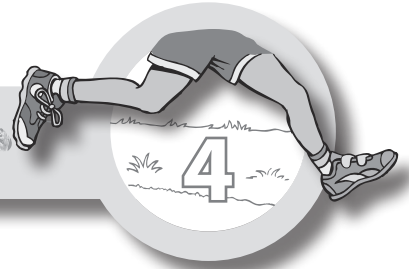


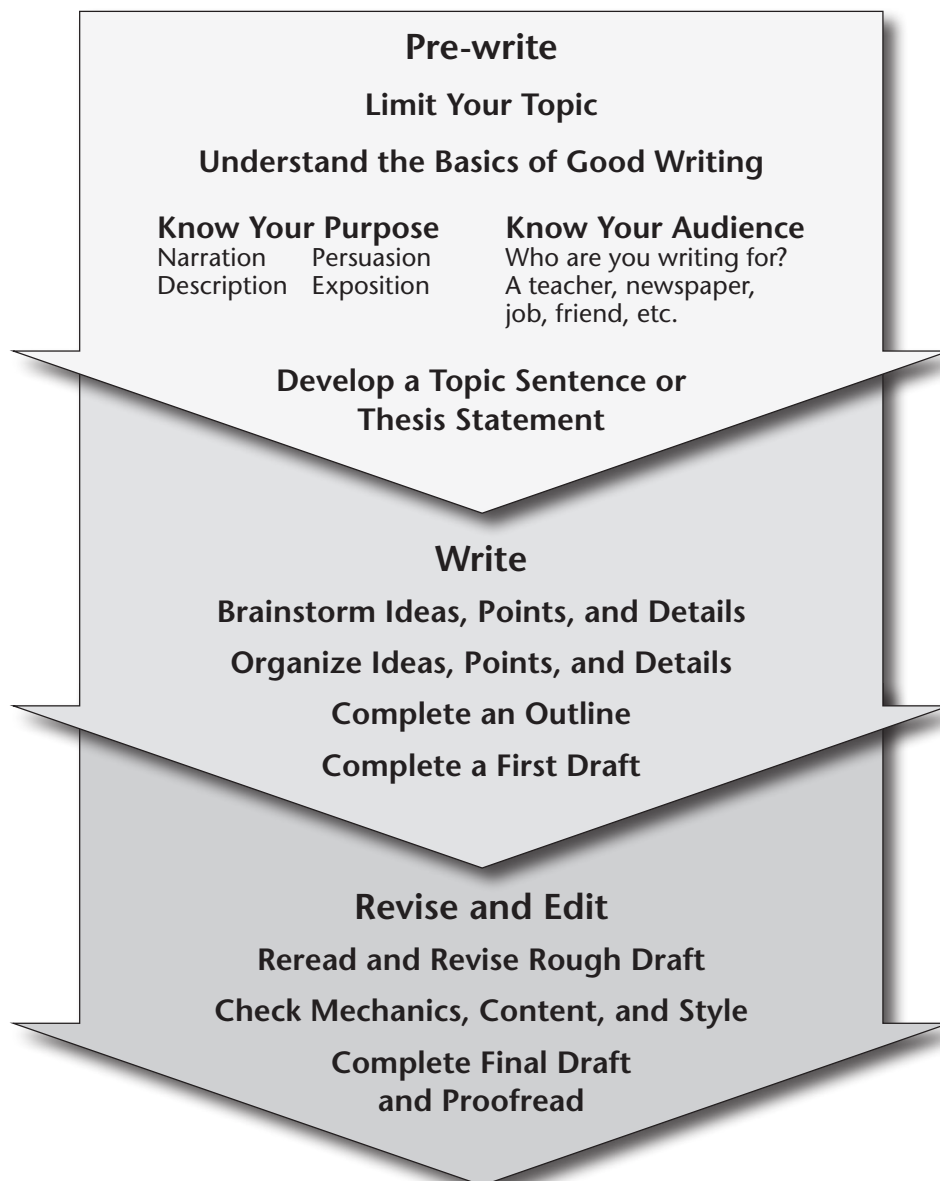
# Writing Process



## Overview

Whether you are writing a single paragraph, a multi-paragraph composition (essay), or creating an oral presentation, an understanding of the writing process will help you to produce and publish your very best work.

