SECTION ONE

The Process—Decisions in Planning, Drafting, and Revising

Introduction

WRITING AS DECISION MAKING

People who succeed usually are those who make the right decisions—about a career, an investment, a relationship, or anything else. Like any decision making, good writing requires hard work. If we had one recipe for all writing, our labours would be small. We could learn the recipe ("Do this; then do that"), and then apply it to every writing task—from love letters to lab reports. But we write about various subjects for various audiences for various purposes—at home, at school, on the job. For every writing task, we make our own decisions.

Writing has no recipes

Still, most of us face identical problems: in deciding on who our audience is and how to connect with it; in deciding on what goal we want to achieve and on how to make the writing achieve that goal. This book introduces strategies that help us succeed as writers.

Most writers face problems like these

Most writing is a conscious, deliberate *process*—not the result of divine intervention, magic, miracles, or last-minute inspiration. Nothing ever leaps from the mind to the page in one neat and painless motion—not even for creative geniuses. Instead, we plan, draft, and revise. Sometimes we know right away what we want to say; sometimes we discover our purpose and meaning only as we write. But our finished product takes shape through our decisions at different stages in the writing process.

Writing can be hard work for anyone

NOTE

This book shows you how to plan, draft, and revise in a suggested sequence of activities. But just as no two people use an identical sequence of activities to drive, ski, or play tennis, no two people write in the same way. How you decide to use this book depends on your writing task and on what works for you.

HOW WRITING LOOKS

The neat and ordered writing samples throughout this book show the products of writing—not the process. Every finished writing task begins with messy scribbling, things crossed out, lists, arrows, and fragments of ideas, as in the section from the first draft of this introduction shown in Figure I.1.

Writing appears in many shapes

Just as the writing process has no one recipe, the finished products have no one shape. In fact, very little writing published in books, magazines, and newspapers looks exactly like the basic college essay discussed in this book's early chapters (an introductory paragraph beginning or ending with a thesis statement; three or more support paragraphs, each beginning with a topic sentence; and a concluding paragraph). But all effective writers use identical skills: they know how to discover something worthwhile to write about, how to organize their material sensibly, and how to express their ideas clearly and gracefully.

Why academic essays are important

Academic essays offer a good model for developing these skills because they provide you with a basic structure for shaping your thinking. They also supply an immediate, helpful audience—your instructor and

