

The Writing Process

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter and completing its activities and assignments, you will

- Know how to choose and narrow a topic
- Understand the concepts behind the stages of the writing process
- Be ready to use prewriting effectively to generate ideas
- Know the structure and importance of outlining

Chapter 1 introduced you to writing as a skill and a process, and then to paragraph and essay structure. Now this chapter turns to focus on the writing process itself. Prewriting, outlining, and revising are strategies that will help you create better essays every time you use them.

In this chapter, a four-step sequence for creating effective essays is set out. Internalizing this sequence will guide and direct you every time you approach a writing task. Review the four steps in the box below:

Four Steps to Effective Essay Writing

- Discover your point and write a solid thesis statement.
- Develop logical, detailed support for your thesis.
- Organize your thesis and supporting material into an outline.
- Write a first draft, then revise and edit in further drafts.

Each of these steps uses different parts of your mind, different ways of thinking. Learning how the writing process works at each step will help you to focus your mind for that step, and lessen your confusion about writing effectively. The chapters that follow cover each step in detail, allowing you to practise them and absorb the sequence thoroughly.

Before you write your first essay, and before you “test drive” the writing process, you may face a common first-semester challenge: how to choose a topic. Following is advice to help you with this preliminary issue.

CHOOSING AND MANAGING A TOPIC

Occasionally you may be assigned a specifically designed “essay-size topic or subject.” When this is the case, you simply proceed to prewrite to discover your ideas—no “topic adjustment time” is needed. More often, though, you will be given a general topic area or asked to choose a topic for your paper. In either of these writing situations, the focusing and managing techniques that follow will be useful.

When you must find a focus within a wide topic-area or choose a topic of your own, follow your interests. The truest (and perhaps oldest) writing rules are, “Write about what interests you,” and “Write about what you know.” When you write about a subject that you connect with, your energy and interest will flow through to your words, making it easier for you to spend the time needed to produce a solid essay. When you write on a subject you already know about, your confidence allows you to relax and concentrate on shaping and expressing your ideas. Remember, experience is not your only source of “knowing” something; you “know” things from reading, thinking, talking about, or seeing things as well. If you are interested in and confident about your topic, you are ready to explore your thoughts in the prewriting phase of the writing process.

In some courses, you may be asked to write on a topic about which you have no experience or knowledge. Do whatever research is required to gain the information you need. The chapter “Using the Library and the Internet” on pages 319–333 will show you how to use these resources to look up relevant information. Without direct or indirect experience, or information gained through research, you will not be able to provide the specific evidence needed to develop the point you are trying to make. Your writing will be starved for specifics.

THE WRITING PROCESS

A blank page or screen can be an intimidating object for anyone. As you sit wondering how to develop a finished essay in a few days, you may develop a mental block instead. The blank, confused feeling is usually the result of “mental clutter,” trying to think of too many things at once.

Beginning to write is difficult, but these two strategies will help you immediately:

- 1** Review the four steps for essay writing in the box below, and see how these steps mesh with and lead to the four clear-cut goals for an effective essay. Doing so will give you a structure and directed path to follow.
- 2** Focus on one thing, one writing task at a time. No one can create a solid thesis before gathering a few thoughts together and focusing on making a point about your topic; no one writes a final draft in one sitting. Begin at the beginning—this chapter will show you where and how to begin to write good essays.

Four Steps to Effective Essays	Four Goals for Essay Writing
1. Discover the main point you wish to make. Write your thesis statement.	1. Unity: The thesis guides and controls all supporting points and details.
2. Develop solid support for the thesis.	2. Support: Each supporting point is explained or illustrated by sufficient and specific details.
3. Organize and connect supporting points and details by outlining and drafting.	3. Coherence: Supporting points are in an order appropriate to the thesis; paragraphs, points, and details are clearly connected.
4. Write and revise to develop your thesis most clearly through points and support and to ensure that language or mechanical errors do not interfere with your message.	4. Effective Sentence Skills: Sentences, spelling, and punctuation are free of errors; readers will follow your essay's argument without interference.

Don't worry about trying to memorize the four steps or four goals; this book will remind you of them. As you work through this text, these steps and goals will become parts of your "writing equipment."

AN OVERVIEW OF THE WRITING PROCESS

When you start to write an essay, you begin a process that is seldom straightforward. For most writers, getting started is difficult. Accept first of all that discovering what you think will take time and energy. Your mind is not blank; it is full of ideas and connections. Writing—like drawing, speaking, or making music—is a way of finding out what your ideas are and then giving them shape. The writing process has three general stages, and each calls for a different approach. The "discovery" stage or prewriting requires different mental processes than does the "shaping" or outlining and drafting stage, or the "polishing" or revision part of the writing process.

In the following pages, you will learn how to best use your abilities during different stages of essay writing; you will explore tested strategies to help you with blocks and problems—skills you can practise in writing situations for the rest of your life.

STAGE 1: PREWRITING

Prewriting describes the first stages of writing, the creative "discovery" period. During prewriting, you want to free your mind to discover the directions in which your ideas flow most freely. This is not a time to use "ordering" or "correcting" functions in your mind—those work against the relaxed, open mental state you need for exploratory prewriting.

Writers have, by trial and error, found techniques (sometimes referred to as "brainstorming") to help open up their minds and imaginations. The following pages

describe four techniques that will help you think about and develop a topic and get words on paper: (1) freewriting, (2) questioning, (3) making a list, and (4) diagramming. These prewriting techniques are an essential first stage of the writing process.

TECHNIQUE 1: FREEWITING

Freewriting means jotting down in rough sentences or phrases everything that comes to mind about a possible topic. See if you can write non-stop for ten minutes or more. Do not worry about spelling or punctuating correctly, about erasing mistakes, about organizing material, or about finding exact words. Instead, explore an idea by putting down whatever pops into your head. If you get stuck for words, repeat yourself until more words come. There is no need to feel inhibited, since mistakes *do not count*, and you do not have to hand in your paper.

