

The Writing Process

INTRODUCTION

The writing process outlined in this document will give you the tools you need to write an effective paragraph or essay. This writing process has two stages, **Stage 1: Plan and Write** and **Stage 2: Revise and Edit**. This document shows different techniques you can use in each stage as you complete your writing assignments in *Q: Skills for Success*.

Good writers usually develop their own personal process for writing. You do not have to follow each step presented here in this exact order. After you become familiar with these techniques, you will be able to personalize how you use them. As you become a more experienced writer, you will develop the writing process that is best for you.

STAGE 1: PLAN AND WRITE

A. BRAINSTORM

Brainstorming means thinking freely about your topic to collect a lot of ideas. There are many techniques you can use to brainstorm ideas. The one you choose will depend on the type of writing you are doing. After you complete the brainstorming process, look back at your ideas and choose the ones you will use in your writing.

Freewriting

Write the topic, question, or assignment at the top of your paper. Then write for ten minutes without stopping. You will brainstorm ideas as you write. Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar—just keep your pen moving! After 10 minutes, read your freewriting. Which ideas can you use in your writing? Underline your best ideas.

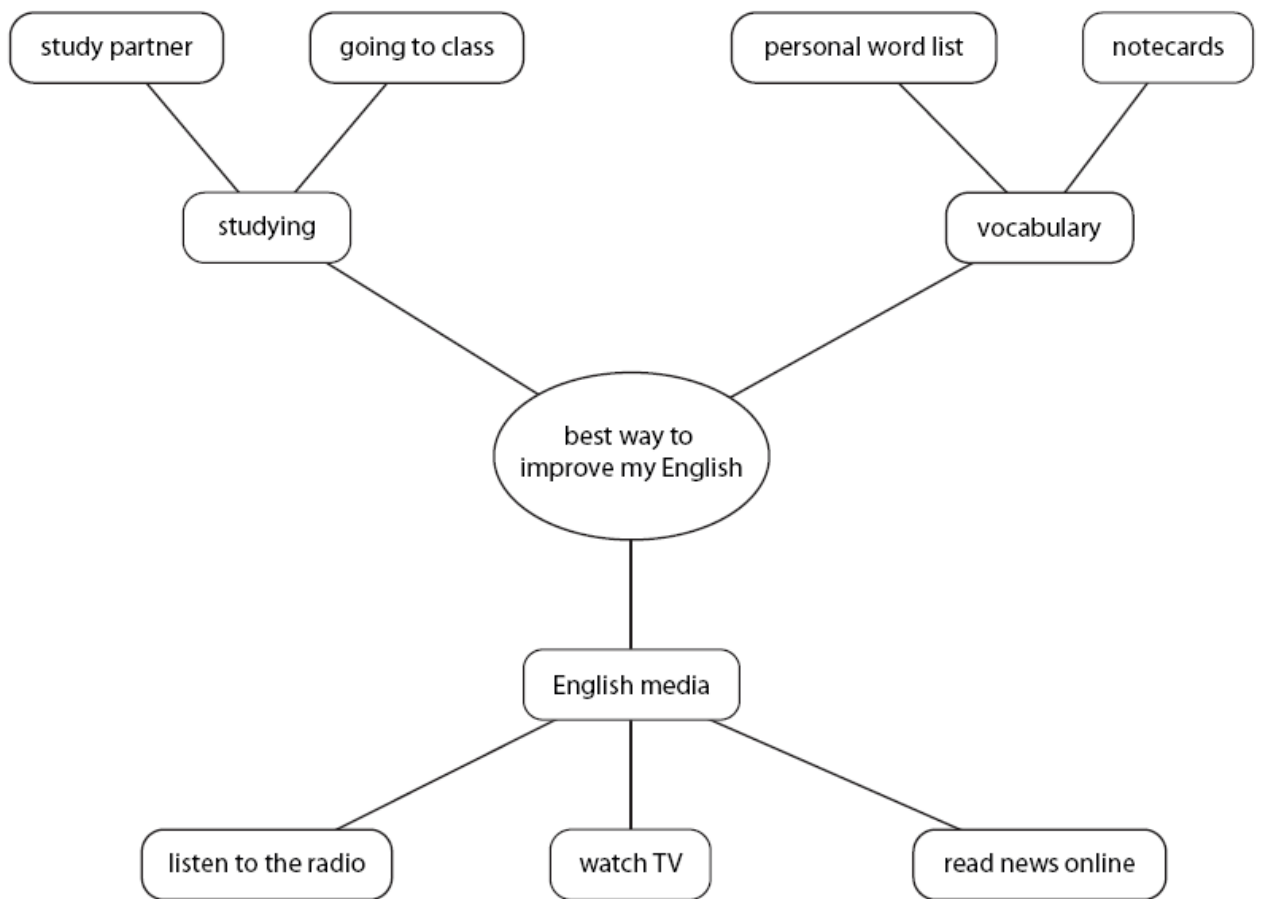
Listing

Write a list of all the ideas you have for the assignment. Add as many ideas as you can. Don't delete anything. Don't edit your list. When you finish, look at your list. Which ideas are the strongest or most interesting?

Clustering

Make an idea map. (You can print out a blank idea map from the Resources section of *Q Online Practice*.) Write your topic in the middle of the page. Add supporting ideas around it and draw lines to connect them to your topic. Draw more lines to connect these ideas to examples or other details. When you finish, look at your clusters (groups of ideas). Which clusters are the strongest? Which ideas need more support?

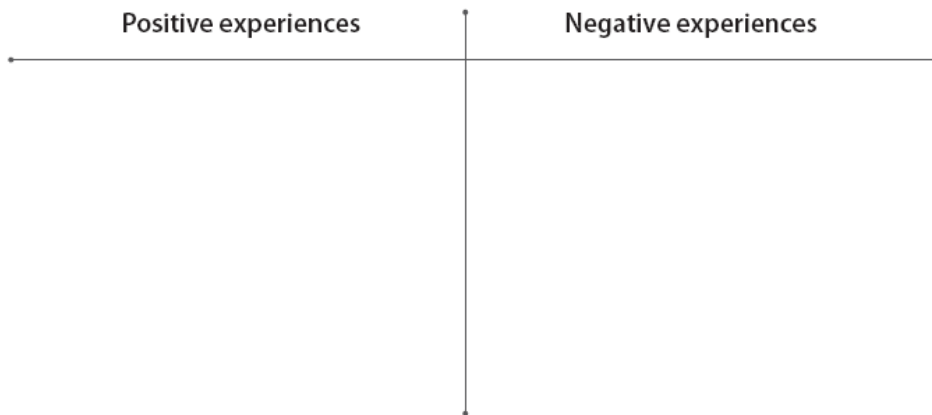
Idea Map



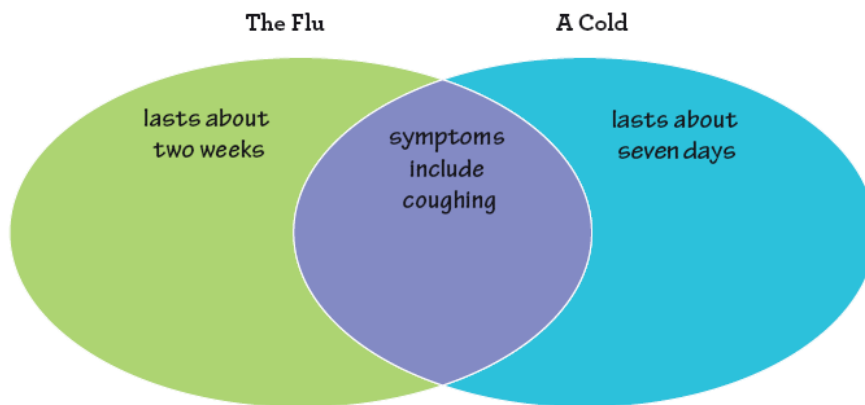
Charting

Draw a chart or table, such as a T-chart or Venn diagram. (You can print out these charts from the Resources section of *Q Online Practice*.) Choose a chart that is right for your assignment. Write all your ideas in your chart. Does the chart help you plan and organize your ideas?

