

Chapter 6

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Writing an Essay

The steps in the writing process described in this chapter are

- **Stating the Main Idea**
- **Outlining the Essay** • Generating More Ideas • Using Outline Form
- **Drafting** • Drafting Body Paragraphs • Drafting the Introduction and Conclusion
- **Revising** • Peer Feedback • Instructor Feedback • Self-Evaluation
- **Editing**

This chapter will lead you through the process of organizing, drafting, revising, and editing an **essay**. It is intended as an overview of the writing process for an essay and not as detailed instruction on the parts of the essay. Chapter 7, “The Structure of the Essay,” analyzes each part of the essay in detail and provides practice exercises and multiple examples. In this chapter we use one example, Beth’s essay “Ready for the Junk Heap,” to illustrate the steps of the writing process. Because the best way to learn the writing process is to practice it, **we suggest that for each step of the process, you respond to the prompt in Writing Practice to develop a topic you have chosen or been assigned.**

Stating the Main Idea

In a paragraph the main idea is stated in a topic sentence, but in an essay, the main idea statement is generally called a **thesis** or **thesis statement**. The thesis is the main point your writing will communicate. Everything in your essay should support your thesis statement.

To generate a thesis statement, you must narrow your writing topic, formulate a tentative main idea, and brainstorm supporting ideas for the main idea (all covered in Chapter 3). Once you have a good idea of what information you will use in your essay, you should revise your tentative main idea statement into a thesis statement.

As you formulate and refine your thesis statement, keep in mind your assignment, audience, purpose, and tone. Make sure that your main idea statement is appropriate for the length and type of assignment you are