Freewriting will limber up your writing muscles and make you familiar with the act of writing. It is a way to break through mental blocks about writing. Do not worry about mistakes; **focus on discovering what you want to say** about a subject. Your initial ideas and impressions will often become clearer after you have gotten them down on paper, and they may lead to other impressions and ideas. As you get material down on the page or up on the screen, it will make what you have left to do a bit easier. Sometimes as you write down one idea, another possible focus emerges. That's fine: if your freewriting tells you that you have unexpected thoughts, go with them. Revise or review those new ideas later to take advantage of your discoveries. Through continued practice in freewriting, you will develop the habit of thinking as you write. And you will learn a technique that is a helpful way to get started on almost any paper.

Freewriting: A Student Model

As you freewrite, your mind runs along all sorts of paths branching off the general topic you are assigned. You fill up your page or screen, racing past ideas as you get them down. From this general freewriting, two possibilities usually emerge: your focus simply appears as the thing you are writing most about, or, like Tina Kallas, you consciously decide on one idea that “sparks a connection” for you. Many writers use freewriting in two stages: to generate ideas about some broad topic, and then to explore a single focus, their specific topic.

Freewriting to Generate Ideas

Tina Kallas' essay “The Hazards of Movie-Going” on pages 13–14 was in response to an assignment with the general topic of some annoyance in everyday life. Tina began by doing some general freewriting and thinking about things that annoyed her. Here is her freewriting:

There are lots of things I get annoyed by. One of them that comes to mind is politicians, in fact I am so annoyed by them that I don't want to say anything about them the last thing I want is to write about them. Another thing that bothers me are people who keep complaining about everything. If you're having trouble, do something about it just don't keep complaining and just talking.

I am really annoyed by traffic. There are too many cars in our block and its not surprising. Everyone has a car, the parents have cars and the parents are just too indulgent and the kids have cars, and they're all coming and going all the time and often driving too fast. Speeding up and down the street. We need a speed limit sign but here I am back with politics again. I am really bothered when I have to drive to the movies all the congestion along the way plus there are just so many cars there at the mall. No space even though the parking lot is huge it just fills up with cars. Movies are a bother anyway because the people can be annoying who are sitting there in the theatre with you, talking and dropping popcorn cups and acting like they're at home when they're not.

Focused Freewriting

At this point, Tina read over her notes, and later commented, “I realized that I had several potential topics. I said to myself, ‘What point can I make that I can cover in an essay? What do I have the most information about?’ I decided that maybe I could narrow my topic down to the annoyances involved in going to the movies; I figured I would have more details for that topic.” Tina then did a more focused freewriting to accumulate details for a paper on problems with movie-going:

I really find it annoying to go see movies anymore. Even though I love films. Traffic to Cinema Six is awful. I hate looking for a parking place, the lot isn't big enough for the theatres and other stores. You just keep driving to find a parking space and hoping someone will pull out and no one else will pull in ahead of you. Then you don't want there to be a long line and to wind up in one of the first rows with this huge screen right in front of you. Then I'm in the theatre with the smell of popcorn all around. Sitting there smelling it trying to ignore it and just wanting to pour a whole bucket of popcorn with melted butter down my throat. I can't stop thinking about the chocolate bars either. I love the stuff but I don't need it. The people who are there sometimes drive me nuts. Talking and laughing, kids running around, packs of high school kids hollering, who can listen to the movie? And I might run into my old boyfriend—the last thing I need. Also sitting thru all the previews and commercials. If I arrive late enough to miss that junk the movie may be sold out.

Tips and Comments

Tina's freewriting drafts contain errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. They are shown uncorrected to make three points:

- Freewriting is *for you*; you are the audience and no one is checking “over your shoulder.”
- The whole point of freewriting is to go with the flow of your ideas; don't stop as you discover what's in your mind—get ideas down just as they come to you.
- Correcting problems is a mental process different from exploring; “shifting mental gears” can slow or stop the discovery stage of the writing process.

If worrying about your sentences is slowing you down, write your ideas in point form—this is *your* first step, the raw material you will return to and shape later.

Take the same approach as Tina did when freewriting: explore your topic without worrying at all about being “correct.” Figuring out what you want to say and getting material down on the page to find your focus should have all of your attention at this early stage of writing.

Activity

To get a sense of freewriting, take a sheet of paper and do some general freewriting about the everyday annoyances in your life. See how much material you can accumulate in ten minutes. And remember not to worry about “mistakes”; you’re just thinking on paper.

When you are finished, see if you can find an idea or two that would make a good focus for an essay.

TECHNIQUE 2: QUESTIONING

Questioning as a technique works in a way different from freewriting. If you are an “order oriented” methodical person who enjoys linear thinking, questioning may offer a comfortable framework to use. Freewriting bypasses the ordering parts of your mind; questioning requires you to confront yourself with a set of specific demands. Questioning’s structured approach gives a sense of direction to prewriting. Ask yourself as many questions as you can think of about your subject; your answers will be a series of different “takes” or focuses on it. Such questions include *Why? When? Where? Who?* and *How?*

To begin, divide your page or screen into two columns: “Questions” and “Answers,” as you see below. Leave enough space in the “Answers” column so that you can return to a particular response if more details come to you later. Next, ask yourself this preliminary question: “What’s my subject?” Then, write your answer as a reference point for the rest of your question-and-answer series. If one question stops you, just go on to another.

Here are some questions that Tina Kallas might have asked while developing her paper:

Questioning: A Student Model

Questions

Why don’t I like to go to the theatre?

When is going to the movies a problem?

Where are problems with movie-going?

Answers

Just too many problems involved.

Could be any time—when movie is popular the theatre is too crowded, when traffic is bad the trip is a drag.

On the highway, in the parking lot, at the concession stand, in the theatre itself.

Questions

Who creates the problems?

How can I deal with the problem?

Answers

I do by wanting to eat too much.
The patrons do by creating disturbances.
The theatre owners do by not having enough parking space and showing too many commercials.

I can stay home and watch movies on video or cable TV.

Tips and Comments

Asking questions can be an effective way of getting you to think about a topic from a number of different angles. The questions can really help you generate details about a topic.

Questioning also works as a “second stage” for your prewriting. If you have done some general freewriting, but still are not sure of a focus for your paper, then try questioning, using your freewriting as a reference.