T-Chart



Venn Diagram



Thinking about Your Reader's Questions

What will your reader want to know about your topic? Make a list of questions that you expect a reader to ask. Then, write a one-sentence answer to each question.

B. PLAN

When you plan your writing, you take your ideas and organize them into one or more paragraphs.

Talking about Your Ideas

Discuss your ideas with a classmate. This will help you make your topic clearer. Try to explain your main idea in one sentence. Describe your supporting details. Ask your classmate, “Are my ideas clear? Do you have any questions?”

Charting

You can use the following charts as you plan your writing. (You can print out these charts from the Resources section of *Q Online Practice*.)

- Timeline: Use this to organize events in time. This is useful if you are writing a story or an essay with a lot of dates.
- Flowchart: Use this to show the relationship between events, such as cause and effect.
- Wh-question chart: Use this to plan the important elements of a story.

Main Idea

Identify the main idea of your writing. In a paragraph, the main idea is the topic sentence. In a longer writing, the main idea connects all the paragraphs. It includes the topic and a specific idea or opinion about it. Ask yourself these questions to decide the main idea of your writing:

1. What do I want to tell my reader?
2. What about this topic interests me?
3. What is most important about this topic?

Thesis Statement

For a longer essay, you should write a thesis statement that you usually include in your first paragraph. This is a sentence that explains the main idea of your essay. Every paragraph in the essay should support the thesis statement.

Paragraph Topics

Identify the topic for each paragraph. Each topic should support the main idea of the writing.

Formal Outline

A formal outline helps you plan the order of your ideas. There are two main types of formal outlines: topic outlines and sentence outlines. In a topic outline, you write your ideas as words or short phrases. In a sentence outline, you write your ideas as complete sentences. Choose the type of outline that you think works best for your essay. (The examples below are topic outlines.)

For a paragraph: Write your main idea or topic sentence on the first line (I). Write your supporting ideas in order under the main idea (A, B, C). Smaller details and examples should go under each supporting idea (1, 2, 3). You may also include a concluding idea for the paragraph.

I. Topic sentence: The best way for me to improve my English is to spend more time speaking.

A. Supporting Idea: Work with a study partner

1. Detail: Must speak to communicate

2. Detail: Not nervous when I speak with a classmate

B. Supporting Idea: Learn and sing popular songs

1. Detail: Fun to do

2. Detail: Singing is like speaking fluently

C. Concluding Idea: Speaking builds confidence

For a longer writing: Write your main idea or thesis statement at the top. For each paragraph, write the topic and some supporting details or examples. The structure of your outline will change according to the kind of writing you are doing.

Thesis statement: People can improve the environment by making changes in their lives.

I. Introduction

A. Global warming is caused by human pollution and waste

B. People must take responsibility for the environment

II. Body paragraph 1: Reduce our use of automobiles

A. Using cars less

1. Carpools

2. Changing work hours to drive fewer days per week

B. Alternate forms of transportation

1. Public transportation

2. Bicycles

III. Body paragraph 2: Reduce garbage

A. Reuse items

1. Bags and containers

2. Clothes and objects

B. Shop responsibly

1. Buy reusable items

2. Buy items made from recycled materials

IV. Conclusion

A. The environment affects our health and our future

B. Together people can make a difference

Informal Outline

An informal outline is a list of the main ideas that you want to write about. You may also make notes about details you want to include. You can do a quick informal outline to help you put your ideas in order.

Ways to improve my English
watch TV---good for listening
try to concentrate on language

work with a study partner
help each other with mistakes

C. WRITE**Writing a First Draft**

Not all writers like to write in the same way. Ask yourself these questions to decide which techniques are right for you.

