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As we learn the writing process, remember:

Writing is not a natural talent; writing skills can be learned.

**Level : 2ndYear**

**Module: Written Expression**

**The writing process**

Sometimes inexperienced writers think the ability to write effectively is an inborn talent that some people just have a knack for writing and others do not. However, strong writers did not acquire the ability to write well from genetics. They became effective writers from study, practice, and discipline. Just as athletes, carpenters, welders, hair stylists, and cooks learn new techniques, strategies, and moves, so do writers. Writers must study and practice to write well.

**What is the writing process?**

The Writing Process is a series of steps to help you write a paper. It is like using a map to get to an unfamiliar place. The writing process has four steps:

1. **Pre-writing:** This step stars by defining the basic elements of focused writing (narrowing the topic, identifying the purpose and deciding on the audience). Then, the writer has to generate ideas about the selected topic using different techniques such as brainstorming, listing, free writing, clustering and questioning. After that, he has to organize the ideas within an outline.
   1. **Basic Elements of Writing:**

The writer should identify the basic elements of focused writing which are:

1. **Narrow down the Topic:**

“What should I write about?” Some people think the hardest part of writing is finding a topic. However, more often than not, you will have to deal with topics professors or employers assign to you. Sometimes, too, situations in everyday life require you to address a subject in writing. Initially, not all of these topics will engage you. In fact, sometimes you may have to write about topics you dislike. So instead of “What should I write about?” the more frequent question is “How can I make this topic interesting for myself and my readers?”

If you find a topic boring or too hard, your reader will likely have the same reaction to your paper on that topic. Challenge yourself to find your own creative ways of making topics and assignments personally interesting. Begin by having an open mind about the subject and believing that you have something worthwhile to say about it. Know, too, that you are more likely to become engaged with a subject after you have listened, read, debated, pondered, and explored beyond the surface.

1. **Purpose:**

A way to think about purpose is to consider why you are writing or what you want a piece of writing to accomplish. The very basic purposes of writing are these: to explain, to convince, and to entertain. Writing with a primary purpose to explain is sometimes called expository writing. Other writing such as advertisements, editorials, and political speeches has a strong intent to persuade or to convince readers to take action or change their way of thinking. A great deal of writing such as gossip magazines, comics, and fiction, simply, entertains us.

1. **Audience:**

There is an old saying from the military that “terrain determines tactics,” and this adage proves true with writing. If you think of each person or group of people you are writing to (your audience) as having certain characteristics values, attitudes, intelligence, and biases this will take you a long way toward using the right “tactics” to get a good grade, earn a promotion at your job, or influence your community about a certain issue.

Writing takes practice and patience; with practice your skills will improve.

* 1. **Generating Ideas**

Often times when you begin the process of writing a paper, you feel totally devoid of inspiration and simply do not know where to begin. Finding a topic or main argument for a paper is a difficult task for many writers, but there are two of the best ways to help you get started which are:

* + 1. **Brainstorming** is the process of coming up with ideas. You can brainstorm in order to decide on a topic, to explore approaches to your paper, or to deepen your understanding of a certain subject. Finding a brainstorming technique that works for you can greatly improve your writing efficiency. There are myriad brainstorming techniques to choose from. Take some time to try out several of these techniques and find one that suits your learning style:

1. **Key Word Clustering/Mapping:**

Write down key words or phrases relevant to your topic of interest. Draw lines to identify connections between them.

1. **Listing:**

Make a list of ideas and/or quotations about your potential topic. For each idea or quotation, write a question you would like your paper to answer, according to your interests.

1. **Asking Questions:**

Write down every question you have about your topic. Circle the ones you want to address in your paper.

**1-2-2 Free writing** is an exercise in which you write without stopping for a set period of time with no consideration of grammar, punctuation, spelling, or even logical progression. The purpose of a free write is to rely on your subconscious to make associations and to keep your pen moving without editing each word or thought before it hits the page. This can be very useful in helping you put ideas down that you might not have previously considered.

The following are some guidelines for a successful free write:

1. Set a time limit between five and thirty minutes, and try to stick to it—don’t stop early or continue too long.
2. Allow yourself to continue writing regardless of what your “inner critic” might say (or what your professor, parents, or best friend might say if s/he read what you were writing). Write fearlessly. This free write is for your eyes only.
3. Don’t stop for grammar, spelling, or word choice. In a free write, your first thought is your best thought.
4. If you get stuck, don’t stop writing. It may sound silly, but keep your hand moving at all times, even if that means rewriting the last word you came up with over and over again until something else comes to mind.
5. Other key phrases to write your way out of being stuck include:

· I remember…

· I forget…

Good writers follow a writing process

· I hate…

· I love…

· This book is about…

· This book is not about…

· I just want to say…

1. When the time is up, look over your writing and highlight ideas that you feel are important, meaningful, or thought provoking. You can take these ideas and do another free write or perhaps begin some preliminary research.
   1. **Organisation of Ideas:**

The writer should make an outline of the paragraph in order to organize all his ideas in a way that makes sense, before starting to write them in a formal way. This plan will be a visual guide to the information, and how it will be presented in the writing assignment.

