

Overview of the Writing Process

In terms of both reading and writing, students should be aware that these are multi-step processes, not single one-time acts. Instruction and practice in the different steps of the process can greatly improve a student's writing or reading skill. Breaking a daunting task into manageable steps that can be worked on individually can make improvement in reading or writing a much less overwhelming endeavor.

- I. Prewriting: once presented with a topic, students should take the time to engage in some form of informal writing designed to generate ideas. This can include any combination of a variety of activities: brainstorming, clustering, freewriting, or journal writing. By doing this before actually drafting an essay, students can explore the topic in order to gauge their level of knowledge and interest in certain areas of the topic and can better formulate a thesis (main point) regarding that topic. At this stage, students can also sketch a rough plan of how they might develop a multi-paragraph essay.
- II. Drafting: with guidance from the instructor as to the specific nature of the writing task (what type of essay they are writing, length requirements, use of readings, etc), students can begin the writing of the formal essay.
- III. Reviewing and Revising: at various points in the drafting process, students should stop and review what they have written and make changes, both large (moving paragraphs, modifying thesis, added supporting detail) and small (changes in sentence structure and word choice).
- IV. Proofreading: after drafting and several instances of reviewing and revising, students should very carefully read over their essays in final draft form to catch any small remaining errors.

Important note: the writing process should not be thought of only in linear terms; that is, students should be prepared to visit and revisit the steps outlined above several times in the course of writing a formal essay.