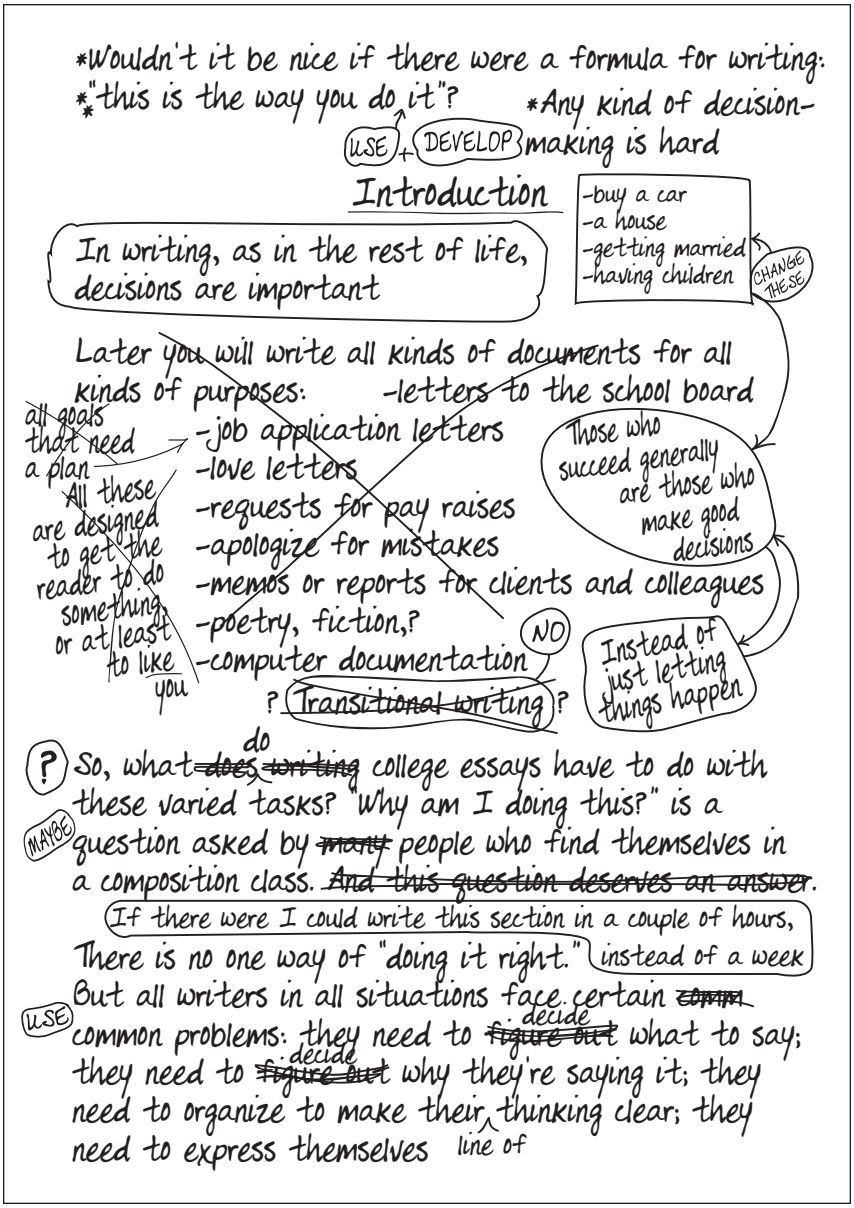


FIGURE I.1
Part of a typical first draft

Messiness is a natural and often essential part of writing in its early stages

classmates. Unlike many audiences who read only your final draft and from whom you could not reasonably expect helpful and sympathetic advice, your teacher and classmates can give you valuable feedback as you continue to shape and rework drafts of your writing.

What any reader expects

Like any audience, your classroom readers will expect you finally to give them something worthwhile—some useful information, a new insight on some topic, an unusual perspective, or an entertaining story—in a form easy to follow and pleasing to read.

HOW WRITING MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Surface reasons for writing

Deeper reasons for writing

All through school, we write too often for surface reasons: to show we can grind out a few hundred words on some topic, cook up a thesis, and organize paragraphs; to show we can punctuate, spell, and use grammar; or to pass the course. These surface reasons mask the deeper reasons we write: to explore something important to us, to connect with our readers, to make a difference—as students, as employees, as citizens, or as friends.

Differences writing can make

What kind of difference can any writing make? It might move readers to act or reconsider their biases; it might increase their knowledge or win their support; it might broaden their understanding. Whether you're giving instructions for running an electric toothbrush or pouring out your feelings to a friend, effective writing brings writer and reader together. As you read the essays in this book, you will see how student and professional writers in all kinds of situations manage to make a difference with their readers. These models, along with the advice and assignments, should help your writing make a difference of its own.

DECISIONS IN COLLABORATIVE WRITING

Many of the Applications in this book ask you to collaborate with peers. Especially now that the Internet simplifies collaborative work, countless documents in the workplace are produced collaboratively; effective collaboration enables a group to synthesize the *best* from each member. Collaboration allows us to:

Benefits of collaboration

- Share in new perspectives.
- Test and sharpen ideas.
- Recognize our biases and assumptions.
- Get feedback from group members.
- Enjoy group support instead of working alone.

But like all writing, collaborative work demands decisions. Group members have to find ways of expressing their views persuasively, of accepting constructive criticism, of getting along and reaching agreement

with others who hold different views. Collaborators may face these potential problems:

Things that go wrong in collaborative work

- Differences in personality, working style, commitment, standards, or ability to take criticism.
- Disagreements about exactly what or how much the group should accomplish, who should do what, or who should make the final decisions.
- Feelings of intimidation or reluctance to speak out.

Guidelines in the following chapters will help make collaborative projects useful for you.