- Questioning may reveal your focus quickly when one answer in particular is more detailed than others.
- Questioning can yield answers that may be rich sources of *connected* details—making some of your organizing and outlining a little easier.
- Questioning can show you directions for paragraphs within an essay; if you have many answers to “*Why?*” your mind may want to explore the causes of a subject.

Activity

To get a sense of the questioning process, use a sheet of paper to ask yourself a series of questions about a good or bad experience that you have had recently. See how many details you can accumulate in ten minutes. And remember not to be concerned about “mistakes,” because you are just thinking on paper.

TECHNIQUE 3: LIST MAKING

List making is simply making a list of ideas and details that relate to your subject. Pile these items up, one after another, without trying to sort out major details from minor ones or trying to put the details in any special order. Your goal is just to list everything about your subject that occurs to you. You may use list making as a first or second stage of prewriting.

After Tina did her freewriting about her movie-going topic, she made up the following list of details to help her see her ideas more clearly.

List Making: A Student Model

Traffic is bad between my house and theatre
Noisy patrons

Don't want to run into Jeremy
 Hard to be on a diet
 Kids running in aisles
 I'm crowded into seats between strangers who push me off arm rests
 Not enough parking
 Parking lot needs to be expanded
 Too many previews
 Can't pause or fast forward like you can with a VCR or DVD player
 Long lines
 High ticket prices
 Too many temptations at snack stand
 Commercials for food on the screen
 I can make healthy snacks for myself at home
 Tubs of popcorn with butter
 Huge chocolate bars
 Movie may be sold out
 People who've seen movie before talk along with actors and give away plot twists
 People coughing and sneezing
 Icky stuff on floor
 High school students yelling and showing off

Tips and Comments

One detail led to another as Tina expanded her list. Slowly more details emerged, some of which she could use in developing her paper. By the time she finished her list, she was ready to plan an outline and then to write her first draft.

List making works as a first or second stage of prewriting. As a first stage, listing is a quick, easy method you are already familiar with from making everyday “to do” lists.

- List making frees you of concerns about your sentences in prewriting; simply list your ideas as phrases.
- List making works if you like to make notes to yourself as you work; just include something like “good first idea” in parentheses after a list item.

List making is an effective “second stage” of prewriting. Like Tina, you may find it useful to make a list by referring to your page of freewriting.

- List making after freewriting can stimulate your mind so you think of more points and details.
- Listing your ideas after freewriting, questioning, or diagramming displays your thoughts in simple uncluttered form, so you can proceed to evaluate them.
- Listing is an excellent sorting method; number your points and ideas in your preferred order before outlining, or sort out points and their related supporting details from your list.
- Listing is useful for writers who like to connect ideas graphically with lines and circles.

Activity

To get a sense of list making, list a series of realistic goals, major or minor, that you would like to accomplish between today and one year from today. Your goals can involve personal, academic, and career matters.

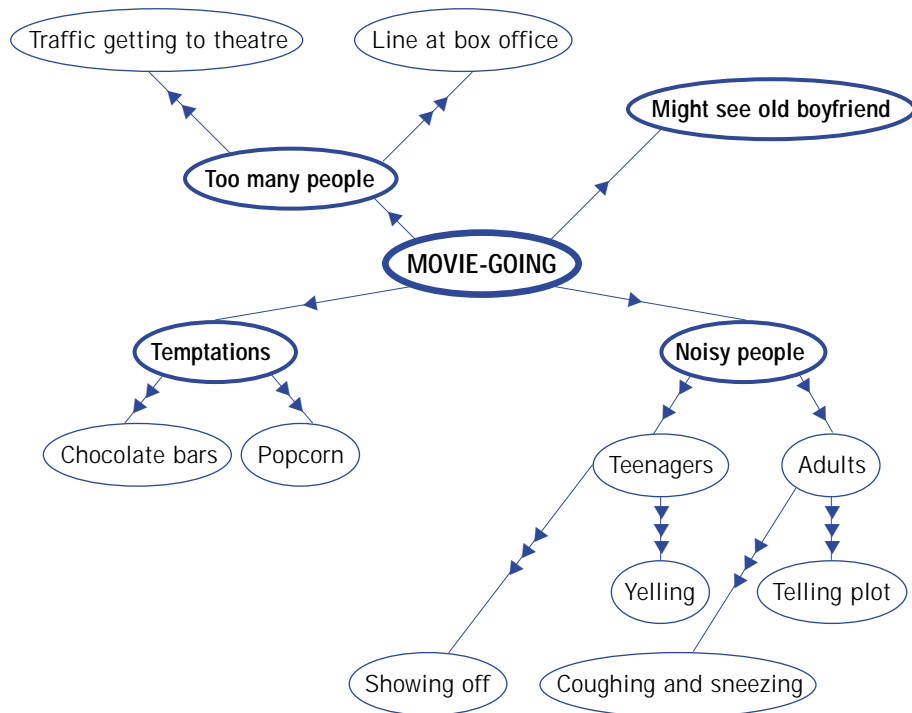
TECHNIQUE 4: CLUSTERING

Clustering, also known as *diagramming* or *mapping*, is another strategy for generating ideas. People who enjoy thinking in a visual or graphic way can use lines, boxes, arrows, and circles to show relationships among the ideas and details that occur to them.

State your subject in a few words in the centre of a blank sheet of paper. Then, as ideas and details come to you, put them in boxes or circles around the subject. As you find connections or relationships between ideas and groups of ideas, draw lines to connect them to each other and to the subject. Put minor ideas or details in smaller boxes or circles, and use connecting lines to show how they relate.

There is no right or wrong way of clustering; it is a way to think on paper about how various ideas and details relate to one another. Below is an example of clustering that Tina might have done to develop her ideas:

Clustering: A Student Model



Note: This diagram shows how Tina could use clustering *after* freewriting, as a second stage of prewriting.

Her main idea groupings now show clearly as **supporting points in bold**, separate branches from the topic. The relationships of **details** to supporting points are clearly visible.

Clustering reveals the levels of structure for Tina’s essay: from topic to supporting points to details for each supporting point.

