



Drafting

Drafting is the most dynamic stage in the writing process. Here you expand your working thesis and outline into body paragraphs, and you communicate your organization to readers through your introduction, topic sentences, and transitions. As you flesh out your plan, however, you can still explore your subject, discovering new ideas and trying different strategies. The techniques in this section will help balance ongoing creativity with your writing plan. The techniques will do this by helping you

- think through different strategies to introduce and conclude an essay,
- organize body paragraphs and identify what information is needed, and
- communicate your writing plan on the essay, paragraph, and sentence levels.

Your goal in drafting is to place information. If you draft quickly, you will be more likely to experiment with new ideas as they come to you. You will also be more willing to make changes in the revision section because you have not bled so much into making the draft.

A. Writing Introductions

A good introduction is the perfect host. First, it draws readers into the essay, promising to share something interesting or meaningful. Second, it tantalizes them with a preview of what they will learn, the thesis of the essay. Third, it sets just the right tone for the experience, the writer's attitude toward the subject and the readers.

You can learn in other process sections how to develop a thesis and set the tone. Here we can work on the more challenging task of hooking the interest of readers. Fortunately, writers have a number of possible strategies to use:

- **Tell a story.** Stories from history or personal experience engage our interest and our emotions.
- **Quote someone else.** A poetic statement can provoke readers to think; a thoughtful statement from an expert can signal that others share your view.
- **Pose a question.** A provocative question readers would like to answer can encourage them to read on.
- **Describe a situation.** A few vivid descriptions can engage readers' imaginations.
- **Offer a surprising fact or statistic.** Information that shows the seriousness of the issue can make readers feel a duty in learning more.
- **Get to the point.** Sometimes an audience would prefer a very concise statement of the subject, your point about it, and what main ideas you will cover.

B. Writing Body Paragraphs

Imagine an essay with no paragraphs. Readers would face an impenetrable wall of words; they would have no guidance in how to cluster the information, no sense of which ideas were important. Good body paragraphs prevent this problem in two ways: 1) they encourage writers to bring similar ideas together, and 2) they give a focus and structure to those ideas. As a result, writers can communicate their ideas much more effectively.

You can learn in other activities how to discover and organize your main points, those insights that support the truth of your thesis. With a general sense of your main points and organization, you can begin fleshing out those points into paragraphs. As you do, remember that you are still in the drafting stage. Write easily and quickly. You need to get all of your information down before you worry about whether it flows well or expresses an appropriate tone. Here are three suggestions to help you write body paragraphs:

1. **Advertise your main point.** In most academic writing, readers expect you to tell them the main point of your body paragraph in the first or second sentence, which we can call your paragraph's *topic sentence*. The topic sentence lets readers know up front what you will be trying to teach them in that paragraph.



2. **Envision a structure.** Even though you should draft quickly, you can still keep a sense of structure in mind. Body paragraphs are usually organized around some variation of topic sentence—evidence or examples—explanation. The explanation clarifies how the evidence or examples demonstrate the truth of the topic sentence.
3. **Provide your evidence.** Work in all the specific examples and evidence you've collected that is relevant to supporting the topic sentence. Don't worry if your paragraph gets really long; you can go back in the revising stage to further divide paragraphs.

C. Working with Transitions

Transitions can only tell readers how you organized; they can not make up for an essay that lacks a clear focus and organization.

By advertising your clear, focused thinking, transitions can help in three ways:

1. **They signal what main points are coming.** "Frank Sinatra is the most playable musician because he was an exceptional vocalist and his songs connect with timeless human emotions."
2. **They signal the shift from one idea to another.** "The pleasure of Sinatra's voice is matched only by the timeless appeal of his songs."
3. **They show how ideas are connected.** "Sinatra's songs appeal to timeless human emotions. For example, "It Was a Very Good Year" appeals to anyone who looks back over her life from the poignant vantage of maturity."

D. Writing Conclusions

A good conclusion is an after-dinner mint. If essays were dining experiences, the conclusion would be the dessert that brings a clean finish to the experience. The thesis and main ideas are reasserted, and readers get the sense that they have been entertained or educated in some way. At the same time, like any good candy, the conclusion leaves readers wanting more. The conclusion encourages them to continue thinking or to act on the recommendations you have made.

Encouraging readers to continue thinking while trying to bring closure to the essay is challenging. Without adding new information that should be developed in the essay's body, the writer must continue to stimulate readers, leaving them with a good taste in their mouths. Fortunately, writers have a number of possible strategies to use:

- **Recall the introduction.** Refer back to the opening story, quote, or statistic to show how far readers have come in their understanding.
- **Quote someone else.** A poetic statement can highlight the subject's profound qualities; a thoughtful statement from an expert can remind readers that others share your view.
- **Give readers something to do.** If you motivate readers to get involved, then give them one small task they can do right away, like writing a letter to their representative.
- **Make it personal.** Connect your subject with readers to show why they need to continue studying this subject.
- **What's next?** What questions remain and what areas of study need exploration as a result of your work?
- **Enlarge the scope.** Showing how the subject is mixed up with larger issues will emphasize its importance.
- **Get to the point.** Sometimes an audience would prefer the thesis and main points restated in a fresh way.

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