**Note:** The outline should be very brief and in point form. The writer should be able to orally summarize the writing assignment to another person by looking at the outline. If he gets confused, he is not ready.

1. **Drafting**

Drafting is like playing a race car video game with an endless supply of quarters. If you end up in a ditch with nothing to write about, just pop in another coin, pick up your pencil, and start driving again on some other part of your topic. Hence, being a writer is all about writing even when you don’t want to, even when it’s hard, even when it looks like you’re the last car on the track struggling to finish the race long after all the other drivers have seen the checkered flag and all the fans have gone home.

**For a Good Drafting**

* Write a complete rough draft, don’t try to fix it as you write, you won’t finish otherwise.
* Don’t edit your draft, just write.
* Take risks; don’t try to make it perfect.
* Words can always be added at a later point in the writing process.
* Don’t give up, keep writing.

**What is a paragraph?**

A paragraph is a group of sentences organized (not random) around a central topic. In fact, the cardinal rule of paragraph writing is to focus on one idea. A solidly written paragraph takes its readers on a clear path, without detours. A paragraph develops ONE main idea through a series of related sentences. This main idea is usually introduced in the first sentence of the paragraph, called the topic sentence. The idea is then developed further through the sentences that follow.

A paragraph is usually around 250 words and consists of five or six sentences, although this can vary depending on the purpose of the paragraph, and the length of the piece you are writing. Paragraphs play an important role in writing because they provide a framework for organising your ideas in a logical order. Using a clear structure for your paragraphs helps guide the reader through your written work.

**2-1 Paragraph Structure**

A basic paragraph structure usually consists of five sentences: the topic sentence, three or four supporting sentences (major and minor), and a concluding sentence.

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| --- |
| ***Paragraph Structure***  ***Topic Sentence (TS) the beginning***   * introduces the main idea * limits or focuses the topic * often tells the reader how the information will be organized in the paragraph   ***Supporting Sentences (SS) the middle***  -Elaborates and explains the idea introduced in the topic sentence.  -Provides evidence and examples.  -Explains the evidence or example included - why is it relevant?  ***Concluding Sentence (CS) the end***  ***-***Makes links: back to the main idea of the paragraph; back to research question or topic of the assignment; to the next paragraph. |

**2-1-1 Features of a Topic Sentence**

A topic sentence has these important features:

1. It has a controlling idea that limits the topic and guides the flow of the paragraph. The controlling idea tells the reader what you will say about your topic. Here are two topic sentences. The topic is circled and the controlling idea is underlined.

• ***Soccer is popular for many reasons.***

***Explanation:*** The reader expects the paragraph to explain why soccer is popular.

***• Many language students prefer bilingual dictionaries to monolingual dictionaries.***

***Explanation:*** The reader expects the paragraph to explain why this statement is true.

1. It is not a fact. For example, “Libraries have books” is not a good topic sentence. The information in this sentence is true, but it is a fact and there is little to say about it.
2. It is specific. “Tea is delicious” is not a good topic sentence because the information in the sentence is too general. If you want to write a paragraph about tea, make your topic sentence more specific, such as “Green tea has many health benefits.”
3. It is not too specific. “This dictionary contains more than 42,000 words” limits the topic too much. There is nothing else for the writer to say, so the paragraph cannot continue.

**Example:** suppose that you want to write a paragraph about the natural landmarks of your hometown. The first part of your paragraph might look like this:

My hometown is famous for several amazing natural features. First, it is noted for the Wheaton River, which is very wide and beautiful. Also, on the other side of the town is Wheaton Hill, which is unusual because it is very steep.

Note how the first sentence, *My hometown*, *Wheaton, is famous for several amazing geographical features,* is the most general statement. This sentence is different from the two sentences that follow it, since the second and third sentences mention specific details about the town's geography, and are not general statements.

Here are some examples of sentences that cannot be used as topic sentences. Can you figure out why they are inappropriate?

1. My hometown is famous because it is located by Wheaton River, which is very wide, and because it is built near an unusually steep hill called Wheaton Hill.

