

# The Writing Lab

## Writing Process Tip Sheet

handout courtesy of Richard Morris

Different people approach writing in different ways, but I want you to start thinking about writing as a process. Writing can be intimidating and is often a difficult and sometimes frustrating process, but you need to find the type of process that works best for you. This handout outlines some basic strategies to focus on the invention, arrangement, and style of your work.

Invention	Arrangement	Style
<p>Invention means developing your ideas. The following are strategies for developing ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brainstorming</li><li>• Webbing/Clustering</li><li>• Researching/Reading</li><li>• Talking to Others or Discussing</li><li>• Using Invention Grids</li><li>• Observing</li><li>• Freewriting*</li></ul> <p>* Freewriting has its uses, but students who use it need extremely strong editing (and deleting skills), which most first-semester college writers do not have. Freewriters should be encouraged to add other invention strategies to their writing processes for those occasions when they have fast-approaching deadlines or need to write more focused pieces.</p>	<p>Arrangement means deciding how to organize your ideas, including adding, deleting, sorting, and setting up paragraph flow. The following are strategies for organizing ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Formal Outlines</li><li>• Informal Outlines</li><li>• Webbing</li><li>• Organization Maps</li><li>• Writing Plans</li><li>• Lists</li></ul>	<p>Style means fine-tuning your writing at the sentence and word levels, cleaning up your writing to create sentence flow and effectiveness. The following are strategies for improving your style:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grammar</li><li>• Punctuation</li><li>• Spelling</li><li>• Don't "write up."</li><li>• Don't use "flowery" sentences.</li><li>• Don't use "50 cent" words.</li><li>• Don't pad with unnecessary words.</li><li>• Use clear, direct, precise language.</li><li>• Use good compound-complex sentences.</li></ul>

**Thesis Statement:** A thesis statement is usually a single sentence (though in longer, more complex documents, the thesis statement can be longer) that provides readers with your essay's purpose and focus. In academic writing, thesis statements can be stated in different ways and placed in different spots in the document. For English 101, however, make sure to state essay's thesis statement *no later than the end of the second paragraph*. A thesis statement is generally an opinion or argument you want your essay to illustrate to readers.

**Audience:** Who are you writing for? What do they know? What don't they know? What are their beliefs and values? Consider particular points of view and cultural positions/roles as you get ready to convey your ideas or story or make your argument.

## Paragraph Building

At a basic level, each paragraph is like a mini-essay: it has a mini-thesis statement that refers to the main thesis and a mini-conclusion (that will eventually build to a larger final point). Evidence, information, narrative, arguments, and ideas develop and flow in between these two “anchor points” of your paragraph.

mini-thesis statement  ideas examples evidence etc.  mini-conclusion ↓	mini-thesis statement  ideas examples evidence etc.  mini-conclusion ↑
mini-thesis statement  ideas examples evidence etc.  mini-conclusion	mini-thesis statement  ideas examples evidence etc.  mini-conclusion
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Computer Tools</b>
<p><u>Build paragraphs one by one with attention to the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your essay’s major goal: to educate, inform, entertain, argue, persuade, instruct, describe, define?</li> <li>• What does your audience already know about the topic of essay?</li> <li>• What background information does your audience need to know?</li> <li>• Why should your audience be interested in your topic/position?</li> <li>• How do you keep your audience’s attention throughout the essay?</li> <li>• What do you want your audience to do with the information you have provided?</li> </ul>	<p><u>Use computer tools with caution:</u></p> <p><u>Spell Checkers:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spell checkers cannot distinguish homophones (two different words that sound the same but are spelled differently such as <i>to</i>, <i>too</i>, and <i>two</i>).</li> <li>• Spell checkers make mistakes in word use; they allow any correctly spelled word (even if it is the wrong word) to go by.</li> </ul> <p><u>Grammar Checks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grammar checks will try to put information into more simple sentence structures.</li> <li>• Grammar checks are often wrong; they often give incorrect advice, particularly about active vs. passive sentences</li> </ul>