Which supporting point will Tina probably not use, and why?

Where has Tina discovered a third level of details for a supporting point, and how has she indicated this level graphically?

Tips and Comments

Clustering excels as a prewriting tool for the visually minded writer, for both first and second stages of prewriting. As a primary method of generating ideas, clustering frees you from the linearity of the page or screen.

- Clustering prevents “sentence block”; you note points and details in words and phrases.
- Clustering instantly shows you connections between ideas as you use lines and arrows to link one thing with another.

Clustering’s only downfall occurs when your page becomes too messy to follow. Avoid this by starting a clean second page where you distinguish visually between possible supporting points and details. Refer back to the diagram of Tina’s clustering for techniques to help you clarify levels of support and connections.

As a second stage of prewriting, clustering demonstrates relationships between ideas and details. Clustering can also “preview” the content of your body paragraphs and their focus.

- Cluster diagrams clearly reveal a paragraph’s focus and possible levels of details within, as Tina’s “noisy people” set of clusters shows.
- Clustering as a second stage, if you show levels of links between points and details, prepares you for outlining and drafting.

Activity

Use clustering to organize the list of year-ahead goals that you created for the previous activity (page 32).

A FINAL NOTE ON THE FIRST STAGE OF THE WRITING PROCESS

Prewriting is the “no rules” first stage of the writing process. Following rules or worrying about spelling or sentence structure actually works against the “idea generating” way of using your mind. No matter which technique you prefer, there is only one guideline: go with what works for you. Any technique that gets your ideas flowing is good.

- Sometimes you may use one technique, then another, to discover your ideas and a focused topic: i.e., freewriting and listing, or clustering and questioning, or any combination that works for you.

- Occasionally you may use several techniques at once; for example, you may ask yourself questions while writing a list, or you may diagram and sort through a list as you write one.

When one technique is not working, simply stop and try another. The writing process is not a straightforward path, and each journey may begin differently.

STAGE 2: WRITING AN OUTLINE AND DRAFTING

Stage 2 of the writing process involves outlining *and* drafting. Generally you will create an outline from your prewriting, followed by a first draft: this is the sequence this book demonstrates. Outlining, and sometimes re-outlining, is needed to untangle and clarify your prewriting. True, some writers write a trial draft *before* outlining. If you have worked successfully this way, continue to do so; this is actually an extra stage of prewriting. The sorting and decision-making step of outlining is still needed. Your pre-outlining trial draft guides your outline and helps you find out where to make changes or additions.

Preparing a correctly structured detailed outline is an essential step in writing. The quality of your outline can determine the success or failure of your essay. Essays are highly organized writing patterns. They communicate effectively only when their content is logically arranged and sufficiently detailed to make a point and support it thoroughly. Therefore, an effective essay does not result from patching together random pieces of prewriting into a final draft. Essays written without good outlines are as ramshackle as buildings constructed without blueprints.

- Creating a formal outline requires three thought processes: sorting, ordering, and evaluating. You will think about the point you wish to make about your topic as you compose your thesis. You will consider and evaluate the supporting evidence (subtopics or supporting points and details) for that thesis. The quality and the arrangement of your raw material are what add up to a solid essay.
- Sorting, ordering, and evaluating are organizational skills that develop your ability to think clearly and logically. Outlining lets you work on the bare bones of your essay without the distracting clutter of phrases and sentences—you will see both your ideas and the connections between them.
- A good outline allows you to relax and write your first draft without worrying about what you will say next—you have your “blueprint” at hand.

You have seen both a paragraph outline diagram (page 11) and a diagram of an essay’s general shape (pages 17–18) in Chapter 1. The full essay outline pattern simply expands the paragraph model to accommodate the thesis statement and support structure for each body paragraph in the essay. On page 39 following and on the inside back cover, you will see a complete essay outline diagram.

THE TRANSITION FROM PREWRITING TO OUTLINING

Before you become intimidated by the prospect of outlining, know that with your prewriting done, you already have most of your content. There are some informal “sorting out” techniques you can use to bridge the gap between rough notes, lists, or clusters and a finished outline. Tina Kallas, the student writing about the annoyances of movie-going, provides an example of how to make the transition from prewriting to outline.

- As Tina was working on her list of details, she suddenly realized what the plan of her essay could be. She could organize many of her details into one of three supporting groups: (1) annoyances in going out, (2) too many tempting snacks, and (3) other people. She then went back to the list, crossed out items that she now saw did not fit, and numbered the items according to the group in which they did fit:

- 1 Traffic is bad between my house and theatre
- 3 Noisy patrons
- ~~Don't want to run into Jeremy~~
- 2 Hard to be on a diet
- 3 Kids running in aisles
- 3 I'm crowded into seats between strangers who push me off arm rests
- 1 Not enough parking
- 1 Parking lot needs to be expanded
- 1 Too many previews
- ~~Can't pause or fast forward like you can with a VCR~~
- 1 Long lines
- 1 High ticket prices
- 2 Too many temptations at snack stand
- ~~Commercials for food on the screen~~
- 2 Can prepare healthy snacks for myself at home
- 2 Tubs of popcorn with butter
- 2 Huge chocolate bars
- ~~Candy has always been my downfall~~
- 1 Movie may be sold out
- 3 People who've seen movie before talk along with actors and give away plot twists
- 3 People coughing and sneezing
- 1 Icky stuff on floor
- 3 Teenagers yelling and showing off

- Under the list, Tina was now able to write a “trial thesis” and three supporting points or “four-point outline”:

Going to the movies offers some real problems.

1. Inconvenience of going out
2. Tempting snacks
3. Other movie-goers

- Tina was now ready to work on a full outline for her essay. Once the outline was complete, she had a clear framework to follow, and writing the first draft of her essay seemed less intimidating.
 - Tina used her list to find and group her supporting points, to make a transition from prewriting to outlining. You may not proceed in exactly the order or way that Tina did. You may decide on your supporting points before you try to write a trial thesis statement. Or you may find that you have lots of examples for one of your details, so that it's actually a supporting point. There are some steps you can follow, though, that will help you develop your prewriting into an outline.
1. Begin by writing a statement of your point, a “trial thesis statement.” Write your focused version of your topic and your viewpoint on it. Don't worry about writing a polished thesis statement—the next chapter will give you extensive practice in creating one. You can always go back and change it later.