2. There are two reasons why some people like to buy cars with automatic transmission and two reasons why others like cars with manual transmission.

3. Clouds are white.

***The problem with sentence #1*** is that it contains too many details. Topic sentences are general, and details should appear later in the paragraph. A better topic sentence would be like the one mentioned above, *My hometown is famous for several amazing geographical features*.

***Sentence #2*** is not appropriate as a topic sentence because it mentions two topics, not just one. Paragraphs are usually about one main thing and so their topic sentences should also be about only one main thing.

***The problem with sentence #3*** is that it is too general. It is also very boring! Would you like to read a paragraph with this topic sentence? Most people would not.

We can rewrite sentences #2 and #3 in the following ways to make it better:

* There are two reasons why some people like to buy cars with automatic transmission.

OR (in a different paragraph):

* There are two reasons why some people like cars with manual transmission.
* The shapes of clouds are determined by various factors.

**2-1-2 Supporting Sentences:**

Supporting sentences give information that explains and expands the topic of the paragraph. They answer questions—who? what? where? when? why? and how? and give details. Good writers think of these questions when they write supporting sentences for the topic sentence.

Consider again the above-mentioned, short paragraph:

My hometown is famous for several amazing natural features. First, it is noted for the Wheaton River, which is very wide and beautiful. Also, on the other side of the town is Wheaton Hill, which is unusual because it is very steep.

When a reader reads a topic sentence, such as My hometown, Wheaton, is famous for several amazing natural features, a question should usually appear in the reader's mind. In this case, the question should be like, *"What are the natural features that make Wheaton famous?"* The reader should then expect that the rest of the paragraph will give an answer to this question.

Now look at the sentences after the topic sentence. We can see that the second sentence in the paragraph, First, it is noted for the Wheaton River, which is very wide and beautiful, indeed gives an answer to this question. That is, the second sentence gives some explanation for the fact that Wheaton is a famous town. Similarly, we can see that the third sentence also gives some explanation for the fact that Wheaton is famous by giving another example of an "amazing natural feature," in this case, Wheaton Hill.

The second and third sentences are called supporting sentences. They are called "supporting" because they "support," or explain, the idea expressed in the topic sentence. Of course, paragraphs in English often have more than two supporting ideas. The paragraph above is actually a very short paragraph. At minimum, you should have at least five to seven sentences in your paragraph. Here we can see our paragraph about Wheaton with a few more supporting sentences in bold font:

       My hometown is famous for several amazing natural features.  First, it is noted for the Wheaton River, which is very wide and beautiful. Also, on the other side of the town is Wheaton Hill, which is unusual because it is very steep. **The third amazing feature is the Big Old Tree. This tree stands two hundred feet tall and is probably about six hundred years old.**

***Kinds of Supporting Sentences***

Good supporting sentences have different goals. Writers vary them to:

1. Explain: The family moved from the village to the capital for economic reasons.
2. Describe: She lived in a lovely three-story castle surrounded by a forest.
3. Give reasons: Lukas finally quit his job because of the stressful working conditions.
4. Give facts: More than ten percent of the university’s student population is international.
5. Give examples: Oranges and grapefruits grow in California.
6. Define: Many tourists visit Bangkok, which is the capital and largest city in Thailand.

**2-1-3 The Concluding Sentence:**

The concluding sentence is the last sentence of the paragraph. It concludes, or wraps up, a paragraph. It lets the reader know that you have finished talking about the idea introduced by the topic sentence. A concluding sentence often has one of these four important purposes:

**1.** It restates the main idea. **3.** It gives an opinion.

**2.** It offers a suggestion. **4.** It makes a prediction.

* ***Restates the Main Idea***

Perhaps the easiest concluding sentence to write is one that simply restates the main idea or summarizes the main points of the paragraph. The following transitional words and phrases are commonly used at the beginning of a concluding sentence:

*As a result - overall - for this reason - certainly - because of this – surely - therefore for these reasons – clearly – thus - in brief*

***Example:***

**Topic Sentence:** At some point, most parents have to decide whether or not to allow their children to have pets.

**Concluding Sentence:** In brief, although many children want a pet, parents are divided on this issue for a number of important reasons.

* ***Offers a Suggestion, Gives an Opinion, or Makes a Prediction***

A concluding statement can offer a suggestion, give an opinion, or make a prediction. Sometimes a concluding statement does a combination of these three options.

***Example01:***

**Topic Sentence:** Snorkeling can be one of the most amazing adventures you can ever take part in.

**Concluding Sentence:** If you want to have one of the most beautiful experiences that anyone can ever have, you should try snorkeling for a day.