DECISIONS ABOUT WRITING WITH COMPUTERS

Like collaborative writing, computers can provide tremendous advantages if you understand their limitations. Here are some of the decisions you will be making about computers as you progress through this book:

1. *How should I use computers to write my papers?* Working directly on the computer screen reduces the drudgery of writing and revising. You can brainstorm, develop different outlines, and design countless versions of a document without retyping the entire piece. You can also insert, delete, or move blocks of text; search the document to change a word or phrase; or have your document examined automatically for correct spelling, accurate word choice, and readable style. You then can file your finished document electronically, for easy retrieval.
2. *How should I use computers to enhance my research?* Instead of thumbing through newspapers, journals, reference books, or printed card catalogues, you can do much of your research at the computer terminal. See Chapter 19 for detailed descriptions of computerized research and reference tools (card catalogues, online databases, Internet resources, and so on).
3. *How should I use computers for collaborative projects?* Computers facilitate collaborate writing. For instance, group members might review, edit, or proofread your writing directly from a disk you have provided. The latest software even enables readers to comment on your writing without altering the text itself. Finally, using electronic mail, you can transmit copies of your writing to classmates and they can respond.

But your decisions about these issues should take the following cautions into account:

Limitations of writing with a computer

- Messages still need to be *written.* The task of sorting, organizing, and interpreting information still belongs to the writer.
- No computerized device can convert bad writing to good. Moreover, the ease of "fixing" our writing on a computer might encourage minimal revision. (Sometimes the very act of rewriting an entire page in longhand or type causes us to rethink that whole page or discover something new.)
- A computer is not a substitute brain. Shabby thinking produces shabby writing.

The following chapters will help you make thoughtful decisions about the part computers can play in your work.

APPLICATION **A**

Identify a situation in which your writing (or someone else's) has made a difference. Be prepared to describe the situation in class.

APPLICATION **B**

Locate a piece of nonfiction writing that you think "makes a difference." Bring a copy to class and be prepared to explain why this particular piece qualifies.

CHAPTER 1

Decisions in the Writing Process

During the writing process you transform the material you discover—by inspiration, research, accident, or other means—into a message that makes a difference for readers. In short, writing is a process of making deliberate decisions.

For example, consider a Dear John or Jane letter, an essay exam, a job application, a letter to a newspaper, a note to a sick friend, or your written testimony as a witness to a crime. In each of these writing situations, you write because you feel strongly enough to have a definite *viewpoint* and to respond or speak out.

But merely expressing a viewpoint doesn't tell readers very much. To understand your ideas, readers need *explanations* that have been shaped so that readers can follow them. In any useful writing, whether in the form of a book, a news article, a memo, a report, or an essay, writers decide on a sensible line of thinking, often in a shape like this:

Much of your writing will have this basic shape.

INTRODUCTION
The introduction attracts attention, announces the viewpoint, and previews what will follow. All good introductions invite readers in.
BODY
The body explains and supports the viewpoint, achieving *unity* by remaining focused on the viewpoint. It achieves *coherence* by carrying a line of thinking from sentence to sentence in logical order. Bodies come in all different sizes, depending on how much readers need and expect.
CONCLUSION
The conclusion sums up the meaning of the piece, or points toward other meanings to be explored. Good conclusions give readers a clear perspective on what they have just read.

Writers also make decisions about whom they're writing to (their *audience*) and what they want to sound like: whether they want to sound formal, friendly, angry, or amused.

DECISION MAKING AND THE WRITING PROCESS

Composing words on paper or your computer screen is only one small part of the writing process. Your real challenge lies in making decisions like those in Figure 1.1:

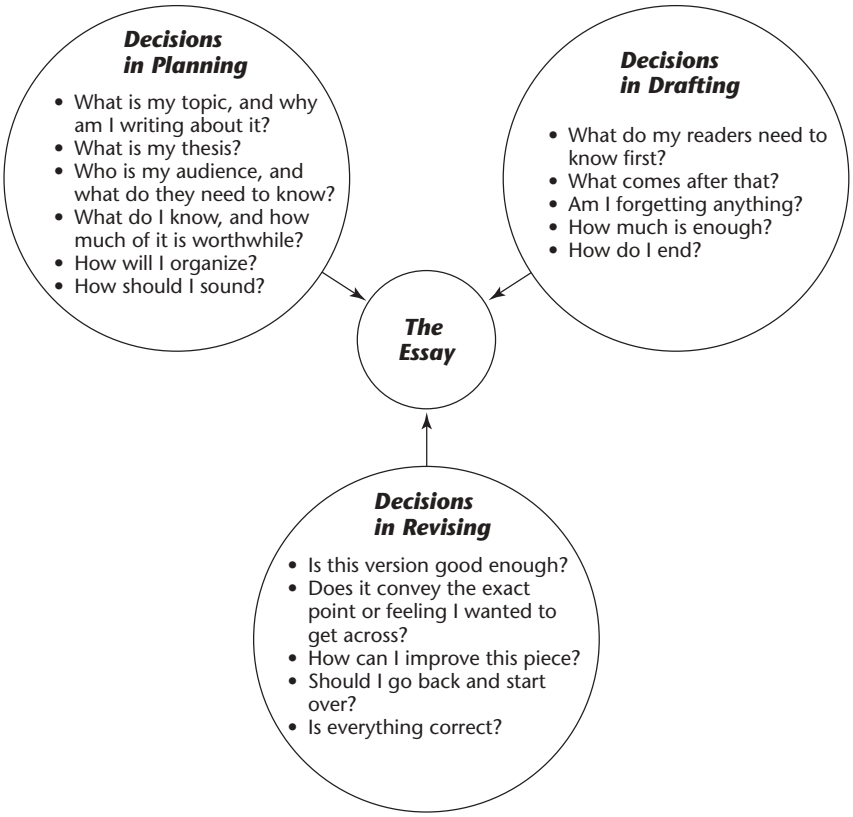


FIGURE 1.1
Typical decisions during the writing process

CASE STUDY

ONE WRITER'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

To appreciate writing as a deliberate process, let's follow one student through two approaches to the same writing situation. We'll see how decisions about planning, drafting, and revising like those shown in Figure 1.1 distinguish this writer's quickest effort from her best effort.

Shirley Haley has been assigned an essay on this topic: How do you want your life to be different from (or similar to) that of your parents? Haley's twofold goal is to explore her feelings about this topic and to share that exploration with us. Her first response, a random piece of freewriting, took about 30 minutes:

Haley's freewriting

> When my mother was my age, life was simple. Women really didn't have to study in university. They came primarily to find a husband, and they majored in liberal arts or teaching. They knew they were going to be wives and mothers. My mother says she got an education so she would have "something to fall back on" in case something ever happened to my

father—which was a good thing, I suppose. Maybe it was her attitude about "family first, me second" that made our home life so stable.

I appreciate the fact that my parents have given me a stable home life, and I want parts of my life to turn out like theirs. But my parents are slaves to their house; they never go anywhere or do anything with their spare time. They just work on the house and yard. They never seem to do anything they want to do—only what other people expect of them. I wish my parents would allow themselves to enjoy life, have more adventure. They go to the same place every year for their vacation. They've never even seen a country outside Canada.

I'll have a family some day, and I'll have responsibilities, but I never want to have a boring life. When I'm on my own, I want my life to be full of surprises. And even though I want to provide a stable home life for my children and husband someday, I hope I never forget my responsibility to myself as well.

Discussion of Haley's freewriting

Freewriting is a valuable invention tool—but only a first step. Haley's draft has potential, but she hints at lots of things in general and points at nothing in particular. Without a thesis to assert a controlling viewpoint, neither writer nor reader ever finds an orientation. Lacking a definite thesis, Haley never decided which material didn't belong, which was the most important, and which deserved careful development.

At first, the essay seems to be about a change in women's roles, but the end of the first paragraph and the beginning of the second suggest that Haley's topic has shifted to ways in which she wants her life to resemble her parents'. But the second, third, and fourth paragraphs discuss what Haley dislikes about her parents' lives. The final sentence adds confusion by looking back to a now-defunct topic in the first paragraph: stable family life. The lack of an introduction and conclusion deprives us of a way of narrowing the possible meanings of the piece and of finding a clear perspective on what we have just read. The paragraphs also either lack development or fail to focus on one specific point. And some sentences (like the last two in paragraph 1) lack logical connections. Finally, we get almost no sense of a real person speaking to real people. Haley has written only for herself—as if she were writing a journal or diary.

A quick effort (as in a journal or diary) offers a good way to get started. But when writers go no further, they bypass the essential stages of *planning* and *revising*. In fact, putting something on the page or screen is relatively easy. But in order to get the piece to *succeed,* to make a difference for readers, tougher decisions need to be made.

Now let's follow Haley's thinking as she struggles through her planning decisions.

Haley's planning decisions

What exactly is my topic, and why am I writing about it? *My intended topic was "How I Want My Life to Be Different from That of My Parents," but my first draft got off track. I need to focus on the specific differences!*

I'm writing this essay to discover my own feelings and to help readers understand these feelings by showing them specific parts of my parents' lifestyle that I hope will be different for me.

