presentation, today has to do with document design, so that the final product is presented in a professional manner according to Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) style. Delivery also involves grammatical accuracy because surface errors detract from the effective impact of a document.

Table 6.1

THE FIVE PARTS (OR "FACULTIES") OF RHETORIC		
ENGLISH	GREEK	LATIN
invention	<i>heuresis</i>	<i>inventio</i>
arrangement	<i>taxis</i>	<i>dispositio</i>
style	<i>lexis</i>	<i>elocutio</i>
memory	<i>mneme</i>	<i>memoria</i>
delivery	<i>hypocrisis</i>	<i>actin</i>

THE WRITING PROCESS OVERVIEW

When you are planning to write, what do you do? Do you talk to a friend about the topic you are writing about, or do you go to the library to look up what experts have said about your topic? Do you write in your head as you drive to school, or do you sit at your kitchen table with your favorite pen and create an extensive outline before you begin typing your paper into the computer? Do you only write a sentence down when you know it is perfect, or do you allow words to flow on to the page unedited, checking for spelling and grammar errors later? Do you ask people to read and respond to your writing, or are you hesitant even to show it to your instructor? Maybe you put off writing until the evening before your paper is due; then you sit down to write at midnight, hoping you will finish before breakfast.

Every writer, even the student writer, has developed habits of writing. These habits may help a writer complete thoughtful and well-written essays, or they may keep a writer from doing his or her best work. No matter what habits you have developed, examining the habits of successful writers can help you get better ideas and write more thorough and thoughtful essays. It is likely your instructor will ask you to follow a set of steps in order to write your essays for this class. The steps the instructor asks you to follow are not just random requirements. Instead, they have come from careful analysis of the activities of successful student and professional writers.

INVENTING

Writing is not only about putting the pen to paper. As did rhetors in ancient Greece and Rome, you have to think deeply and critically about the subject before you begin a composition. The “invention” step of the writer’s process is designed to help you find a worthwhile topic and develop your ideas about that topic before you start to write a draft. It includes writing, discussion, and research, as well as informal writing to help you explore your thoughts and feelings about a subject. Whatever method you choose, keep a record of your thoughts and the discoveries that come up as you spend this time in close examination of your subject.

DRAFTING

It may seem odd that writing a draft should come in the middle of the writer’s process. However, research has shown that students and profes-

sionals alike write more effective essays when they don't reach for the pen too quickly. If you have spent enough time in the invention stage, the actual drafting stage may go more quickly. You write the first draft, then in succeeding drafts you add details, observations, illustrations, examples, expert testimony, and other support that will help your essay entertain, illuminate or convince your audience.

REVISING

Today, we talk more about the revision stage of writing than did ancient rhetoricians. If your habits have included writing your class essays at the last minute, you may have missed this step entirely, yet many writers claim this is the longest and most rewarding step in the writing process. To revise, you must, in a sense, learn to let go of your writing. Some students think their first drafts should stay exactly the way they are written because they are true to their feelings and experience. Many writers find, however, that first drafts assume too much about the reader's knowledge and reactions. Sometimes readers, reading a first draft essay, are left scratching their heads and wondering what it is the writer is trying to convey. Writers who revise try to read their writing as readers would note gaps in logic, absence of clear examples, need for reordering information, etc. Then they can revise content with the reader in mind.

EDITING AND POLISHING

Once writers have clarified their messages and the methods by which they get their points across, one more step must be taken. Particularly because their compositions are written, rather than oral presentations, they must go over their work again to check for correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation, as well as the use of Standard Written English. Some students finish with an essay, print it, and turn it in without ever examining the final copy. This is a critical mistake, because misspelled words, and typographical and formatting errors can make an otherwise well-written essay lose credibility.

USING *TOPOI* TO DEVELOP A TOPIC INTO AN ESSAY

Students in ancient Greece, like modern students, generally began the composition process with a subject or topic and then explored the topic from

a variety of perspectives or viewpoints, something like our contemporary prewriting process. For example, they would define terms and the meanings associated with those terms, and then consider the moral connotations of those meanings. Aristotle and other teachers of rhetoric did this by employing “*topoi*” which might be translated literally as “places” or more generally as “topics.” A *topoi* is a strategy or heuristic made up of questions about a topic which allows a rhetor to construe an argument. *Topoi* applicable to any topic are sometimes called common topics or commonplaces. Following is an outline of Aristotle’s common topics which can be applied to develop research paper topics into essays. It is based upon a schema developed by Edward P.J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors for *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*.

In each case, you would answer the question and then elaborate on your answer. In the process of answering the questions, you may develop an approach to discussing the topic.

QUESTIONS OF DEFINITION

Genus or classification—*What larger class does your subject belong to? If, for example, you are writing about stem cell research, the larger class might be medical ethics.*

Species or division—*What makes your topic unique in terms of its class? For stem cell research, you might discuss embryonic stem cells as different from adult stem cells.*

QUESTIONS OF COMPARISON

Similarity—*What characteristics does your topic share with others? How is the stem cell research controversy similar to other medical controversies such as the use of animals to test new drugs and medical procedures?*

Difference—*What makes your topic unique? How is it different from others? How does research with stem cells differ from other medical research controversies?*

Degree—*How significant are those similarities and/or differences?*

Cause and Effect—*What makes your topic happen? What are the consequences of your topic and how significant are they? Embryonic stem cells were chosen for research because they have not yet differentiated into cell types such as heart cells or skin cells and, thus, offer more opportunities for modification into cells that can be used for*

medical treatment. A consequence of the use of embryonic stem cells, however, is that it involves the destruction of human embryos.

QUESTIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS

Antecedent and Consequence—*What came before your topic? What will happen because of it? In other words, you might ask the question of your subject: “If your topic occurs, then what?” For example, if the embryos come from fertility clinics and were to be destroyed anyway, is there a problem with using them for research? Some argue that a consequence of using embryonic stem cells is that it opens the door to cloning human cells.*

Contraries—*What is the argument that proves the opposite of your argument? For example, instead of arguing that embryonic stem cells should or should not be used for research, you might argue that diseases should not be treated by alteration of genetic material. Thus, no stem cells should be used for research.*

Contradictions—*What other interpretations could there be of your topic? If your topic is not what you think it is, what else might it be? For example, early on, stem cell researchers feared that the public would protest “the technological power” of stem cells, questioning what would happen if someone put human stem cells into the brain of a rat. Would you have a human mind in a rat’s brain?*

QUESTIONS OF CIRCUMSTANCE

Possible and Impossible—*How feasible and/or workable is your topic? What factors make your topic either possible or impossible? For example, you can question whether it is moral to leave unexplored medical research that could lead to cures for diabetes and other major illnesses.*

Past Fact and Future Fact—*What precedents are there for your topic? Has it happened or been tried before? Based on past experience, what can you predict for the future of your topic? Based on other medical research, how feasible is it that using embryonic stem cells could lead to cures for diseases?*

QUESTIONS OF TESTIMONY

Authority—*What sources of information do you have to support your topic? What makes your sources authoritative? For example, have you based your argument upon*

recognized medical authorities? Are there those in the medical community who might disagree? Indeed, are medical leaders the proper authorities for your argument?

Testimonial—*Who has personally experienced your topic? How might their experience enhance or detract from the credibility of your position on your topic? Do you have examples of the testimony of couples who have donated embryonic cells to this research? Do you have testimony of individuals who have diabetes and other diseases that might be cured by such research?*

Statistics—*What documented research can you find that gives insight about your topic? How widespread or significant is your topic? Do you have statistics that result from studies using embryonic vs. adult stem cells? Do you have statistics about the diseases that may be receptive to treatment with stem cells?*

OTHER INVENTION STRATEGIES

Great myths have grown up around writers who can supposedly sit down, put pen to paper, and write a masterpiece. If these myths had developed about any other type of artist—a musician or a painter—we would scoff about them and ask about the years of study and practice those artists had spent before they created their masterpieces. Since all of us can write to some degree, perhaps it seems more feasible that great authors simply appear magically amongst us. Alas, it is not so; like all talented artists, good writers must learn their craft through consistent and continuous practice. Similar to how the ancient Greeks used *topoi* to generate raw material for their compositions, many writers today use the following invention strategies as prewriting activities:

FREEWITING

One practice method developed in the 1970s and often attributed to Peter Elbow, author of *Writing Without Teachers*, is called *freewriting*. And the method is just what it sounds like—writing that is free of any content restrictions. You simply write what is on your mind. Freeform, but there is some structure—you must set a time limit before you begin, and once you begin, you must not stop. The time period is usually ten to twenty minutes, and you must keep your pen or pencil moving on the page—no hesitations,

no corrections, no rereading. Don't worry about spelling, or punctuation, or grammar—just download onto the paper whatever comes to mind. It will seem awkward at best; some have said it is downright painful. But after a few weeks practice, you will realize it is effective, and a wonderful individual method of getting at your thoughts on a subject.

INVISIBLE FREEWITING

If you just cannot stop paying attention to your spelling and grammar, or if you find yourself always stopping to read what you have written, you can **freewrite invisibly**. To do this, you will need carbon paper and a pen that is retracted or out of ink. You sandwich the carbon paper, carbon side down, between two sheets of paper and write on the top sheet with your empty pen. You cannot see what you are writing, but you will have it recorded on the bottom sheet of paper. You can easily modify this to work on the computer by taping a blank sheet of paper over the monitor while you type.

FOCUSED FREEWITING

When freewriting, you are writing without sticking to any particular topic. You are exploring many ideas and your sentences may roam from your day at work, the letter you just got from your sister, or a story you read in the paper about a man who tracks the nighttime migrations of songbirds. With *focused freewriting*, you are trying to concentrate on one particular subject. You can write that subject at the top of the page to remind you of your topic as you write. The rules are the same, but when you are focusing, you are more aware of exploring one question or idea in depth.

One drawback of focused freewriting is that students sometimes confuse it with a different step in the writing process, drafting. Remember that freewriting is “invention” work, intended only to help you explore ideas on paper. Drafting takes place only after you have explored, analyzed, and organized those ideas. Freewriting helps you think and write critically about a topic while drafting occurs once you have done the critical thinking necessary to come up with a unified, cohesive, and organized plan for an essay.

LISTING/BRAINSTORMING

This method of mapping is the least visual and the most straightforward. Unlike freewriting, where you write continuously, with *listing* you

write down words and/or phrases that provide a shorthand for the ideas you might use in your essay, much as you would a grocery or “to-do” list. **Brainstorming** is a bit looser. Lists usually follow line after line on the page; brainstorming consists of words and phrases placed anywhere on the page you want to write them down.

CLUSTERING

When you think of a cluster, you think of several like things grouped together, often with something holding them together. *Peanut clusters*, a type of candy, are peanuts joined together with milk chocolate. *Star clusters* are groupings of stars, like the Pleiades or the Big Dipper connected by their relative positions to each other in space. You can create **clusters** of like ideas by grouping your ideas around a central topic on a blank sheet of paper.

ORGANIZING OR ARRANGING

The “invention” process is intended to get our ideas out of our heads and onto a piece of paper, but rarely do these ideas arrive in the most logical or effective order. Take some time (an hour or so for a short essay) to analyze your inventions. Place all the ideas in a logical order, and join similar ideas. Next, look for your most significant point, the most important thing you want to say about your subject. This may become your tentative thesis. Then identify which of the other items on your list will help you communicate your point and delete items that are irrelevant to your thesis.

ORGANIZE YOUR ESSAY

Classical rhetoricians based their teaching of arrangement, or organization of a composition, upon the practices they noticed among the most outstanding orators of their day. The basic arrangement of material then is much the same as familiar organization today. An orator would begin by attracting the audience’s attention in what they called the *exordium* which we would call the opening or introduction. Next, they would provide background information in a *narratio* or narration, followed by an *explication* in which they would define terms and enumerate the issues. During the *parti-*

tion they would express the thesis or main issue to be discussed, and in the *confirmation* they would provide evidence to support the thesis. Opposition arguments would be addressed in the *refutatio*, and the composition would be wrapped up with a *peroratio* or conclusion. The order of these different elements was not rigid in ancient times, nor it is today, and sometimes one or more sections were eliminated if they were not needed, but then, as now, an effective text included most of these elements. For example, if your audience is very familiar with a particular subject, you would not need to define terms, as you would with an audience who was unfamiliar with the material.

As you begin to draft your research paper, you might want to keep the elements of an effective composition in mind, perhaps checking as you complete your first draft to be sure either that all are present or that there is a reason for eliminating one or more parts. Like the ancient Greeks, you will begin with an opening and end with a conclusion. However, in between the bookends of your essay, you will likely want to rearrange the elements somewhat, as we have done in the discussion that follows in the chapter.

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION FROM ANCIENT RHETORIC

Opening (Exordium): *Attracts the audience's attention to the issue.*

Background or narration (Narratio): *Details the history or facts of the issue.*

Definition or explication (Explicatio): *Defines terms and outlines issues.*

Thesis (Partitio): *States the particular issue that is to be argued.*

Proof (Confirmatio): *Develops the thesis and provides support evidence.*

Refutation or opposition (Refutatio): *Addresses the arguments opposing the thesis.*

Conclusion (Peroratio): *Reiterates the thesis and may urge the audience to action.*

WRITE A THESIS STATEMENT

A **thesis** may be a sentence or a series of sentences, or in a few cases may be implied rather than stated explicitly; but a thesis is at the heart of a

piece of writing. If a reader cannot identify your thesis, the meaning of your text is not clear. How do you develop a thesis? First, you determine your occasion for writing—who is your audience, what is your purpose, and what special circumstances are there, if any. Then you write a working thesis that makes an assertion or claim about your topic, something that will be affected by your audience and purpose. For example, if you are writing a research paper about the advantages and disadvantages of biodiesel fuel, your claim may be stated differently if your audience is an English class than if it is a chemistry class. In the latter, you might need to use technical language that would be unfamiliar to your English professor.

Working theses are statements that develop and change as essays are written; they are basic frameworks which provide a connection for the ideas you have decided to convey to your reader. Later, after you have completed a draft of your text, examine your working thesis. If needed, rewrite your thesis so that it clearly states the main idea of your essay in a clear and engaging fashion.

EXAMPLES OF A THESIS STATEMENT

The United States should implement a guest worker program as a way of reforming the illegal immigration problem.

Nuclear power should be considered as part of a program to reduce the United States' dependence on foreign oil.

COMPOSE AN INTRODUCTION

Experienced writers have different methods of creating a good introduction. One who tends to discover his paper as he goes along swears the best way to write an introduction is write the entire paper, then move the conclusion to the beginning of the essay and rewrite it as the introduction. Another writer lets the paper sit around for a few days before she writes her introduction. A third always writes two or three different introductions and tries them out on friends before deciding which to use. However you choose to write the introduction, make sure it is interesting enough to make your reader want to read on.

The introduction to your essay is an invitation to your reader. If you invite readers to come along with you on a boring journey, they won't want to follow. In magazine and newspaper writing, the introduction is sometimes called a hook because it hooks the reader into reading the text. If a magazine writer does not capture the reader's attention right away, the reader is not likely to continue. After all, there are other and possibly more interesting articles in the magazine. Why should readers suffer through a boring introduction? Depending on the topic and pattern of your essay, you might employ one of the following techniques to hook your readers and make them keep reading:

- An intriguing or provocative quotation
- A narrative or anecdote
- A question or series of questions
- A vivid sensory description
- A strongly stated opinion

Your introductory paragraph makes a commitment to your readers. This is where you identify the topic, state your thesis (implicitly or explicitly), and give your readers clues about the journey that will follow in the succeeding paragraphs. Be careful not to mislead the reader. Do not ask questions you will not answer in your paper (unless they are rhetorical questions). Do not switch topics from your introduction to your paper.

Although the introduction is the first paragraph or so of the paper, it may not be the first paragraph the writer composes. If you have problems beginning your essay because you cannot immediately think of a good introduction, begin with the first point in your essay and come back to the introduction later.

COMBINE YOUR IDEAS WITH SUPPORT FROM SOURCE MATERIALS

A research paper, by definition, makes use of source materials to make an argument. It is important to remember, however, that it is *your* paper, *not* what some professors may call a "research dump," meaning that it is constructed by stringing together research information with a few transitions. Rather, you, as the author of the paper, carry the argument in your own words and use quotes and paraphrases from source materials to support your argument. How do you do that? Here are some suggestions:

- After you think you have completed enough research to construct a working thesis and begin writing your paper, collect all your materials

in front of you (photocopies of articles, print outs of electronic sources, and books) and spend a few hours reading through the materials and making notes. Then, put all the notes and materials to the side and freewrite for a few minutes about what you can remember from your research that is important. Take this freewriting and make a rough outline of main points you want to cover in your essay. Then you can go back to your notes and source materials to flesh out your outline.

- Use quotes for three reasons: 1.) You want to “borrow” the ethos or credibility of the source. For example, if you are writing about stem cell research, you may want to quote from an authority such as Dr. James A. Thomson, whose ground-breaking research led to the first use of stem cells for research. Alternatively, if you are quoting from the *New England Journal of Medicine* or another prestigious publication, it may be worth crediting a quote to that source. 2.) The material is so beautifully or succinctly written that it would lose its effectiveness if you reworded the material in your own words. 3.) You want to create a point of emphasis by quoting rather than paraphrasing. Otherwise, you probably want to paraphrase material from your sources, as quotes should be used sparingly. Often, writers quote source material in a first draft and then rewrite some of the quotes into paraphrases during the revision process.
- Introduce quotes. You should never have a sentence or sentences in quote marks just sitting in the middle of a paragraph, as it would puzzle a reader. If you quote, you should always introduce the quote by saying something like this: According to Dr. James A. Thomson, “Stem cell research.....”
- Avoid plagiarism by clearly indicating material that is quoted or paraphrased. See the appendix for more information about citing source material.

SUPPORT YOUR THESIS

After you have attracted the interest of your audience, established your thesis and given any background information and definitions, you will next begin to give reasons for your position, which further develops your argument. These reasons are, in turn, supported by statistics, analogies, anecdotes, quotes from authorities which you have discovered in your research

or know from personal knowledge. Ideally, arrange your reasons so that the strongest ones come either at the beginning or the end of this portion of the paper and the weaker ones fall in the middle which are not points of emphasis.

ANSWER OPPOSING ARGUMENTS

If you are aware of a contradicting statistic or other possible objection to your argument, it may be tempting to ignore that complication, hoping your audience will not notice. However, that is exactly the worst thing you can do. It is much better to anticipate your audience's possible questions or objections and address them in your discussion. Doing so prevents you from losing credibility by appearing to deceive your audience or from the perception that you are not aware of all the facts. Also, acknowledging possible refutations of your position actually strengthens your position by making you seem knowledgeable and fair-minded.

VARY YOUR STRATEGIES OR PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT

When composing your essay, you have many different strategies or **patterns of development** available to you. You may write entire essays whose strategy is argumentation or comparison and contrast, but more often, will combine many of these different modes while writing a single essay.

- Analysis entails a close examination of an issue, a book, a film, or other object, separating it into elements and examining each of the elements separately through other writing modes such as classification or comparison and contrast.
- Argumentation involves taking a strong stand on an issue supported by logical reasons and evidence intended to change a reader's mind on an issue or open a reader's eyes to a problem.
- Cause and effect is an explanation of the cause and subsequent effects or consequences of a specific action.
- Classification entails dividing and grouping things into logical categories.
- Comparison and contrast examines the similarities and differences between two or more things.
- Definition employs an explanation of the specific meaning of a word,

phrase, or idea.

- Description uses vivid sensory details to present a picture or an image to the reader.
- Exemplification makes use of specific examples to explain, define, or analyze something.
- Narration uses a story or vignette to illustrate a specific point or examine an issue.

WRITE A CONCLUSION

After they have read the last paragraph of your essay, your readers should feel satisfied that you have covered everything you needed to and you have shared an insight. You may have heard the basic rules: A conclusion cannot address any new issues, and it should summarize the main points of the essay. Although these are valid and reliable rules, a summary is not always the best way to end an essay. The prohibition against new ideas in the final paragraph also might limit certain effective closures like a call to action or a question for the reader to ponder.

One effective technique for writing an introduction is to refer back to your introduction. If you began with a narrative anecdote, a sensory description, or a question, you can tie a mention of it to your ending point. Or, if you are composing an argumentative essay, you might choose to summarize by using an expert quote to restate your thesis, giving the reader a final firm sense of ethos or credibility. You might also end with a single-sentence summary followed by a suggestion or a call to action for the reader. Another effective way to end an argument can be a paragraph that suggests further research.

A conclusion doesn't have to be long. As a matter of fact, it does not even need to be a separate paragraph, especially if your essay is short. If your closing comments are related to the final paragraph of the essay, one or two sentences can easily be added to the final body paragraph of the essay.