

Tips for Writers: Writing as a Process

The Prewriting Stage

- You might find an interesting subject to write about by brainstorming potential topics with classmates, taking a photo safari through a picture album, rereading old journal entries and letters, or taking a nature walk and observing your environment.
- Gather details about your topic to decide if you care enough to write about it. Organize your thoughts in some manner including throwing away the ideas that don't fit.
- Graphic organizers can help you sort through your thoughts!

The Draft and Discover Stage

- Begin writing! Jot down your ideas, using your prewriting notes as the skeleton of your piece. Don't be surprised if your writing takes an unexpected turn; the act of writing often sparks new ideas.
- Focus on content, *not* mechanics. Use temporary spelling at this stage. We'll edit later!
- Double-space each line so that you can revise easily.
- Think about your draft. Have you tailored it to your audience? Do you have enough information on this topic? Are you ready to share it with a peer reader?

The Revising Stage

- It's time to *rethink!* Read your draft aloud, slowly, listening for problem areas.
- Use your 6+1 Trait rubrics to see how the piece measures up in Ideas and Content, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, and Sentence Fluency. Conference with a peer/teacher/parent/anyone who will hold still! Remember, all writers need feedback to see how their work plays to an audience.
- Add, delete, and CHANGE!
- REWRITE. Yes, it's hard work, but you just might surprise yourself.

The Editing Stage

- Have you said everything just the way you want it? Good! *Now* is the time to focus on mechanical correctness. Look for possible errors in capitalization, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and paragraph construction.
- Use standard proofreading marks.
- Another conference is in order - a fresh eye will often spot something the author glosses over.

The Publishing Stage

- Publish your writing in an appropriate format. You've worked hard, and you want it to look good!
- Presentation should *enhance* your message rather than detract from it; choose graphics, fonts, and illustrations wisely.
- Have you...
 - made your writing/font legible?
 - used adequate margins and spacing between words?
- Celebrate your writing by sharing it with others and/or reflecting on it in your writer's notebook.



The Prewriting Stage

1. Find an interesting subject to write about by exploring some of the following suggestions:
 - Brainstorm and list potential topics to write about with your classmates; think 'small'.
 - Take a photo safari through a picture album.
 - Dig up the past . . . reread past journal entries, letters, unfinished drafts, etc.
 - Take a nature walk or do some research reading.
2. Choose a subject to write about those interests you and one you **know** a lot about.
3. Gather details about your topic to decide if you **care enough** to write about it. Organize your thoughts in some manner on paper . . . ask your teacher for a graphic organizer to help you get your thoughts down.
4. Sometimes if you're fresh out of ideas, your teacher might offer a topic or two!

With thanks to classroom teachers for these ideas.



The Draft and Discover Stage

1. Begin to write. Jot down your ideas . . . the ones that are the **clearest** to you.
2. Decide what is most **important** to you as you write.
3. Decide which ideas are **working** and which are not.
4. Use temporary spelling at this stage. (We'll edit later!)
5. Focus on **content**, NOT mechanics.
6. Double space each line so that you can revise easily.
7. Think about your draft:
 - Are you ready to share it with a peer reader?
 - Do you have enough information to write about this topic?
 - Who is your audience?
 - What is your purpose: to inform, persuade, describe.

With thanks to classroom teachers for these ideas.



The Revising Stage

1. Begin to ask yourself where changes need to be made. It's time to **RETHINK!**
2. Read your draft aloud.
3. Check for the traits: Ideas, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, Voice, and Organization. (Refer to your Student-Friendly Scoring Guide.)
4. Add, delete, **CHANGE!**
5. Have a conference with one of the following:
 - a peer
 - your teacher
 - someone outside the classroom (Mom, Dad)
6. **REWRITE . . .**Yes, we know it's work, but you might surprise yourself and be pleased with the outcome!
7. Don't forget your title! It should reflect your main theme.

With thanks to classroom teachers for these ideas.



The Editing Stage

1. Now you can focus on mechanical correctness. Look for possible errors in the following areas:
 - capitalization
 - grammar (read it aloud again!)
 - punctuation
 - spelling
 - paragraphs and indentation
2. Check for spelling errors. Read your story backward to look for those spelling demons!
3. Use standard proofreading marks.
4. Find out if a peer can help you with your editing.
5. Remember this is the trait of CONVENTIONS.

.. With thanks to classroom teachers for these ideas.



The Publishing Stage

1. Publish your writing in an appropriate form. You've worked hard, so you want it to look good!
2. Be aware of presentation:
 - Is it legible?
 - Do I have margins?
 - Do I use adequate spacing between each word?
 - Are my name and the date appropriately positioned?
 - Is my title centered?
 - Have I included pictures, graphs, diagrams?
3. Share your finished writing with an audience:
 - Your classmates, family, or community members.
 - Hang it up someplace where you and others can enjoy it.
 - Enter it in a writing contest.
 - Send it off to your local newspaper.
 - Put it in your portfolio.
4. Take some quiet time to reflect on your writing in your writer's notebook.

With thanks to classroom teachers for these ideas.



The 6+1[®] Analytical Trait Model for Writing Assessment



1. Ideas

Ideas are the heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, together with the details that enrich and develop that theme.



2. Organization

Organization is the internal structure, the thread of central meaning, the logical and sometimes intriguing pattern of the ideas within a piece of writing.



3. Voice

Voice is the heart and soul, the magic, the wit, along with the feeling and conviction of the individual writer coming out through the words.



4. Word Choice

Word choice is the use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader.



5. Sentence Fluency

Sentence fluency is the rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way in which the writing plays to the ear—not just to the eye.



6. Conventions

Conventions are like the mechanical correctness of the piece—spelling, paragraphing, grammar and usage, punctuation, and use of capitals.



+1 Presentation

Presentation zeros in on the form and layout of the text and its readability; the piece should be pleasing to the eye.