What is my thesis? *After countless tries, I think I've finally settled on my thesis: "As I look at my parents' life, I hope my own will be less ordinary, less duty-bound, and less predictable."*

Who is my audience, and what do they need to know? *My audience consists of my teacher and classmates. (This essay will be discussed in class.) Each reader already is familiar with this topic; everyone, after all, is someone's son or daughter! But I want my audience to understand specifically the differences I envision.*

What do I know about this topic? *A better question might be, "What don't I know?" I've spent my life with this topic, and so I certainly don't have to do any research.*

Of all the material I've discovered on this topic, how much of it is worthwhile (considering my purpose and audience)? *Because I could write volumes here, I'll have to resist getting carried away. I've already decided to focus on the feeling that my parents' lives are too ordinary, duty-bound, and predictable. One paragraph explaining each of these supporting points (and illustrating them with well-chosen examples) should do. How will I organize? I guess I've already made this decision by settling on my thesis: moving from "ordinary" to "duty-bound" to "predictable." Predictability is what I want to emphasize, and so I will save it for last.*

How do I want my writing to sound? *I'm sharing something intimate with my classmates, so my tone should be relaxed and personal, as when people talk to people they trust.*

In completing her essay, Haley went on to make similar decisions for drafting and revising. Here is her final draft.

Haley's final draft Introductory paragraph (leads into the thesis)

Life in Full Colour

I'm probably the only person I know who still has the same two parents she was born with. We have a traditional Canadian family: we go to church and hockey games; we watch the Olympics on television and argue about politics; and we have Thanksgiving dinner at my grandmother Clancy's and Christmas dinner with my father's sister Jess, who used to let us kids put pitted olives on our fingertips when we were little. Most of my friends are struggling with the problems of broken homes; I'll always be

Thesis statement

grateful to my parents for giving me a loving and stable background. *But sometimes I look at my parents' life and hope my life will be less ordinary, less duty-bound, and less predictable.*

Topic sentence and first support paragraph

I want my life to be imaginative, not ordinary. Instead of honeymooning at Niagara Falls, I want to go to Paris. In my parents' neighbourhood, all the houses were built alike about twenty years ago. Different owners have added on or shingled or painted, but the houses basically all look the same. The first thing we did when we moved into our house was plant trees; everyone did. Now the neighbourhood is full of family homes on tree-lined streets, which is nice; but I'd prefer a condo in a renovated brick building in Winnipeg. I'd have dozens of plants, and I'd buy great furniture one piece at a time at auctions and dusty shops and not by the roomful from the local furniture store. Instead of spending my time trying to be similar to everyone else, I'd like to explore ways of being different.

Topic sentence and second support paragraph

My parents have so many obligations, they barely have time for themselves; I don't want to live like that. I'm never quite sure whether they own the house or the house owns them. They worry constantly about taxes, or the old furnace, or the new deck, or mowing the lawn, or weeding the garden. After spending every weekend slaving over their beautiful yard, they have no time left to enjoy it. And when they're not buried in household chores, other people are making endless demands on their time. My mother will stay up past midnight because she promised some telephone voice 3 cakes for the church bazaar, or 5 dozen cookies for the Girl Guide meeting, or 76 little sandwiches for the women's club Christmas party. My father coaches soccer, wears a clown suit for the Lions' flea markets, and both he and my mother are volunteer firefighters. In fact, both my parents get talked into volunteering for everything. I hate to sound selfish, but my first duty is to myself. I'd rather live in a tent than be owned by my house. And I don't want my life to end up being measured out in endless chores.

Topic statement and third support paragraph

Although it's nice to take things such as regular meals and paycheques for granted, many other events in my parents' life are too predictable for me. Every Sunday at five o'clock we dine on overdone roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, a faded green vegetable, and sometimes that mushy orange squash that comes frozen in bricks. It's not that either of my parents is a bad cook, but Sunday dinner isn't food anymore; it's a habit. Mom and Dad have become so predictable that they can order each other's food in restaurants. Just once I'd like to see them pack up and go away for a weekend, without telling anybody; they couldn't do it. They can't even go crazy and try a new place for their summer vacation. They've been spending the first two weeks in August at Falcon Lake since I was two years old. I want variety in my life. I want to travel, see this country and see Europe, do things spontaneously. No one will ever be able to predict my order in a restaurant.