You can break the writing process into three basic steps: Pre-write, Write, and Revise / Edit. Look at the following chart to see an overview of the writing process.



# Pre-write

## Limit Your Topic

In order to limit your topic, you must first understand the purpose of your writing project. It is important to understand the scope and directions of the project.

Sometimes, your teacher may provide you with a limited topic.

*Write a **paragraph describing the process of photosynthesis.***

When you are provided with a limited topic, underline key words to make sure you understand what is being asked of you. In the above example, underlining key words helps to verify that you are being asked to write a descriptive paragraph on the process of photosynthesis.

Other times, your teacher may provide you with a broad topic.

*Write a **three to five paragraph narrative composition on "A day to remember."***

"A day to remember" is a broad topic. You have lived many days of your life. Your job here is to narrow your topic to one day that you can realistically write about in a multi-paragraph composition. To help limit your topic, you might choose a day that you remember vividly, so you can describe it well. You might consider a day that other people would find interesting to read about or learn from. Remember, you only have three to five paragraphs to address this topic.

## Know Your Purpose

You must make sure you understand the purpose of your communications: what is it you want to say and why.

- Are you trying to describe a process, like how to tie a shoelace? (description)
- Are you trying to tell a story, like your most embarrassing experience? (narration)
- Are you trying to explain a difficult topic, like the difference between the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament? (exposition)
- Are you trying to persuade someone of an opinion, like the graduated licensing program should be abolished? (persuasion)

Understanding your purpose will help you select your mode of writing: whether you will write a descriptive, narrative, expository, or persuasive piece of writing.

## Know Your Audience

You also need to know your audience: for whom you are writing. Writing for your English teacher will be different from writing to your friend. Knowing your audience will help you to determine:

- What style of language you will use: formal, informal, or slang?
- How much information to provide: if your audience is unfamiliar with your topic, you may have to provide more background information.
- What type of examples to use: if you are writing a multi-paragraph composition for your English teacher, are you using examples, such as song titles or movie characters, that your teacher would know?
- What would make for interesting content?

## Develop a Topic Sentence or Thesis Statement

Once you are clear as to your purpose and audience, you can formulate your topic sentence or thesis statement. A topic sentence introduces a paragraph, whereas a thesis statement introduces a multi-paragraph composition. Both topic sentences and thesis statements provide your reader with a clear sense of purpose and direction for the writing to follow.

### Topic Sentence

A topic sentence introduces a paragraph and is typically the first sentence in the paragraph. The topic sentence should be limited enough in scope so that it can be adequately developed in six to eight sentences.

#### Poor Examples:

*There are many things that cause cancer.*

This topic sentence is poor because it is vague: “many things” is not very specific. The topic is also too broad to discuss in six to eight sentences. In fact, a book could be written on this topic.

*The Dixie Chicks won “Record of the Year” at the 2007 Grammy Awards.*

This topic sentence is poor because it is too limited. This is a statement of fact, so requires no further support.

#### Good Examples:

*Friday is the best day of the week.*

*Valentine’s Day should be a national holiday.*

## Thesis Statement

A thesis statement introduces the focus of a multi-paragraph composition and is typically the last sentence of the introductory paragraph. Just like a topic sentence, it informs the reader of the composition's main idea. The thesis statement should be limited enough in scope so that it can be adequately supported in three to five paragraphs.

### Poor Example:

*It is important to graduate from high school.*

This thesis is vague and is not limited in scope. A student could definitely write more than five paragraphs to cover this topic.

### Good Examples:

*Volunteering at an elderly care facility changed my attitude towards ageing.*

*Prior to signing a rental agreement, the three most important areas of your apartment to inspect are the kitchen, bathrooms, and living rooms.*

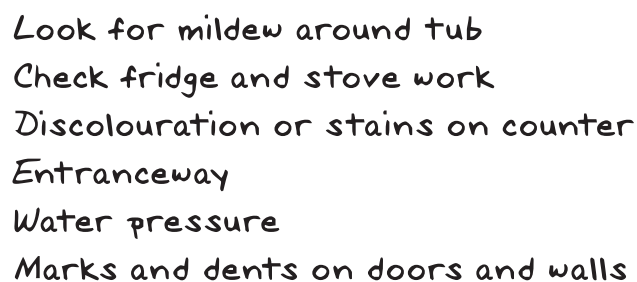
## Write

### Brainstorm Ideas, Points, and Details

The first step in writing your composition, whether that be a paragraph or multi-paragraph composition, is to generate your content, including your ideas, main points, and details.

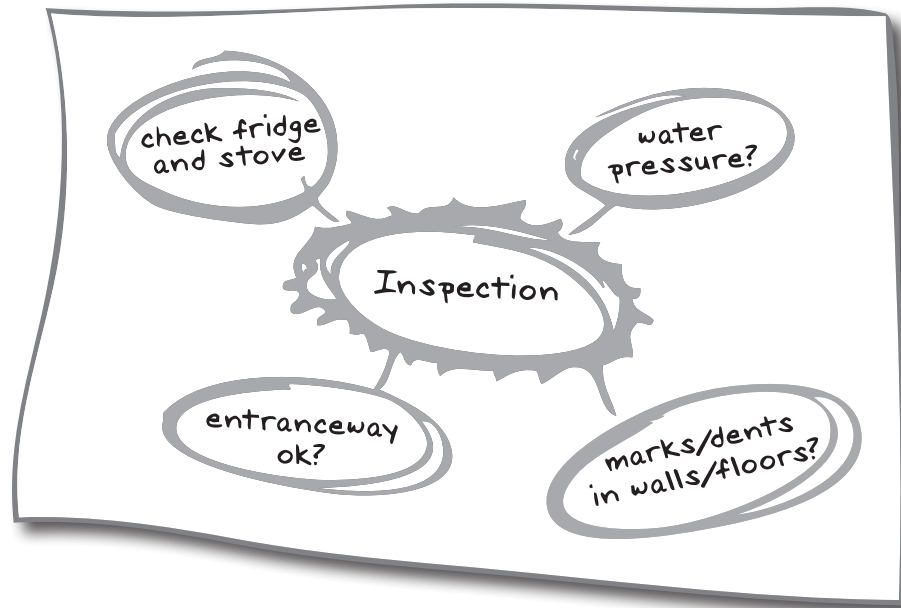
### Some Strategies to Brainstorm Ideas

**Brainstorm** by making a list of all possible ideas.



Look for mildew around tub  
Check fridge and stove work  
Discolouration or stains on counter  
Entranceway  
Water pressure  
Marks and dents on doors and walls

Create a **cluster diagram** by putting the topic in the middle of a page and drawing a circle around it. Think of words that are associated with the topic and write them down on the page. Write as many words as come to mind. To show the connection between the words and the topic, draw a line between them. The line should go from each word to the outer part of the circle.



To **free write** just write whatever comes to mind about the topic. Ideas don't have to be written in complete sentences—just get them down!

So, inspecting an apartment. Always a good idea.  
Check mildew in bathroom around the tub (ugh).  
Also water pressure for the shower. Fridge works.  
Also stove, is the entrance well maintained?  
Are there marks in the floor? What about the walls?  
Countertops clean? Is the whole apartment clean?

There is no one right way to generate ideas, so find a strategy that works for you!

## Research

For some writing projects, you may not have all the information you need at hand to complete them. You may have to conduct research to support your topic.

### **Research strategies include: The Internet**

Learning more about your topic and finding examples to support your opinion will require research. Use a search engine to find numerous other resources. Look for an author or publisher and date posted on the home page—if that information is not there, it may not be a reliable resource. For websites, keep a note of the topic, web address, date the page was posted (if available), and date you viewed the site.

### **Books and Magazines, Comics, and Catalogues**

Your local public library, or school library will have useful books that you can borrow for free. Look up their collections online or phone the librarian if you'd like to find out more about possible resources before going to the library yourself. Your textbook may also be a good source of information.

### **Interviews**

Talking to other people can offer you ideas and perspectives that you may not have considered.

Ask people what they think about your topic, and if they say something that you might use in your composition, note their words, the date, and place of the interview. Be sure you've spelled the person's name correctly.

If you know people who have lived the experience of one of the issues, ask them if they could speak to you about their experiences. Ask a few questions to direct the interview, or show the person your composition topic, and listen. Jot down notes or use a recorder to help keep a record of their comments. Finally, thank the person for sharing his or her story, and offer a copy of the composition when it is complete.

You will have to cite the interview in your list of resources for the composition.

## Organize Ideas, Points, and Details

Once you have generated your ideas, points, and details, your next step is to group the information into logical categories. How you group your ideas will depend upon what your end goal is. For this example, the student is writing a five-paragraph composition.

**Structured lists** provide a simple, linear way to group information from the ideas you have generated. You can use bullets or sub-points to organize your ideas.

Example:

### **Apartment Inspection:**

#### **Kitchen:**

- Appliances  
*Fridge, stove, microwave, washer and dryer all work*
- Cupboards  
*Empty, clean, not damaged*
- Counters  
*Clean, not damaged*

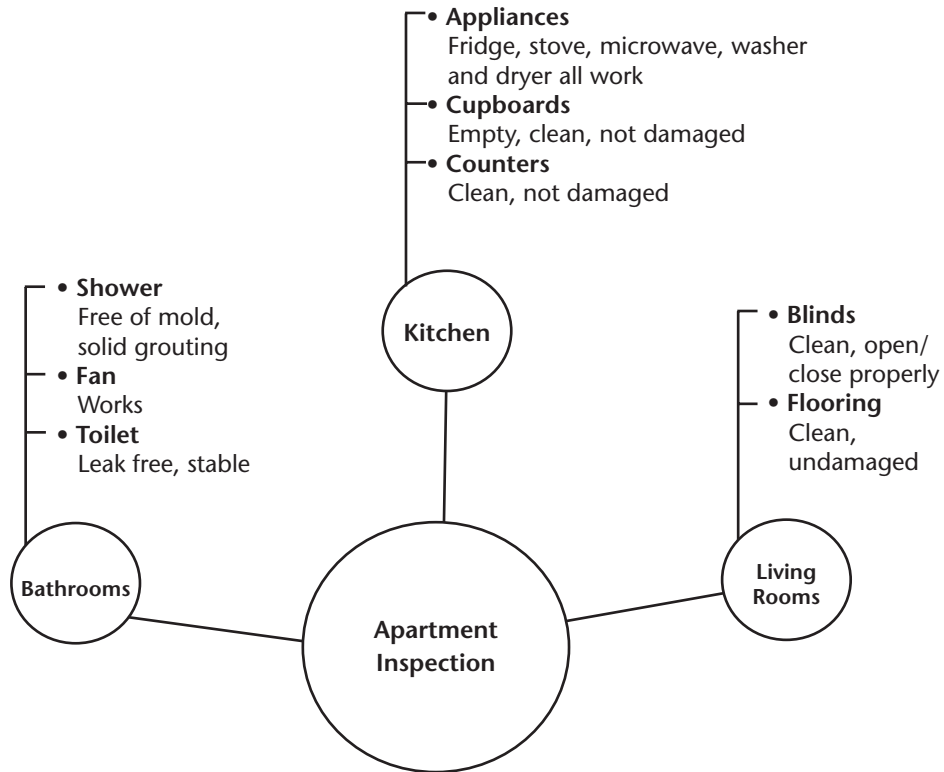
#### **Bathrooms:**

- Shower  
*Free of mold, solid grouting*
- Fan  
*Works*
- Toilet  
*Leak free, stable*

#### **Living rooms:**

- Blinds  
*Clean, open/close properly*
- Flooring  
*Clean, undamaged*

**Mind maps** provide a visual way to logically group the ideas you have generated.





## Complete an Outline

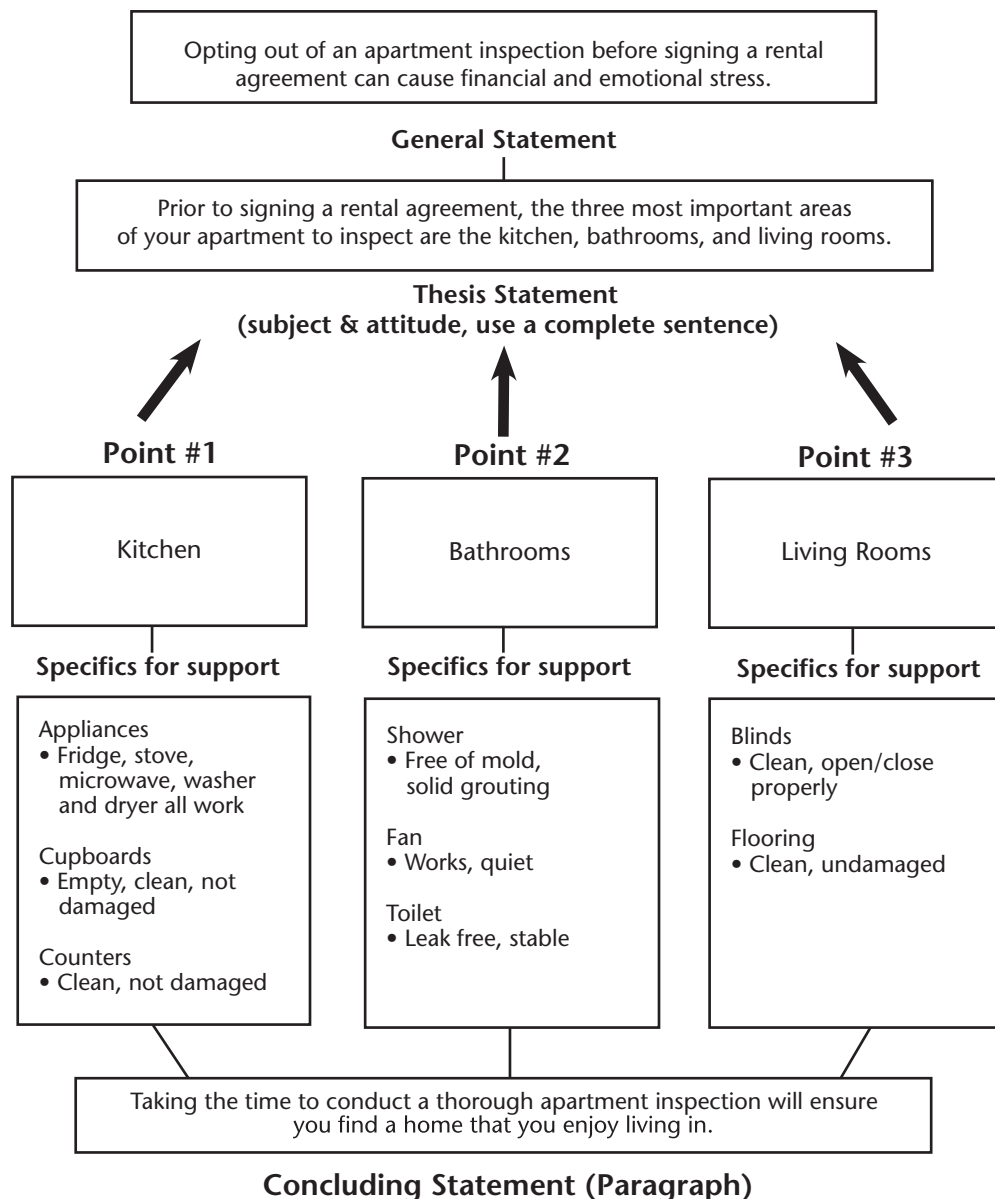
The next step of your writing process is to create an outline for your multi-paragraph composition based on the ideas you have organized. It's helpful to plan the order of how you want to present your content:

Sequentially—order by sequence or steps

Chronologically—order by time

Spatially—order through space

Logical order—general statements followed by causes or examples



## Complete a First Draft

The final step in the writing phase of the process is to create a first draft of your composition. The goal of your first draft is to connect your ideas together into a unifying piece, whether it is a single paragraph, a multi-paragraph composition, or another form of communication.

Before you write, review your outline to be sure the ideas are fresh in your mind. It's a good idea to keep that outline close at hand to refer to as you write. This will help to keep your writing project focused.

Focus on getting your ideas on paper. Don't get hung up with spelling, punctuation, grammar, or perfecting every word or sentence. That is the purpose of the next phase of the process.

Once your first draft is complete, walk away from it for a while. This will give you a fresh perspective when you reach the next phase of the writing process: revise and edit.



# Revise and Edit

## Reread and Revise Draft

Your finished composition should be smooth. In order to polish it, you will need to evaluate your work and make revisions.

Revising your writing is more than just correcting spelling and grammar errors. It is a four-step process that makes your words and sentences stick together.

### 1. Cut

As you reread your composition, you might see a sentence that doesn't seem to end or one that is repetitive. Another sentence might be padded with unnecessary words. These are examples of wordiness. Here is what you can do to avoid wordiness:

- Repeat a word or phrase only for emphasis or clarity.
- If you can get an idea across with fewer words, do it.
- Remove any words from a sentence that don't relate to the main idea.
- Remove any sentences that don't relate to the main idea of the multi-paragraph composition.

### 2. Use appropriate language

Reread your composition carefully to make sure you have avoided:

- inappropriate language (colloquialisms or slang), for example, neat, cool, lousy, goon, moocher, etc.
- jargon—words that are specific to a particular group or profession that others may not understand, example bites, ram, IRP, stet
- gender-biased language (sexism)

### 3. Expand

As you reread a paragraph, you might realize that something is missing. If you think you need to add information to clarify an idea:

- Define words and phrases if their meanings are unclear or substitute better words.
- Give readers all the information they need to understand what you mean.
- Add additional ideas to support your thesis statement.

### 4. Use Transitions

Words or phrases that help link your ideas together in a logical way.

Use transitions to introduce ideas, conclude ideas, and move between ideas.



## Check Mechanics, Content, and Style

In order to polish your composition, you need to get a detail-oriented look at the mechanics, content, and style of your piece to make sure your writing is correct and consistent.

An effective strategy to polish your composition is to have a friend, family member, or teacher read your work to give you suggestions for improvement.

Then, you must also carefully review your work for correct sentence structure, punctuation, and usage. Review the topics in *Writing on the Run!* for more information.

Using a checklist is a helpful strategy for editing your work. There are many editing checklists available in grammar books or on the Internet. Find one that works well for you.

Sample checklist:

Criteria	Self-Assessment: have you done this?	Teacher
presents each idea in paragraph format		
presents ideas in a logical order		
supports ideas with facts, evidence, and/or descriptive details		
provides an effective opening and conclusion		
uses proper sentence format, including capitalization and periods		
uses a variety of sentence types		
shows agreement in use of verbs and pronouns		
uses verb tenses properly		
uses punctuation correctly, including commas, quotation marks, periods, question marks, and exclamation marks		
uses correct word forms		
presented in typed or legible handwriting		

## Complete Final Draft and Proofread

Once you have completed your revising and editing, you are now ready to complete your final draft. Reread the instructions of your assignment to ensure you are submitting your composition as instructed.

For example:

- name, date, title
- single space or double space
- type, print, or write



Then, give your composition one final read to ensure it is error free before submitting it!