

# Key points on writing

# Essay writing

an essay is a short piece of writing by a student  
as a part of a course of study  
(Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary)

- Getting started requires to do three things:
  - 1). gain an understanding of the assignment;
  - 2). select a suitable topic;
  - 3). collect information about it.

# Purpose of writing

- Writing communicates a message for a purpose to readers.

The message of writing is its content; the purpose of writing motivates what and how we/ writers/senders should write; readers are the audience/receiver of the message.

- The purpose is the reason of writing. Purposes for writing:
- to express yourself,
- to inform a reader,
- to persuade a reader,
- to create a literary work.

# Reading audiences

- what's the setting? academic/ workplace/ public
- who are they? age/ gender/ ethnic, political religious background
- what do they know? level of education/ general or specialized knowledge about the topic/ preconceptions and prejudices they have about the topic.

# To generate possible writing ideas you can use different strategies:

- *Brainstorming*
- *Listing*
- *Clustering / Mapping*
- *Asking journalist's questions / W-questions*
- *Talking it over*
- *Doing research*
- *Freewriting*

# Collecting information

Writers write with information.  
If there is no information,  
there will be no effective writing.  
Donald Murray

- **Identify possible sources.**

## Primary Sources

- Interviews
- Observations
- Participation
- Surveys

## Secondary Sources

- Articles
- Reference book entries
- Books
- Web sites

- **Note!**

- Evaluate sources critically.
- Represent the sources accurately: quote, paraphrase, summarize well,
- do not distort the material.
- Never plagiarize.
- Credit your sources with documentation.

# Paragraphs

- A **paragraph** is a group of sentences that work together to develop a unit of thought.
- An **introductory** paragraph leads the reader to sense what's ahead.
- It sets the stage.
- It also attempts to arouse a readers interest in the topic.

# Introductory paragraphs

- **Strategies to Use**
- Providing relevant background information
- Relating briefly an interesting story or anecdote
- Giving statistics
- Asking one or more provocative questions
- Using an appropriate quotation
- Defining a **KEY TERM**
- Presenting one or more brief examples
- Drawing an **ANALOGY**



# Introductory paragraphs

- **Strategies to Avoid**
- Don't write statements about your purpose, such as "I am going to discuss the causes of falling oil prices."
- Don't apologize, as in "I am not sure this is right, but this is my opinion."
- Don't use overworked expressions, such as "Haste makes waste, as recently discovered" or "Love is grand."

# Introductory paragraphs.

## Example

- What should you do? You're out riding your bike, playing golf, or in the middle of a long run when you look up and suddenly see a jagged streak of light shoot across the sky, following by a deafening clap of thunder. Unfortunately, most outdoor exercisers don't know whether to stay put or make a dash for shelter when a thunderstorm approaches, and sometimes the consequences are tragic.

(Gerald Secor Couzens, "If Lightning Strikes")

# Body paragraphs

- **Unity:** Have you made a clear connection between the main idea of the paragraph and the sentences that support the main idea
- It is controlled by the topic sentence
- **Development:** Have you included detailed and sufficient support for the main idea of the paragraph?
- **Coherence:** Have you progressed from one sentence to the next in the paragraph smoothly and logically?

# Body paragraphs.

## Development

- **Reasons** provide support.
- **Examples** provide support.
- **Names** provide support.
- **Numbers** provide support.
- **Senses** - sight, sound, smell, taste, touch - provide support.

# Body paragraphs.

## Coherence.

- Using appropriate transitional expressions.
- Using pronouns when possible.
- Using deliberate repetition of a key word.
- Using parallel structures.
- Using coherence techniques to create connections between paragraphs .

# Body paragraphs.

## Example.

- The cockroach lore that has been daunting us for years is mostly true. Roaches can live for twenty days without food, fourteen days without water; they can flatten their bodies and crawl through a crack thinner than a dime; they can eat huge doses of carcinogens and still die of old age. They can even survive "as much radiation as an oak tree can," says William Bell, the University of Kansas entomologist whose cockroaches appeared in the movie *The Day After*. They will eat almost anything - regular food, leather, glue, hair, paper, even the starch in book bindings. (The New York Public Library has quite a cockroach problem.) They sense the slightest breeze, and they can react and start running in 0.05 second; they can also remain motionless for days. And if all this isn't creepy enough, they can fly too.

(Jane Goldman, "What's Bugging You?")

# Plagiarism

- Buy a paper from an Internet site, another student or writer, or any other source;
- Turn in any paper that someone else has written, whether it was given to you, you downloaded it from the Internet, or you copied it from any other source;
- Change selected parts of an existing paper, and claim the paper as your own;
- Combine the ideas from many sources and claim that they're your own thoughts;
- Neglect to put quotation marks around words that you quote directly from a source, even if you document the source.

# Strategies to avoid plagiarism

- Use DOCUMENTATION to acknowledge your use of the ideas or phrasings of others, taken from the sources you've compiled on your topic.
- Become thoroughly familiar with the documentation style that your instructor tells you to use for your research paper.



# Never assume that your instructor can't detect plagiarism

For example, you might be tempted to download a completed research paper from the Internet. Or you might be tempted to borrow wording from what you wrongly consider an "obscure" Internet source.

*Don't.* That's intellectual dishonesty, which can get you into real trouble not only with your instructor but also with the college.

# Freewriting

- Freewriting helps you get your thoughts down on paper.
- Freewriting helps you develop and organize these thoughts.
- Freewriting helps you make sense out of things that you may be studying or researching.
- Freewriting may seem awkward at times, but just stick with it.

# Freewriting. The process.

- • **Write nonstop and record whatever comes into your mind.** Follow your thoughts instead of trying to direct them.
- **If you have a particular topic or assignment to complete, use it as a starting point.** Otherwise, begin with anything that comes to mind.
- **Don't stop to judge, edit, or correct your writing;** that will come later.
- **Keep writing even when you think you have exhausted all of your ideas.** Switch to another angle or voice, but keep writing.
- **Watch for a promising writing idea to emerge.** Learn to recognize the beginnings of a good idea, and then expand that idea by recording as many specific details as possible.

# Freewriting. The result.

- **Review your writing and underline the ideas you like.** These ideas will often serve as the basis for future writings.
- **Determine exactly what you plan to write about.** You may then decide to do a second freewriting exercise.
- **Listen to and read the freewriting of others;** learn from your peers.