Concluding paragraph

Before long, Christmas will be here, and we'll be going to Aunt Jess's. Mom will bake an apple pie, and Grandpa Frank will say, "Michelle, you sure know how to spoil an old man." It's nice to know that some things

> never change. In fact, some of the ordinary, obligatory, predictable things in life are the most comfortable. But too much of any routine can make life seem dull and grey. I hope my choices lead to a life in full colour.
>
> —*Shirley Haley*

Here are some of Haley's major improvements:

Discussion of Haley's final draft

- The distinct shape (introduction, body, conclusion) enables us to organize our understanding and follow the writer's thinking.
- The essay no longer confuses us. We know where Haley stands because she tells us, with a definite thesis; and we know why because she shows us, with plenty of examples.
- She wastes nothing; everything seems to belong and everything fits together.
- Now each paragraph has its own design, and each paragraph enhances the whole.
- We now see real variety in the ways in which sentences begin and words are put together. We hear a genuine voice.

All good writing has these qualities

Because she made careful decisions, Haley produced a final draft that displays the qualities of all good writing: *content* that makes it worth reading; *organization* that reveals the line of thinking and emphasizes what is most important; and *style* that is economical and convincingly human.

Writers rarely struggle with these decisions about planning, drafting, and revising in a predictable sequence. Instead, writers choose sequences that work best for them. Figure 1.2 diagrams this looping ("recursive") structure of the writing process.

NOTE

Rarely is any piece of writing ever strictly "finished." Even famous writers have returned to a successful published work years later in order to revise it once again.

APPLICATION 1-1

The essay that follows (a third draft) was written in response to this assignment:

> Identify a personal trait that is so strong you cannot control it (a quick temper, the need for acceptance, a fear of failure, shyness, a bad habit, a phobia, an obsession, or the like). In a serious or humorous essay, show how this trait affects your behaviour. Provide enough details for readers to understand clearly this part of your personality.