<p style="text-align: center; color: #4F81BD;">Thesis Statement</p> <p style="text-align: center;">= [Topic + Viewpoint Subject</p>
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2. Turn your trial thesis statement into a question. Tina's trial statement was, “Going to the movies offers some real problems.” Her “thesis question” might be, “Why is going to the movies such a problem?” or “What are the problems with going to the movies?”
3. Now, ask yourself your “thesis question” as you look over your freewriting for ideas that answer the question.

Tina could have answered a “*Why*” thesis question like this:

“Why is going to the movies such a problem?”

- Because it's inconvenient to go out
- Because theatres are full of tempting snacks
- Because of the way other movie-goers act

Asking a thesis question helps you discover the best supporting reasons for the point stated in your thesis. The best reasons are usually those for which your mind supplies lots of examples or details, or those you feel most strongly about. Don't worry if one of those reasons started out as a detail. If your thesis question changes while you are looking for answers, try that new version of the question.

4. Choose the three best answers to your thesis question.
5. Begin again with a new screen or fresh piece of paper. Write your trial thesis at the top. List your three answers below it in point form.

6. Think about an appropriate order for your answers/reasons—these are your supporting ideas or points. Is one idea or piece of evidence more important than another? Is the order in which your points occurred in time important? After deciding on an order, list the points again, leaving space after each to fill in details. Revise your trial thesis if necessary.
7. Now you have the basics of your outline; work on supplying, in point form, the examples and details that explain your reasons most clearly. Chapters 3 and 4 will give you extensive practice in discovering and selecting supporting points and adequate details.

In the box below, you will find an introduction to the four parts of a formal essay outline and instructions for filling in each part. Refer back to this box as you work through the following chapters.

- **Thesis Statement:** Write a “trial thesis statement.” Note your overall viewpoint on your topic and your supporting points.
- **Supporting Points:** Number each supporting point with an upper-case Roman numeral (I, II, III); then write the point as a “trial topic sentence.” Leave space after your topic sentence to list in point form your supporting details and examples.
- **Supporting Details and Examples:** List these in numbered point form under the topic sentence of each supporting point.
- **Conclusion Statement:** Write a “trial conclusion,” summing up your supporting points. Try to add a final thought that follows as a result of your points, or broadens the meaning of your main point.

A blank essay outline form is shown on page 39. Tina Kallas created her own word-processed version of it, and after working out her details and a fuller thesis statement, she wrote the following formal outline. To show you how Tina Kallas progressed from her rough “four-point outline” to a nearly complete formal outline, her work is shown below. When you have completed the exercises and assignments in the chapters that follow, you will have practised the skills needed to create such outlines.

Opening Paragraph: Thesis Statement

Going to the movies is more of a hassle than a pleasure for me.

1. Annoyances of parking and driving
2. Constant temptations to overeat
3. Behaviour of other movie-goers

Body Paragraph: Supporting Point #1

Going to the theatre is full of inconveniences.

Supporting Details & Examples

1. Time wasted driving to theatre—15 minutes
2. Time wasted at theatre—parking at multiplexes & malls, line-ups for tickets
3. Crowds in theatres—expensive tickets for bad seating

Body Paragraph: Supporting Point #2

Constant temptation to overeat and snack

Supporting Details & Examples

1. Don't need to snack—healthy food at home
2. Theatres are big convenience stores—smells of popcorn, huge chocolate bars
3. Friends buy candy—I feel deprived, so I buy it too

Body Paragraph: Supporting Point #3

Other movie-goers distract and annoy me.

Supporting Details & Examples

1. Noisy little kids, high school kids—stupid behaviour
2. Adults give away the plot
3. Noises of paper & wrappings, people pushing past me

Concluding Paragraph: Conclusion

There are better ways to see a movie—cable & DVDs.

1. No inconveniences
2. No temptations
3. No distractions

Comment

After all her prewriting, and after working out her formal outline, Tina knew that she had a promising paper with a clear point and solid support. She saw that she had organized the material into a traditional essay consisting of an introduction, several supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion. Chances are that if you do enough prewriting and thinking on paper, you will eventually discover what the point and support of your essay might be. Outlining your points and support will alert you

to possible weak spots, repetitions, or unrelated ideas in your support, and will allow you to relax and focus on writing a solid paper.

Activity

Create an essay outline that could serve as a guide if you were to write an essay on your year-ahead goals.

ESSAY OUTLINE DIAGRAM

Photocopy this outline pattern, or create your own on disk by setting it up and saving it as a blank document named “Essay Outline.” Each time you are ready to outline, just paste your outline document onto a new document page.

Opening Paragraph: Thesis Statement

Supporting Points

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Body Paragraph: Supporting Point #1

Supporting Details & Examples

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Body Paragraph: Supporting Point #2

Supporting Details & Examples

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Body Paragraph: Supporting Point #3

Supporting Details & Examples

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Concluding Paragraph: Conclusion

DEVELOPING A FIRST DRAFT FROM AN OUTLINE

Once you have worked through your outline, writing a first draft will not be such a demanding task. Do not be “shackled” to your outline as you proceed, though.

- If additional thoughts and details come to you, put them in your draft and note them on your outline.
- If one of your points or details no longer works for you, and you feel blocked as you try to replace that material, just leave a blank space and add a comment like, “Do later” and then keep going to finish your draft.
- Don’t worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar—you will correct these things in a later draft as you revise.
- Stay fixed on the goal of stating your thesis clearly and pursuing its supporting points with plenty of specific details.

Your first draft is just that: a first try at turning your outline into sentences and paragraphs. Focus on creating the general shape of your essay, not on fine details. Revising, the next stage of the writing process, is the time for polishing your ideas, words, and sentences.

Writing a First Draft: A Student Model

Here is Tina’s first draft:

Even though I love movies, my friends have stopped asking me to go. 1
There are just too many problems involved in going to the movies.

