

Tips on the Writing Process

1. If you are using sources, read them more than once, and annotate each source.

As you take notes:

- Pose questions, and jot down interesting ideas. Note which ideas are yours and which are an author's.
- Which quotations strike you in some way? Record these (including their page numbers).

2. Pre-Write: Brainstorm, freewrite, or make a visual map of your ideas. See the Writing Center's handout on these three strategies.

Think about the following:

- Which ideas intrigue you? Which are new?
- Do you strongly agree/disagree with any ideas?
- Which ideas relate to others from your coursework (readings/research, lectures, class discussion)?

3. Think about the purpose and scope of your paper.

- What is your paper's overarching purpose? To inform, persuade, entertain, or something else?
- What is the required length of your paper? If you are not certain, ask your professor.
- From which point-of-view are you expected to write? Most academic writing employs third person point-of-view (she, he, the author, Jones, etc.). Some reflection, reaction, or research papers *may* allow for first person point-of-view (I, me, my opinion, etc.).

4. Revisit your pre-writing and focus. Then, make an outline.

- Which ideas can you use?
- Which ideas could you explore further?
- Which ideas might you hold aside to reconsider later? Which ideas might you eliminate?
- An outline enables you to organize your thoughts and stay focused.

5. Begin drafting (composing the paragraphs).

- Think about topic sentences and unified paragraphs. That is, each paragraph must cover one specific idea.
- Include citations for any material quoted, summarized, or paraphrased from sources.

6. Revise (content/organization), and proofread (grammar).

- Revision and proofreading are most efficient when done as two separate steps. First, review your paper for content and organization. Then, review the paper again for grammar, mechanics, and formatting. If a particular grammatical issue has given you difficulty in the past, read the paper once or twice, focusing solely on that concept, for instance, comma usage.