***Example02:***

**Topic Sentence:** Fortunately, my parents were very strict with me when I was a child.

**Concluding Sentence:** Looking back, I am not sorry that my parents were strict with me because I think it was the best way to bring up a child.

***Example03:***

**Topic Sentence** The menu at Fresh Market, one of the newest restaurants in downtown Springfield, consists of only five main dishes that are simple but very delicious.

**Concluding Sentence** If you eat a meal at Fresh Market, I am sure you will enjoy it tremendously.

Moreover, you can understand concluding sentences with this example. Consider a burger that you can buy at a fast-food restaurant.

\* A burger has a top bun (a kind of bread), meat, cheese, lettuce, and other elements in the middle of the burger, and a bottom bun. Note how the top bun and the bottom bun are very similar. The top bun, in a way, is like a topic sentence, and the bottom bun is like the concluding sentence. Both buns "hold" the meat, onions, and so on. Similarly, the topic sentence and concluding sentence "hold" the supporting sentences in the paragraph. Let's see how a concluding sentence (in bold font) might look in our sample paragraph about Wheaton:

       My hometown is famous for several amazing natural features. First, it is noted for the Wheaton River, which is very wide and beautiful. Also, on the other side of the town is Wheaton Hill, which is unusual because it is very steep. The third amazing feature is the Big Old Tree. This tree stands two hundred feet tall and is probably about six hundred years old. **These three landmarks are truly amazing and make my hometown a famous place.**

Notice how the concluding sentence, *These three landmarks are truly amazing and make my hometown a famous place,* summarizes the information in the paragraph. Notice also how the concluding sentence is similar to, but not exactly the same as, the topic sentence.

* **Details in Paragraphs**

The short paragraph in this lesson is a fairly complete paragraph, but it lacks details. Whenever possible, you should include enough details in your paragraphs to help your reader understand exactly what you are writing about. In the paragraph about Wheaton, three natural landmarks are mentioned, but we do not know very much about them. For example, we could add a sentence or two about Wheaton river concerning HOW wide it is or WHY it is beautiful. Consider this revision (and note the additional details in bold):

My hometown is famous for several amazing natural features. First, it is noted for the Wheaton River, which is very wide and beautiful. **On either side of this river, which is 175 feet wide, are many willow trees which have long branches that can move gracefully in the wind. In autumn the leaves of these trees fall and cover the riverbanks like golden snow.** Also, on the other side of the town is Wheaton Hill, which is unusual because it is very steep.  **Even though it is steep, climbing this hill is not dangerous, because there are some firm rocks along the sides that can be used as stairs. There are no trees around this hill, so it stands clearly against the sky and can be seen from many miles away.** The third amazing feature is the Big Old Tree. This tree stands two hundred feet tall and is probably about six hundred years old. These three landmarks are truly amazing and make my hometown a famous place.

But the secrets to paragraph writing lay in four essential elements, which when used correctly, can make an okay paragraph into a great paragraph.

1. ***Unity:*** Unity in a paragraph begins with the topic sentence. Every paragraph has one single, controlling idea that is expressed in its topic sentence, which is typically the first sentence of the paragraph. A paragraph is unified around this main idea, with the supporting sentences providing detail and discussion. In order to write a good topic sentence, think about your theme and all the points you want to make. Decide which point drives the rest, and then write it as your topic sentence.
2. ***Order:*** Order refers to the way you organize your supporting sentences. Whether you choose chronological order, order of importance, or another logical presentation of detail, a solid paragraph always has a definite organization. In a well-ordered paragraph, the reader follows along easily, aided by the pattern you’ve established. Order helps the reader grasp your meaning and avoid confusion.
3. ***Coherence:*** Coherence is the quality that makes your writing understandable. Sentences within a paragraph need to connect to each other and work together as a whole. One of the best ways to achieve coherency is to use transition words. These words create bridges from one sentence to the next. You can use transition words that show order (first, second, third); spatial relationships (above, below) or logic (furthermore, in addition, in fact). Also, in writing a paragraph, using a consistent verb tense and point of view are important ingredients for coherency.
4. ***Completeness:*** Completeness means a paragraph is well-developed. If all sentences clearly and sufficiently support the main idea, then your paragraph is complete. If there are not enough sentences or enough information to prove your thesis, then the paragraph is incomplete. Usually three supporting sentences, in addition to a topic sentence and concluding sentence, are needed for a paragraph to be complete. The concluding sentence or last sentence of the paragraph should summarize your main idea by reinforcing your topic sentence.

***Exercises***