- Where do you like to write? In a quiet room? At a cafe? Outside? Choose a place where you are comfortable and able to focus.
- How do you write best? With a pen and paper? On a computer? For your first draft, use your favorite method.
- Do you like to listen to music when you write? Some people like listening to classical music while they are writing. Try any music that you like.
- Do you start with the beginning, middle, or end? If you are not sure how to write the beginning, try to start with the middle or the end.

Use your work from the Plan section to write your first draft. Follow these guidelines for the format of your paragraph(s).

- **Title:** Include a title for your paragraph(s) or essay.
- **Indent:** Make sure you indent the first line of each paragraph. This means to put extra space before the first word.
- **Thesis Statement:** For a longer essay, make sure there is a thesis statement—this usually appears in the introductory paragraph.
- **Topic sentences:** Make sure each paragraph has a topic sentence. The topic sentences should support the thesis statement.
- **Supporting sentences:** Each topic sentence should be followed by supporting sentences that contain details or examples that support and explain the topic sentence of the paragraph.

- **Concluding paragraph:** The concluding paragraph is the final paragraph of the essay. It should summarize the main points of the essay and restate the thesis (main idea) in different words.
 - **Concluding sentence:** If you are only writing one paragraph, the concluding sentence (final sentence) should summarize the main points of the paragraph and restate the topic sentence in different words.

STAGE 2: REVISE AND EDIT

First drafts are not perfect, so it's important to revise your writing. To revise means to look carefully at your writing and make improvements. When you revise, focus on your ideas. You can make your ideas clearer and stronger by adding, deleting, rewriting, or reorganizing them. Here are some techniques for revising.

A. PEER REVIEW

Share your writing with one or two classmates. Work with a partner or in a group and take turns reading your papers aloud. Then ask and answer questions about your writing. Give each other feedback on the ideas, organization, and language.

Self Review

If you cannot work with a classmate, read your own writing and ask yourself questions about the ideas and organization. Think about ways you can make your writing clearer.

B. REWRITE

Consider the ideas from the Peer Review (or Self Review) section. If you need new ideas, go back to *Stage 1: Plan and Write* and try one of the techniques in the Brainstorming section. If there is a problem with your organization or your writing, try one of the techniques in the Plan or Write sections. Write a new draft.

C. EDIT

After you revise, it is important to edit your work. When you edit, check your writing for correct grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Mechanics include spelling, punctuation, capital letters, and paragraph format. Here are some techniques for finding and fixing language errors.

Editing Checklist

Use an editing checklist, such as the Self-Assessment checklist in your Unit Assignment. Look for each problem separately. For example, read once and look only for errors in verb tenses. Then read again for punctuation errors, and so on.

Personal Editing Checklist

Make a list of mistakes that you often make. Look at corrections that your teacher marks on your writing. Make a personal editing checklist and use it to check your writing. Continue to add to your list.

My Editing Checklist

Grammar

1. Don't use "be" with all verbs (*I ~~am~~ swim*)
2. Check "s" on end of singular third-person verbs
3. Prepositions

Punctuation

1. Use commas in lists (*one, two, and three*)

Spelling

1. recommend
2. receive

Reading Backwards

Read the last sentence in your writing, then the next to last sentence, and so on. This may make it easier to find mistakes.

Marking your Paper

Circle or highlight a particular kind of word. For example, circle all the verbs and check that they agree with their subjects, or circle every noun and check that the correct article (*a, an, the*) is used.

Editing Symbols

When you edit your writing, you can use these editing symbols to mark your changes. Your teacher may use different or additional symbols. Add other useful symbols to the chart.

Symbol	Meaning
^	insert (add)
delete	delete
sp	spelling error
vt	verb tense error
c	capitalization error
ww	wrong word
wf	wrong form of the word
p	punctuation error
s-v	Subject-verb agreement error