There are no small theatres anymore, I have to drive fifteen minutes to a 2
big multiplex. Because of a supermarket and restaurants, the parking lot is filled.
I have to keep driving around to find a space. Then I have to stand in a long line.
Hoping that they do not run out of tickets. Finally, I have to pay too much money
for a ticket. Putting out that much money, I should not have to deal with a
floor that is sticky seems coated with rubber cement. By the end of a movie,
my shoes are often sealed to a mix of spilled pop, bubble gum, and other stuff.

The theatre offers temptations in the form of snacks I really don’t need. 3
Like most of us I have to worry about weight gain. At home I do pretty well by
simply watching what I keep in the house and not buying stuff that is bad for
me. I can make do with healthy snacks because there is nothing in the house.
Going to the theatre is like spending my evening in a market convenience store
that’s been equiped with a movie screen and there are seats which are
comfortable. I try to convince myself to have just a diet pop, the smell of
fresh popcorn soon overcomes me. My friends are as bad as I am. Chocolate
bars seem to jump into your hands, I am eating enormous mouthfuls of maple
buds. By the time I leave the theatre I feel out of sorts with myself.

Some of the other movie-goers are the worst problem. There are highschoolers 4
who try to impress their friends in one way or another. Little kids race up and
down the aisles, giggling and laughing. Adults act as if they’re watching the
movie at home. They talk loudly about the ages of the stars and give away the

plot. Other people are dropping popcorn tubs or cups of ~~pop~~-crushed ice and pop on the floor. Also coughing a lot and doing other stuff.—*be spec*

I decided one night that I was not going to be a movie-goer anymore. I joined a local video store, and I'll watch movies comfortable in my own living room. 5

Comment

After Tina finished the first draft, she was able to put it aside until the next day. You will benefit as well if you can allow some time between finishing a draft and starting to revise.

Review Tina's first draft as you work on the activity that follows.

Activity

1. **The Introductory Paragraph** Tina's first paragraph is very brief. She knows she can develop her opening further in a later draft. Which sentence contains her thesis statement? What is the purpose of her other sentence?
2. **The Body Paragraphs**
 - a. One of Tina's paragraphs lacks a topic sentence. Knowing she can return to fix this problem later, she circles the opening of one of her paragraphs. Which paragraph's opening sentence is not a topic sentence? Why?
 - b. Later in her essay, Tina can't think of details to add to clarify an example, so she writes a note to herself to "be specific." Which subtopic in which paragraph needs more attention, and why?
 - c. At several points in the draft, Tina revises her phrases and images. Where does she do so, and why?
3. **The Concluding Paragraph** Tina's conclusion is very brief because she will expand it later. What could she add to make it more complete?

STAGE 3: REVISION

Revising is as essential to the writing process as prewriting, outlining, and doing the first draft. *Revising* means literally "re-seeing." It means that you rewrite a paper, building upon what has already been done, in order to make it stronger. One writer has said about revision, "It's like cleaning house—getting rid of all the junk and putting things in the right order." It is not just a "straightening up"; instead, you must be ready to roll up your sleeves and do whatever is needed to create an effective paper. Too many students think that a first draft *is* the paper. They start to become writers when they realize that revising a rough draft three or four times is often at the heart of writing.

GENERAL REVISING TIPS

- First, set your first draft aside for a while. Then come back to it with a fresh, more objective point of view.
- Second, work from typed or printed text. You'll be able to see the paper more impartially than if you were just looking at your own familiar handwriting.

- Next, read your draft aloud. Hearing how your writing sounds will help you spot problems with meaning as well as with style.
- Finally, as you do all these things, add in your thoughts and changes above the lines or in the margins of your paper. Your written comments can serve as a guide when you work on the next draft.

Revising is not a “one-shot” activity. Here its basic goals and activities are introduced; then Chapter 6 will give you instruction and practice in revision. When you revise or “re-see” your essay draft, you are not examining one aspect of your writing, but three: your content, your sentences, and finally your “mechanics” —grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Never try to revise all three levels of your writing at once. Instead, leave yourself enough time to give your ideas and language the attention they deserve.

There are three stages to the revising process:

- Revising content
- Revising sentences
- Editing

REVISING CONTENT

Recall the box on page 26 of this chapter, and note how the goals for effective essay writing guide you during revision. To revise the content of your essay, ask the following questions:

1 Is my paper **unified**?

- Do I have a thesis that is clearly stated or implied in the introductory paragraph of my essay?
- Do all of my supporting paragraphs truly support and back up my thesis?

2 Is my paper **supported**?

- Are there three separate supporting points for the thesis?
- Do I have *specific* evidence for each of the three supporting points?
- Is there *plenty* of specific evidence for each supporting point?

3 Is my paper **organized**?

- Do I have an interesting introduction, a solid conclusion, and an accurate title?
- Do I have a clear method of organizing my paper?
- Do I use transitions and other connecting words?

The next two chapters (Chapters 3 and 4) will give you practice in achieving **unity**, **support**, and **organization** in your writing.

REVISING SENTENCES

The fourth goal for essay working is effective sentence structure, and Chapter 5 in this part of the book will give you practice in revising sentences. Refer to the pages listed as you ask yourself the following questions:

1 Do I use parallelism to balance my words and ideas? (pages 98–99)

2 Do I have a consistent point of view? (pages 99–101)

3 Do I use specific words? (pages 101–104)

- 4 Do I use active verbs? (pages 104–105)
- 5 Do I use words effectively by avoiding slang, clichés, pretentious language, and wordiness? (pages 105–107)
- 6 Do I vary my sentences? (pages 107–112)

EDITING

After you have revised your paper for content and style, you are ready to edit for errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Students often find it hard to edit a paper carefully. They have put so much work into their writing, or so little, that it is almost painful for them to look at the paper one more time. You may simply have to *will* yourself to perform this important closing step in the writing process. Remember that eliminating sentence-skills mistakes will improve an average paper and help ensure a strong mark on a good paper. Further, as you get into the habit of checking your papers, you will also get into the habit of using the sentence skills consistently. They are an integral part of clear and effective writing.

Chapter 5 in this part of the book and the handbook of skills in Part 4 (pages 355–488) will serve as guides while you are editing your paper for mistakes in **sentence skills**.

AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE REVISING AND EDITING PROCESSES

Revising with a Second Draft: A Student Model

Since Tina Kallas was using a word-processing program on a computer, she was able to print out a double-spaced version of her movie essay, leaving her plenty of room for revisions. Here is one of her revised paragraphs:

Secondly, *tempting snacks*
 The theatre offers temptations in the form of snacks I really don't need.
battle an expanding waistline
 Like most of us I have to worry about weight gain. At home I do pretty well by
 simply watching what I keep in the house and not buying stuff that is bad for
like celery and carrots sticks no ice cream freezer
 me. I can make do with healthy snacks because there is nothing in the house.
however
 Going to the theatre is like spending my evening in a convenience store that's
comfortable *As*
 been equipped with a movie screen and there are seats which are comfortable. I
dripping with butter
 try to convince myself to have just a diet pop, the smell of fresh popcorn soon
 overcomes me. My friends are as bad as I am. Chocolate bars seem to jump
my risk pulling out my fillings as I chew My friends are buying
 into your hands. I am eating enormous mouthfuls of maple buds. By the time
snacks, and I feel left out. disgusted
 I leave the theatre I feel out-of-sorts with myself.

Comment

Tina made her changes in longhand as she worked on the second draft. As you will see when you complete the activity below, her revision serves to make the paragraph more **unified, supported, and organized**.

Activity

Fill in the missing words.

- To achieve better organization, Tina adds the transitional word *Secondly*, making clear that tempting snacks is the second of her supporting ideas.
- Tina also adds in the transition “_____” to clearly contrast the difference between being at home and being in the theatre.
- In the interest of _____, (*unity/support/organization*), Tina crosses out the sentence _____. She realizes this sentence is not a relevant detail but really another topic idea.
- To add more _____ (*unity/support/organization*), Tina changes *healthy snacks* to _____; she changes *nothing in the house* to _____; she adds _____ after *popcorn*; and she changes *am eating* to _____.
- In the interest of eliminating wordiness, she removes the words _____ from the third sentence.
- In the interest of parallelism, Tina changes *and there are seats which are comfortable* to _____.
- To create a consistent point of view, Tina changes *jump into your hands* to _____.
- For greater sentence variety, Tina combines two short sentences, beginning the first sentence with the subordinating word _____.
- Finally, Tina replaces the vague *out of sorts* with the more precise _____.

Editing: A Student Model

After typing into her document all the changes in her second draft, Tina printed out another clean draft of the paper. The paragraph on tempting snacks required almost no more revision, so Tina turned her attention mostly to editing changes, illustrated below with her work on the second supporting paragraph:

Secondly, the theatre offers tempting snacks I really don't need. Like most of us, I have to battle an expanding waistline. At home I do pretty well by simply not buying stuff that is bad for me. I can make do with snacks like celery and carrot sticks because there is no ice cream in the freezer. Going to the theatre, however, is like spending my evening in a convenience store that's been *equipped* with a movie screen and comfortable seats. As I try to convince myself to have just a diet pop, the smell of fresh popcorn dripping with butter soon overcomes me. *Chocolate* bars seem to jump into my hands. I risk pulling out my fillings as I chew enormous mouthfuls of *Maple Buds*. My friends are *buying nachos and licorice strings*, and I feel left out. By the time I leave the theatre, I feel disgusted with myself.

Comment

Once again, Tina makes her changes in longhand right on the printed sheet of her paper. To note these changes, complete the activity below.

Activity

Fill in the missing words.

- As part of her editing, Tina checked and corrected the _____ of two words, *equipped* and *chocolate*.
- She added _____ to set off two introductory phrases (*Like most of us* in the second sentence and *By the time I leave the theatre* in the final sentence) and to set off the interrupting word *however* in the fourth sentence.
- She realized that *Maple Buds* is a brand name and added _____ to make it *Maple Buds*.
- And since revision can occur at any stage of the writing process, including editing, she made one of her details more vivid by adding the descriptive words _____.

ACTIVITIES

You now have a good overview of the writing process, from prewriting to first draft to revising to editing. The remaining chapters in Part 1 will deepen your sense of the four goals of effective writing: unity, support, organization or coherence, and sentence skills.

To reinforce much of the information about the writing process that you have learned in this chapter, you can now work through the following activities:

1 OUTLINING SKILLS

As already mentioned (see pages 34–41), outlining is central to writing a good paper. An outline lets you see, and work on, the bare bones of a paper, without the distraction of a clutter of words and sentences. It develops your ability to think clearly and logically. Outlining provides a quick check on whether your paper will be **unified**. It also suggests right at the start whether your paper will be adequately **supported**. And it shows you how to plan a paper that is **well organized**.

The following two exercises will help you develop the outlining skills so important to planning and writing a solid essay.

Activity 1

One key to effective outlining is the ability to distinguish between **major ideas and details** that fit under those ideas. In each of the three lists below, major and supporting items are mixed together. Put the items into logical order by filling in the outline that follows each list.

1. **Thesis:** My high school had three problem areas.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Involved with drugs | a. _____ |
| Leaky ceilings | (1) _____ |
| Students | (2) _____ |
| Unwilling to help after class | b. _____ |
| Formed cliques | (1) _____ |
| Teachers | (2) _____ |
| Buildings | c. _____ |
| Ill-equipped gym | (1) _____ |
| Much too strict | (2) _____ |

2. **Thesis:** Working as a dishwasher in a restaurant was my worst job.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Ten-hour shifts | a. _____ |
| Heat in kitchen | (1) _____ |

Working conditions	(2) _____
Minimum wage	b. _____
Hours changed every week	(1) _____
No bonus for overtime	(2) _____
Hours	c. _____
Pay	(1) _____
Noisy work area	(2) _____

3. **Thesis:** Joining an aerobics class has many benefits.

Make new friends	a. _____
Reduce mental stress	(1) _____
Social benefits	(2) _____
Strengthens heart	b. _____
Improves self-image	(1) _____
Mental benefits	(2) _____
Tones muscles	c. _____
Meet interesting instructors	(1) _____
Physical benefits	(2) _____

Activity 2

Read the essay on the following pages, and outline it in the spaces provided. Write out the thesis, or central point, and topic sentences, and summarize in a few words the supporting material that fits under each topic sentence. One item is summarized for you as an example.