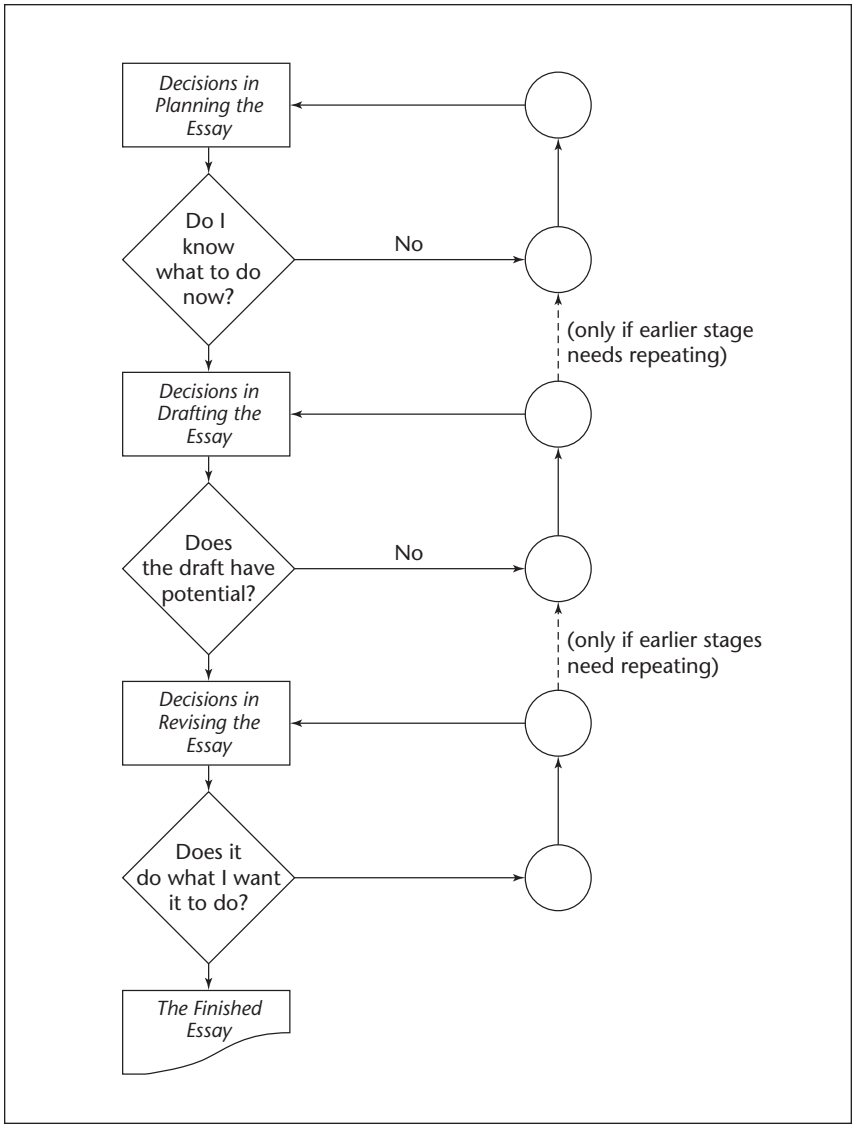


FIGURE 1.2
The looping structure of the writing process

Decisions in the writing process are recursive; no one stage is complete until all stages are complete.

A writer might even revisit the "finished" essay for additional revision.

Our writer, Wendy Gianacoples, decided to explore a personal obsession: food.

Read Wendy's essay once or twice. Then read it again, using the questions that follow the essay for your analysis.

Essay for analysis

CONFESSIONS OF A FOOD ADDICT

Like many compulsive eaters, I eat to fill a void—an emptiness within. I feed my feelings. Food can be my best friend, always there when I need it. This friend, however, actually is a tyrant that dominates my life through endless cycles of need, indulgence, and guilt.

Thanks to my food obsession, I seem to have two personalities: the respected, self-controlled Wendy who eats properly all day, and the fat Wendy who emerges after dark to gobble everything in sight. Lying in bed, I wait for the house to be silent. Feeling excited and giddy, I sneak to the kitchen and head straight for the freezer to begin my search. My initial prize is an unopened pint of Häagen-Dasz chocolate chip ice cream. I break the container's seal, dig in with my spoon, and shovel down massive gobs. (I have a love/hate relationship with food: I want all or nothing.) Next thing I know the container is empty.

Stashing the empty container deeply in the trash, I continue my rampage. From the cookie drawer, I snatch a nearly full package of Fig Newtons. As I tiptoe toward the milk, I ask myself what the folks at Weight Watchers would say if they could see me standing half-awake in my ice cream splattered Lanz nightgown, popping down Fig Newtons and swigging milk from the carton. After pushing the few remaining cookies to the front of the package so it looks fuller, I rummage around for my next "fix."

Beneath a bag of frozen Green Giant vegetables, I find a frozen pizza—the ultimate midnight snack. The oven will take too long but the microwave is too noisy—all that beeping could get me busted. Feeling daring, I turn on the kitchen faucet to drown out the beeps, place the pizza in the microwave, set the timer, grab the last handful of Fig Newtons, and wait.

By the time I polish off the pizza, it's 1:00 a.m. and I crave Kraft Macaroni and Cheese. Standing on a chair I reach for a box from the overhead cabinet. Trying to be quiet, I dig out a spaghetti pot from a pile of pots and pans. Grabbing the handle, I hold my breath as I pull the pan from the clutter. While the water boils and the macaroni cooks, I fix a bowl of Rice Krispies. Just as I finish chowing down "Snap, Crackle, and Pop," the macaroni is ready. After eating the whole package, I bury the box in the trash.

After a binge, I panic: "What have I done?" Setting a hand on my bulging stomach, I think of the weight I'll gain this week. Climbing the stairs to my bed, I feel drained, like a person on drugs who is now "coming down." In my bedroom, I study myself in the full-length mirror, looking for visible signs of my sins. Lying in bed, I feel fat and uncomfortable. Although I usually sleep on my stomach, on "binge" nights, I assume the fetal position, cradling my full belly, feeling ashamed and alone, as if I were the only person who overeats and uses food as a crutch. When the sugar I've consumed keeps me awake, I plead with God to help me overcome this weakness.

The next morning I kick myself and feel guilty. I want to block out last night's memories, but my tight clothes offer a painful reminder. My stomach is sick all day and I have heartburn. During the following week, I'll eat next to nothing and exercise constantly, hoping to break even on the scale at Weight Watchers.

