

# ➤ PART ONE

## *Overview of Writing Processes*

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Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-65768-6 - Academic Writing: Exploring Processes and Strategies: Second Edition

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Excerpt

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## Getting Started

Do you remember the first time you tried to ride a bike? One thing that makes a skill like bike riding hard to learn is that you have to do many things at the same time that you do not yet know how to do well: pedal, keep your balance, steer, watch the road ahead of you, and so on. Learning how to write seems to present similar kinds of problems. Even in the first paragraph, you must have an idea of what you want to say, how to explain it, and how to sound convincing to your reader, and you have to do all of this in English.

But in some important ways, learning the skill of writing well is different from and *easier* than learning the skill of bike riding because when you write, it is possible to concentrate on the different parts of the writing activity one at a time. This possibility makes writing much more like making a clay pot than like riding a bike. When you make a piece of pottery, first you must gather and prepare your materials: select the kind of clay you want, soften the clay by kneading it, perhaps find a pottery wheel, and so on. Next you need some idea of what you want to make, how the piece of pottery is going to be used, and who is going to use it. Only then can you start working on your piece. As you are working, you may change your mind about what you want it to become; instead of becoming a cup, your piece may start to look as though it would be a better flowerpot. If this happens, you revise your image of the final product and who you are making it for. As you work, you show your piece to others, who give you opinions and advice on how to improve it. Sometimes you may decide that you are no longer interested in this particular project or that the project is not coming out the way you had originally hoped. You may then decide to abandon the project and begin something entirely different. If you finally manage to produce a pot you like, the good qualities of that pot will be the result of good materials, good planning, good advice from critics, and good execution on your part.

The same is true of good writing. Before you have a finished product, you must gather ideas on the subject you want to write about. You also have to consider who you are writing this essay

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for and why. As you write, you will consult with others about their ideas and about their opinion of what you have done so far. You may decide to abandon your project and begin something else entirely. Or you may change your ideas about what you are saying, who you are saying it for, or why you want to say it. This book is meant to help you discover, develop, and arrange your ideas in a shape you can be satisfied with.

## HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

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Part One of this book will introduce you to a number of ways to approach a writing task. You will learn how to:

Gather ideas by keeping a working journal and using invention techniques (Chapter 2)

Consider your audience, purpose, and focus (Chapter 3)

Write the first draft of a paper and get and give feedback on that draft (Chapter 4)

Express the main ideas of your paper explicitly (Chapter 5)

Develop and shape those ideas (Chapter 6)

Write effective introductions, conclusions, and titles (Chapter 7)

Revise a draft (Chapter 8)

Edit a revised draft (Chapter 9)

In Part Two, you will apply all the strategies you developed in Part I to writing academic papers. You will learn how to:

Summarize, paraphrase, and quote from published sources (Chapter 10)

Document any material you take from other sources (Chapter 11)

Write a paper analyzing an issue (Chapter 12)

Read and respond in writing to written arguments (Chapter 13)

Use written material to develop your own argument (Chapter 14)

Prepare for essay exams, including those in your other academic courses (Chapter 15)

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Practice writing some essay exams under time limits (Chapter 16).

By the time you finish this book you will have experience with many types of writing required in academic settings. This experience should make you feel confident about your ability to gather ideas, express them, get feedback on your writing, prepare final drafts, and take essay exams in many of the other academic courses you will take.

**HINTS**

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Writing is *communicating*. Good writing helps your reader understand your ideas as clearly as possible. The following are suggestions for making the task of writing easier in English assignments—or any other writing you may need to do.

1. Whenever possible, write on subjects that actually interest you.
2. Write on subjects that you know about or want to know about.
3. Before you begin to write a draft, explore your ideas freely with the help of invention techniques.
4. Have an idea of the audience you are writing for, and keep that person or group of people in your mind as you write.
5. Decide what your purpose is and what you want your writing to accomplish. Will it inform? Persuade? Entertain? Will it help you discover your own ideas?
6. Don't worry about details in your first draft. Try just to get your ideas down on paper. You can shape your ideas later.
7. Reread your own writing frequently. Try to read objectively, as though you were not the author and you were seeing it for the first time.
8. Let others read what you have written and give you feedback.
9. Don't be afraid to add, delete, or move your ideas around.
10. Once your ideas are on paper, check the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation to make the writing as correct as you can.