Losing Touch

Steve, a typical Canadian, stays home on workdays. He plugs into a computer terminal in order to hook up with the office, and he sends and receives work during the day by e-mail and a fax modem. Evenings, he puts on his stereo headphones, slides a movie into his DVD player, or logs back onto the computer to spend time online. On many days, Steve doesn't talk to any other human beings, and he doesn't see any people except those on television. Steve is imaginary, but his lifestyle is very common. More and more, the inventions of modern technology seem to be cutting us off from contact with our fellow human beings.

Thesis: _____

The world of business is one area in which technology is isolating us. Many people now work alone at home. With access to a large central computer, employees such as secretaries, insurance agents, and accountants do their jobs at terminals in their own homes. They no longer actually have to see the people they're dealing with. In addition, employees are often paid in an impersonal way. Workers' salaries are automatically credited to their bank accounts, eliminating the need for paycheques. Fewer people stand in line with their co-workers to receive their pay or cash their cheques. Finally, personal banking is becoming a detached process. Customers interact with machines or pay bills online rather than contacting people to deposit or withdraw money from their accounts. Even some bank loans are approved or rejected, not in an interview with a loan officer, but through a display on a bank's website.

First topic sentence: _____

Support: 1. *Many people now work alone at home.* _____

2. _____

3. _____

a. _____

b. _____

Another area that technology is changing is entertainment. Music, for instance, was once a group experience. People listened to music in concert halls or at small social gatherings. For many people now, however, music is a solitary experience. Walking along the street or sitting in their living rooms, they wear headphones to build a wall of music around them. Movie entertainment is changing, too. Movies used to be social events. Now, fewer people are going out to see a movie. Many more are choosing to wait for a film to appear on cable television. Instead of being involved with the laughter, applause, or hisses of the audience, viewers watch movies in the isolation of their own living rooms.

Second topic sentence: _____

Support: 1. _____

2. _____

Education is a third important area in which technology is separating us from others. From elementary schools to colleges, students spend more and more time sitting by themselves in front of computers. The computers give them feedback, while teachers spend more time tending the computers and less time interacting with their classes. A similar problem occurs in homes. As more families buy

computers, increasing numbers of students practise their math and reading skills with software programs instead of with their friends, brothers and sisters, and parents. Last, alienation is occurring as a result of other high-tech inventions: CDs and DVDs. People are buying CDs and DVDs on subjects such as cooking, real estate investment, speaking, and speed-reading. They then practise their skills at home rather than taking group classes in which rich human interaction can occur.

Third topic sentence: _____

Support: 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Technology, then, seems to be driving human beings apart. Soon, we may no longer need to communicate with other human beings in order to do our work, entertain ourselves, or pursue an education. Technology will be the co-worker and companion of the future.

2 REVISING

Activity

Following is the second supporting paragraph from an essay called “Problems of Combining School and Work.” The paragraph is shown in four different stages of development: (1) the first full draft; (2) the revised second draft; (3) the edited next-to-final draft; and (4) the final draft. The four stages appear in scrambled order. Write the number 1 in the answer blank for the first full draft and number the remaining stages in sequence.

_____ I have also given up some personal pleasures in my life. On sundays for example I used to play street hockey or football, now I use the entire day to study. Good old-fashioned sleep is another lost pleasure for me now. I never get as much as I like because their just isn’t time. Finally I miss having the chance to just sit in front of the TV, on weeknights. In order to watch the whole line-up of movies and sports that I used to watch regularly. These sound like small pleasures, but you realize how important they are when you have to give them up.

_____ I’ve had to give up pleasures in my life. I use to spend sundays playing games, now I have to study. I’m the sort of person who needs a lot of sleep, but I don’t have the time for that either. Sleeping nine or ten hours a night wouldn’t be unusual for me. Pyschologists say that each individual need a different amount of sleep, some people need as little as five hours, some need as much as nine or ten. So I’m not unusual in that. But Ive given up that pleasure too. And I can’t watch the TV shows I use to enjoy. This is another personal pleasure Ive lost because of doing work and school. These may seem like small things, but you realize how good they are when you give them up.

Besides missing the social side of college life, I've also had to give up some of my special personal pleasures. I used to spend Sunday afternoons, for example, playing street hockey or touch football depending on the season. Now I use Sunday as a catch-up day for my studies. Another pleasure I've lost is sleeping late on days off and weekends. I once loved mornings when I could check the clock, bury my head in the pillow, and drift off for another hour. These days I'm forced to crawl out of bed the minute the alarm lets out its piercing ring. Finally, I no longer have the chance to just sit watching the movies and sports shows that I enjoy. A leisurely night of playing Tomb Raider or renting a Jet Li movie is a pleasure of the past for me now.

Besides missing the social side of college life, I've also had to give up some of my special personal pleasures. I used to spend Sunday afternoons, for example playing street hockey or touch football, depending on the season. Now I use the day as a catch-up day for my studies. Another pleasure I've lost is sleeping late on days off and weekends. I once loved mornings when I could check the clock, then burying my head in the pillow, and you drift off to sleep for another hour. These days I'm forced to get out of bed the minute the alarm lets out its ring. Finally I no longer have the chance to just sit watching the movies and also programs with sports that I enjoy. A leisurely night of playing Tomb Raider or renting a Jet Li movie is a pleasure of the past for me now.

Final Questions

- Which errors in some of the drafts are the most distracting to the reader?

- Which sample paragraph conveys its meaning most clearly?

Why? _____

REVIEWING THE LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR CHAPTER 2

To assure yourself that you have met the Learning Outcomes for this chapter, answer the following questions.

- What is the key to discovering a topic or narrowing a wide general topic?
- What are the main stages of the writing process and what activities are involved in each stage?
- How do you think working on essay writing in distinct stages will improve your writing?
- What are the four prewriting techniques, and which techniques might suit which types of thinkers?
- What are the four parts of a formal outline?