

Resources for Writers: The Writing Process

Writing is a process that involves at least four distinct steps: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. It is known as a recursive process. While you are revising, you might have to return to the prewriting step to develop and expand your ideas.

Prewriting

1. Prewriting is anything you do before you write a draft of your document. It includes thinking, taking notes, talking to others, brainstorming, outlining, and gathering information (e.g., interviewing people, researching in the library, assessing data).
2. Although prewriting is the first activity you engage in, generating ideas is an activity that occurs throughout the writing process.

Drafting

1. Drafting occurs when you put your ideas into sentences and paragraphs. Here you concentrate upon explaining and supporting your ideas fully. Here you also begin to connect your ideas. Regardless of how much thinking and planning you do, the process of putting your ideas in words changes them; often the very words you select evoke additional ideas or implications.
2. Don't pay attention to such things as spelling at this stage.
3. This draft tends to be writer-centered: it is you telling yourself what you know and think about the topic.

Revising

1. Revision is the key to effective documents. Here you think more deeply about your readers' needs and expectations. The document becomes reader-centered. How much support will each idea need to convince your readers? Which terms should be defined for these particular readers? Is your organization effective? Do readers need to know X before they can understand Y?
2. At this stage, you also refine your prose, making each sentence as concise and accurate as possible. Make connections between ideas explicit and clear.

Editing

1. Check for such things as grammar, mechanics, and spelling. The last thing you should do before printing your document is to spell check it.
2. Don't edit your writing until the other steps in the writing process are complete.

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