

The Writing Process

From the shortest poems to the longest novels, writing is a process. The writing process consists of five dynamic stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

The stages of the writing process are not a linear progression of steps. Writers do not move from stage to stage in a prescribed order like a runner clearing hurdles on a track. Instead, the writing process is recursive and cyclical. Writers weave in and out of stages like an ice skater twirling around, gliding up and down the rink.

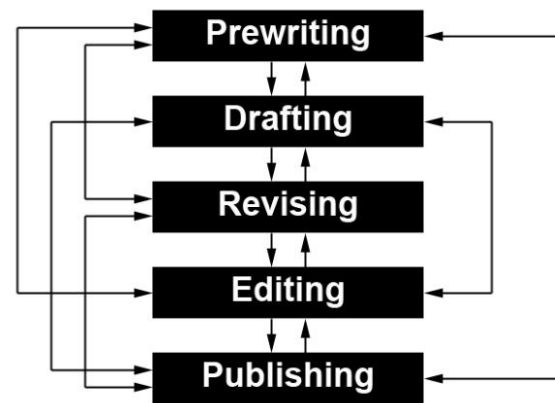
Prewriting

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Prewriting strategies to help writers generate and organize ideas include: thinking; reading; discussing; freewriting; creating lists and word banks; researching; drawing; outlining; and organizing ideas graphically with webs, clusters, charts, etc. An essential step, prewriting should account for 70 to 85 percent of writing time.¹ Research indicates skilled writers spend significantly more time organizing and planning before writing.² However, on average, most students spend about three minutes preparing to write.³

Drafting

Drafting is **writer-centered**. Using ideas generated through prewriting, writers create drafts putting ideas into sentences and paragraphs with a focus on content; explaining, supporting, and beginning to connect ideas; and concentrating on what the writer knows and thinks about the topic.



Revising

Revising is **reader-centered**. Concentrating on content (not mechanics) and predicting readers' needs and expectations, writers revise by adding, deleting, moving, and replacing text. While revising, writers focus on ideas, details, word choice, organization, and sentence variety.

Editing

In preparation for publishing, editing involves correcting errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Publishing

Providing an authentic audience, publishing includes displaying a piece of writing in the classroom; reading it aloud; posting it on the Internet; printing it in a class anthology; entering it in a contest; and submitting it to a newspaper or magazine.

1. Donald R. Murray, *Learning by Teaching* (Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1982).

2. George Hillocks, Jr., *Research on Written Composition* (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1986).

3. U.S. Dept. of Education, *Can Students Benefit from Process Writing?* (Washington, D.C.: NAEP, Apr. 1996).