

Steps in the Writing Process



1. PREWRITE—explore the topic and plan your writing; also known as *brainstorming* (“THINK”)

Prewriting is any kind of activity that helps you determine what you will write about. Many things qualify as prewriting activities. Some of the most common are:

- Making lists
- Brainstorming
- Making webs, charts, clustering, or using graphic organizers
- Outlining
- Drawing
- Discussing the subject
- Free writing, journal writing
- Note taking
- Researching
- Interviewing

The purpose of the prewriting stage is to allow you to explore the topic thoroughly in an informal, relaxed, unstructured way before starting a formal composition. Prewriting is a prerequisite for good writing. Don't skip this step or cut it short.

2. DRAFT—put it down on paper. (“WRITE”)

Drafting is where formal writing begins. Using your prewriting materials as your guide, you start to write. At this point, you don't worry too much about mechanics (spelling, punctuation, *etc.*), style, or organization. You just want to get your ideas down on paper as quickly and easily as you can.

You have finished drafting when:

- Sketches, notes, outlines, lists or ideas have been turned into sentences and paragraphs.
- There is a recognizable beginning, middle, and end.
- You have gone as far as you can go without some feedback.

Your draft does not have to be complete from beginning to end. Like prewriting, the drafting stage is important. It gives you as a writer the opportunity to engage in risk-free exploration of your subject. It's a good time for trying things out.

3. REVISE—take a look at what you’ve written; get some advice. (“MAKE IT BETTER”)

Revising means *seeing again*, and it also includes getting some reader response. Response can come from many sources:

- Teacher conference (show it to your ES)
- Peer conference (show it to a friend)
- Small group or class share (read it aloud and get some feedback)
- Discussion with parent, family members, other adults

At this point, you are looking for reactions and suggestions. Everything is fair game, but comments regarding conventions should be kept to a minimum. You’ll deal with conventions during *EDITING*. Right now you’re most concerned with your ideas and how well they flow together into a clear piece of writing.

4. EDIT—make corrections. (“MAKE IT CORRECT”)

At this point, the writer will focus formally on mechanical correctness. This is the point in the process when copy editing occurs. Grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, and minor changes in wording are the only work the paper should need at this point.

Editing can come from different sources:

- Your ES or another teacher
- A friend
- Parents
- Spell-checking and grammar-checking features on your computer (these are not foolproof; you still must pay close attention)

5. PUBLISH—polish your work for presentation, and reflect on it. (“SHARE THE FINISHED PRODUCT”)

Publication can take many forms:

- Posting at school, publishing in the *Voice* or on the PCS website
- Submitting for formal publication in a newspaper or magazine, or on a website
- Reading aloud to an audience
- Collecting in a writing portfolio



WRITING A SUMMARY **For Secondary Students**

Read with the Writer's Purpose in Mind

- Read the article carefully, making **no** notes or marks and looking only for what the writer is saying.
 - After you're finished reading, write down in one sentence the point that is made about the subject. Then look for the writer's thesis and underline it.
 - Does this thesis correspond with the sentence you wrote down? If not, adjust your sentence or reconsider the thesis you selected.
 - Look at the article again and ask yourself if your view is slanted toward one of the essay's minor points. If it is, adjust your sentence so that it is slanted toward the writer's major point.
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Underline with Summarizing in Mind

- Once you clearly understand the writer's major point (or purpose) for writing, read the article again. This time underline the major points supporting the thesis; these should be words or phrases here and there rather than complete sentences.
 - In addition, underline key transitional elements which show how parts are connected. Omit specific details, examples, description, and unnecessary explanations. **Note:** you may need to go through the article twice in order to pick up everything you need.
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Write, Revise, and Edit to Ensure the Accuracy and Correctness of Your Summary

Writing Your Summary

- Now begin writing your summary. Start with a sentence naming the writer and article title and stating the essay's main idea. Then write your summary, omitting nothing important and striving for overall coherence through appropriate transitions.
- Be concise, using coordination and subordination to compress ideas.
- Conclude with a final statement reflecting the significance of the article -- not from your own point of view but from the writer's.
- Throughout the summary, do **not** insert your own opinions or thoughts; instead summarize what the writer has to say about the subject.

Revising Your Summary

- After you've completed a draft, read your summary and check for accuracy.
 - Does your summary make the same point as the article?

- Have you omitted anything important?
 - Does your summary read smoothly with all parts clearly related?
- Keep in mind that a summary should generally be no more than one-fourth the length of the original. If your summary is too long, cut out words rather than ideas. Then look for non-essential information and delete it.
- Write another draft -- still a draft for revision -- and ask someone to read it critically.
 - Can that person understand the sense of the article by reading your summary?
 - Ask for criticism; then weigh these criticisms and make valid changes.

Editing Your Summary

- Correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors, looking particularly for those common in your writing.
- Write a clean draft and proofread for copying errors.

Summary Writing

Summarizing is a very simple concept, but actually doing it can be challenging. It is an excellent way to polish your thinking skills, since you have to be able to pick out the most important ideas in something you read and explain them briefly, without adding any unnecessary details.

When you write a summary, you use your **own words** to explain the **main ideas** of what you have read. A summary does *not* include your opinions. You are trying to convey only what the writer has said about the subject. Your summary should be much shorter than the passage you are summarizing—about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ as long.

How to write a summary:

1. Read your article or passage and look for the main idea of the whole piece.
2. Read through the piece again, and identify the main idea in each paragraph.
 - If possible, make a copy of the piece. Then you can highlight or underline to help yourself identify main ideas.
 - Asking yourself the 5 W's can help you: who, what, when, where, why
3. Make yourself a brainstorm in the style that is most helpful to you, such as a word web, an outline, or a chart. Include:
 - Author
 - Title
 - Source (the title of the book, magazine, or encyclopedia where the piece was published)
 - Overall main idea of the entire piece
 - Subtopics: major points within the piece
4. Begin your first draft. Do not look at the original now; use only the key words and ideas you wrote on your brainstorm.
5. When you have completed your first draft, go back and read over the piece to make sure that you included all of the main ideas.
6. Add any main ideas you may have left out, and take out anything you've included that is not essential. Add *transitional expressions* to help the individual parts of your summary flow together.
7. Now it's time to *revise* your work. If you can, share your work with someone else. Reading it aloud is an excellent way for both you and your listener get a sense of your work. Have a parent, teacher, or friend read it over and give you some feedback—is what you have written clear and understandable? Based on your own opinion and the

suggestions of others, make any changes you think necessary. You can add information, take out information, or just rearrange what you've written so that it flows more smoothly and makes more sense.

8. After revising comes *editing*. This is when you focus on the correctness of your writing. Re-read your writing, and do your best to correct the spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Then ask for some help from a parent, teacher or friend. You want not only the ideas in your work to be correct, but also the words with which you've expressed your ideas.

Transition Words and Phrases

These can help you make your ideas flow together within a paragraph, and they can make your paragraphs flow together into a piece of writing that will interest and inform your reader.

To show how things are related in time or to show the order in which they're related	after before first second third later meanwhile next
When you want to add information	additionally in addition for example furthermore
When you want to bring your writing to a Conclusion	finally in conclusion therefore
When you want to contrast, or show how things are different	although on the other hand yet conversely nevertheless however
When you want to emphasize a point	indeed for this reason to emphasize
When you want to compare, or show how things are the same	in the same way likewise similarly