**6** ➤ *Part 1 Overview of Writing Processes***THE BEST WAY TO LEARN TO WRITE IS BY WRITING**

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➤ **Writing Assignment 1.1: Writing Samples**

Writing  
Assignment 1.1

Choose one of the following suggestions and write an essay as you normally would. This assignment is meant to show your teacher the writing skills and habits you have now.

1. Think of a place from your childhood that you remember well. Describe the place in as much detail as possible and explain its significance to you either then or now.
2. Do people from your country have a reputation for being friendly? Easygoing? Hard working? Serious? Independent? What stereotypes do outsiders have of your country or of the people in your country? Do any of these stereotypes seem at all true to you? How would people in your country describe or characterize themselves? Choose two or three stereotypes of people in your country and explain or illustrate how they are true or untrue.
3. Think of the last time you were forced to do something you did not want to do. What did you have to do? Why? Who forced you to do it? What would have happened if you hadn't done it? Now are you glad or not glad that you did it? Tell the story of this incident. Then explain your own reaction to it then and now.
4. What has surprised you about the United States? Did you have expectations about the community where you now live? Were these expectations met? What is striking to you about the place you live now and the people who now surround you? Choose two or three surprises you have had since your arrival here and explain what you had expected and what you found instead.

**Self-Analysis**

Now answer these questions.

1. To whom were you "speaking" as you wrote your essay? Who did you assume would read what you were writing? Your English teacher? Your classmates in your English class? The general public?
2. Reread what you wrote. Are there any sections, ideas,

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phrases, even words that you are particularly proud of having written? Put brackets around them.

3. Reread the parts you bracketed. Why are you especially happy with these sections? ◀

Now discuss with your class how you wrote your essay. Use these questions as guidelines, and include anything else that comes to mind.

How did you decide which subject to write about?

Did you sit and think or write notes for a while before you began to write the essay itself?

How did you begin? With the first sentence?

How did you decide what to include or exclude?

Who did you assume you were communicating with as you wrote?

What did you think your audience wanted to find out by reading your piece?

What did you enjoy about your first writing assignment for this class?

## TRYING OUT THE PROCESS

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Your answers to these questions tell you something about the processes you now use when you write. As you work through this book, you will have a chance to try out many techniques other writers use to help themselves write well. To give you an idea of some of these writing processes, you will now work through one full writing assignment. This will give you a brief overview of the work you will be doing this term.

### ➤ *Writing Assignment 1.2: Historical Change*

Writing  
Assignment 1.2

Imagine that you are taking a class in U.S. history or culture. In this class you are studying the invasion of the western hemisphere by Europeans, beginning with the voyages of Christopher Columbus in 1492. Discuss with your class everything you already know about the effects of this invasion on the people who originally lived in what is now called North and South America. What has happened to those original inhabitants since the Europeans first landed on this continent?

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-65768-6 - Academic Writing: Exploring Processes and Strategies: Second Edition

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(Or see the end of Appendix A for an alternative subject to explore.)

Now read the text on page 290.

**Reading**

Excerpt from *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, page 290.

Here is the writing assignment for your imaginary history class:

Based on the reading from *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, write a short paper on the following topic:

Change is the essence of history. Some changes are slow and peaceful; others, like the changes the Europeans forced on the native peoples of North and South America, are violent. Often these changes come about as foreign ideas, inventions, technologies, and sometimes armies come into a country from abroad. Think of the history of your own country. Has your country ever been forced to change its ways as the result of foreign influence? Has your country ever introduced changes into another country? Take any point of view that interests you, and compare this aspect of the history of your own country with the information from the passage you just read from *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. Discuss how the two situations are similar and/or different.