> Most people don't consider compulsive eating an addiction. Substance abusers can be easy to spot, but food addicts are less obvious. Unlike drugs, one can't live without food. People would never encourage a drug addict or alcoholic to "have another hit" or "fall off the wagon." However, people constantly push food on overeaters: "Come on, one brownie won't hurt. I made them especially for you," says a friend. When I decline, she scowls and turns away. Little does she know, while she was in the bathroom, I had four.
>
> —*Wendy Gianacoples*

Questions about the writing

Does the Content of the Essay Make It Worth Reading?

- Can you find a definite thesis that announces the writer's viewpoint?
- Do you have enough information to understand the viewpoint?
- Do you learn something new and useful?
- Does everything belong, or should any material be cut?

Does the Organization Reveal the Writer's Line of Thinking?

- Is there an introduction to set the scene, a middle to walk us through, and a conclusion to sum up the meaning?
- Does each support paragraph present a distinct unit of meaning?
- Does each paragraph stick to the point and stick together?

Is the Style Economical and Convincing?

- Can you understand each sentence the first time you read it?
- Should any words be cut?
- Are sentences varied in the way they're put together?
- Is the writer's meaning always clear?
- Can you hear a real person speaking?
- Do you like the person you hear?

Write out your answers to these questions and be prepared to discuss them in class.

APPLICATION 1-2

Collaborative Project: In class, write your "quickest effort" essay about a personal trait, or about this subject: "Important Differences or Similarities Between My Life and That of My Parents." Exchange papers with a classmate, and evaluate your classmate's paper, using the questions from Application 1-1. In one or two paragraphs, give your classmate advice for revising. Don't be afraid to mark up (with your own questions, comments, and suggestions) this paper you're evaluating. Discuss with your classmate your evaluation of his or her work. At home, read the evaluation of your

paper carefully, and write your "best" version of your original essay. List the improvements you made in moving from your quickest effort to your best effort. Be prepared to discuss your improvements in class.

Also, in two or three paragraphs, trace your own writing process for this essay by describing the decisions you made. Be prepared to discuss your decisions in class.

Note: Don't expect miracles at this stage, but do expect some degree of frustration and confusion. Things will improve quickly, though.

APPLICATION 1-3

Collaborative Project: Out of class (drawing on your personal experience with group work if possible), write down one thing you look forward to in working with peers, and one potential problem you find especially important. In class, share your expectations and concerns with a small group. Do group members raise similar issues, or does everyone have different concerns? As a group, craft these issues and concerns into a list of group goals: benefits you hope to achieve and pitfalls you hope to avoid.

APPLICATION 1-4

Computer Application: Familiarize yourself with your school's computer labs. What are their hours? Learn to use your school's e-mail system. Make sure your account is active.

OPTIONS FOR ESSAY WRITING

The following topics offer ideas for essays to get you started. People write best about things they know, and so we begin with personal forms of writing. You might want to return to this list for topic ideas when essays are assigned throughout the early chapters of this book.

1. What major effects has television had on your life (your ambitions, hopes, fears, values, consumer habits, awareness of the world, beliefs, outlook, faith in people, and so on)? Overall, has television been a positive or negative influence? Have you learned anything from TV that you couldn't have learned elsewhere? Support your thesis with specific details.
2. How do advertising and commercials shape our values (notions about looking young, being athletic, being thin, smoking, beer drinking, and so on)? Does advertising present an unrealistic view of life? In what ways? What kinds of human weaknesses and aspirations do

commercials exploit? Support your viewpoint with examples your readers will recognize.

3. If you could repeat your high school years, what three or four things would you do differently? Write for a younger brother or sister entering high school, and provide enough detail to get your viewpoint across.
4. Do some music videos communicate distorted and dangerous messages? If so, what should be done? Discuss specific examples and their effect on viewers.
5. Canadians are often criticized for their lack of identity and lack of patriotism. Is this criticism valid? Do Canadians, and do you as a Canadian, have a distinct Canadian identity and demonstrate patriotism?
6. Our public schools have been accused of failing to educate Canada's students. Does your high school typify the so-called failure of Canadian education? Why or why not? How well did your school prepare you for college or university—and for life?
7. University students commonly are stereotyped as party animals. Explain to a skeptical nonstudent audience that university life is harder than people imagine—but don't sermonize or complain. For instance, if you attend a university, you might write members of parliament who want to cut the budget.
8. Write about a job you've had and explain what you liked and disliked about the job. Show readers exactly what the job was like. