

Everybody's essay writing process is unique. The path you take to create an original piece of writing will be as individual as you are, and this handout is a generalization. But if you find yourself stuck and not sure what to do, this general process has often been found to work.

I • Getting Started •

- a. Figure out what to write about:
 - Take some time to **understand the task** at hand so you know how best to achieve it. What is your **purpose**? Who is your **reader** going to be?
- b. Gather information:
 - You may need to do **research** before you **choose your topic**. Be sure you choose something that fulfills your task and that you can find enough information about.
- c. Brainstorm:
 - Try **discussing your topic** with a friend, tutor, or professor,
 - **Freewriting** to see what sorts of ideas you're interested in,
 - Or **listing or mind mapping** the information that seems most important.

III • Drafting •

Try not to assume that your first draft will be what you turn in. **Let the first draft be rough**—just get your ideas down, and you can clean them up later.

- a. Introduction:
 - **Background information and context**
 - **Thesis statement** – the main point of your whole piece of writing
- b. Body Paragraphs:
 - **Topic sentence** – state the point and how it relates to the thesis
 - Go into **detail** to support the point
- c. Conclusion:
 - **Recap** the main points you've made
 - End on a **thoughtful note** (see Introductions & Conclusions *handout*)

II • Outlining •

- a. Draft your thesis statement:
 - Begin with a **“working” thesis**, which states the main point of your writing, but can be flexible and change as you keep writing. **Keep brainstorming** as you go.
- b. Create an outline:
 - **Form the main points** that'll support your thesis and begin **organizing them into paragraphs**. Keep in mind that each paragraph should focus on one idea that directly relates to the main point of your paper.

IV • Revising •

Don't be afraid to ask for another opinion. It can be very helpful to have another pair of eyes look at your work to see if you've really done what you were trying to do.

- a. Content and organization
 - After you've finished writing, **take a look at what's really on the page**. Is it clear what points you were trying to make? Are you **answering the prompt** fully?
 - Try creating a **reverse outline**, summarizing the main point of each paragraph and looking at the whole trajectory of your ideas. Is everything clear?
- b. Sentence and word-level revisions
 - Once you've got the content and organization settled, **clean up your writing for clarity**. Are the ideas in every sentence clear?
 - Making the **connections** between your ideas clear will help you make the **transitions** between sentences and paragraphs.
 - Cleaning up **sentence structure, grammar, and word choice** is a matter of making sure that your reader won't get confused.