This paper is due in one week. ◀

**Writing First Drafts**

Chapter 2 will help you gather and generate ideas.

Before actually writing, many people find that they write more easily if they prepare themselves to write. In Chapter 2 you will learn about several invention techniques to help you to prepare to write. For now, begin the first draft of this simulated history assignment by writing down a list of everything you can think of about the two situations you will compare.

Now you have a base from which to begin your assignment.

***Who Is Your Audience, and What Is Your Purpose?***  
Before you begin writing, however, think about these things:

Who will read this text you will write?

Why will this audience be reading what you write?



What will this person expect to read?

What qualities in your paper would make this audience consider this an excellent piece of writing?

Chapter 3 will help you focus on your audience and purpose for writing.

Chapter 4 will help you write first drafts.

Chapter 5 will help you determine or develop your main idea.

Chapter 6 will help you decide how best to support and analyze your ideas.

Chapter 7 will help you write introductions, conclusions, and titles.

Chapter 2 will get you started keeping a writing journal.

In Chapter 3 you will analyze in much greater detail your audience and your readers' purposes and expectations in reading your writing, but for now, discuss the questions above with your classmates.

Do you feel that you are ready to write now? In Chapter 4 you will get detailed instructions on writing a first draft, but for now, if you feel ready to write, put your list of ideas in front of you and write a first draft of your assignment. This is a *first* draft. That means it does not have to be perfect—so don't worry about grammar, spelling, punctuation, or other details yet. (Chapters 5, 6, and 7 will help you with writing an introduction, developing and organizing your ideas, and writing a conclusion.)

**Gathering and Generating Ideas.** If you don't quite feel you are ready yet, perhaps it would help you to consider your topic from different but related angles. One way to do this is to discuss your topic with others—your classmates, your roommates, or your friends from your own country or from others.

**Keeping a Writing Journal.** Another way to try to look at the topic from another perspective is to write informally on a related topic, as though you were writing a journal of your own thoughts. In Chapter 2 you will get instructions for beginning a writing journal. For now, think about the history of your country and read the following journal suggestions.

## Journal Suggestions

- Is your country racially or culturally mixed, with some people from different backgrounds and traditions? Or do all the people in your country share the very same ethnic or racial or cultural background? If your country is mixed, how do the different groups of people get along? What do they think of one another as a group? How did these different groupings come together in the same country?
- If all the people in your country share exactly the same background and traditions, how has this similarity affected your country's history? How are outsiders, like foreigners, considered?

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- The popular culture, the economy, and sometimes the political ideas of the United States have had an effect on many other parts of the world. Have you seen this influence in your own country? How has this influence affected the tastes or the opinions of people in your country?

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Now choose one or more of these groups of questions and respond to them in writing—but informally. Spend ten to fifteen minutes writing your answers. No one will read what you have written except you, so don't worry about correct grammar or spelling. Just write freely.

Now that you have finished writing the answers to these questions, you may be ready to write your first draft of Writing Assignment 1.2. First reread everything you have already written; then write your first draft. In this draft, you can use anything, or nothing, from what you have already written.

When you finish your first draft, reread it. If you are not yet satisfied, try writing a new list of ideas that you didn't think of before and see if you can include these new ideas in your text.

**Getting Feedback**

Chapter 4 will help you get feedback on your writing.

Many writers find it helpful when they write a draft to ask a friend or colleague to read the draft before they give it to its real intended audience to read. If you are fairly satisfied, it is time to give your paper to a classmate to read. In Chapter 4 you will practice responding to your classmates' writing, but for now, you will just ask your classmates for feedback on your paper. Before you do this, write down any questions you would like your classmates to answer that might help you improve your ideas in this paper. Don't ask questions about grammar. You can worry about that later.

If you can, give your draft to several people to read and ask them all for their written or oral comments. These comments will help you see your paper as others see it and may help you locate sections that need improvement.

**Revising Your First Draft**

After you have collected feedback from as many readers as possible, you can reconsider what you have written. You should have several important items in front of you: