

General Suggestions for Improving Writing

Write in Stages

a. Pre-writing stage

Take time to think and/or discuss the topic with others who will be writing or evaluating the text. Collect information on the subject, read it and allow it to gel.

b. Writing stage

Organize your thoughts by:

Generating a specific set questions to be answered by the text. Answer these questions as you write. Use these questions as headings throughout all parts of the text including the introduction, body and conclusions/summary.

OR

Putting facts down in categories. Add to categories, combine categories, or separate categories as you put facts down. Order facts within categories in chronological order, from general to specific, or from central to peripheral.

Keep a random facts/thoughts sheet to be integrated into the base structure. Produce diagrams/figures/tables where possible to organize data.

OR

Using diary writing. Put down random thoughts. You are waiting for a structure to suggest itself. Put the random thoughts into clusters which seem to make some sense based on the relationship between the thoughts, such as a time sequence or natural characteristics. Then begin to flesh out sentences.

OR

Talking your thoughts onto a tape recorder for later transcription or dictate your thoughts and have another person write for you or enter your thoughts onto a word processor.

The teacher or fellow students may be very helpful in the organization process.

Now write a first draft! Get it down. If you can not think of the right word, use any word or leave a blank. If you are not sure of the wording, write it in any form. Leave lots of space for editing.

c. Post-writing stage

Spend at least as much time editing and revising as it took to generate the first draft.

Begin by working on the organization of the draft. Read it to another person, ask for comments, and then revise it.

Examine the overall order of the facts of the entire passage from paragraph to paragraph. Examine paragraph structure. Do all of the facts in each paragraph belong together? Is there a head sentence for each paragraph? Combine, separate and/or move paragraphs.

Then work on sentence structure. Do sentences need to be separated or can sentences be combined? Practice different sentence constructions. Use a grammar checker.

Now work on word choice. Use a Synonym Finder or Thesaurus.

Finally work on spelling and punctuation. Use a spell checker and a cheat sheet for punctuation.

Once again the teacher or fellow students may assist in any or all of the revising steps above.

Now read the passage again and add in transitional sentences where needed. You may even need a good beginning and ending to the passage at this late stage.

Source: **GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE** by Dr. Genese Warr-Leeper, Western University, Ontario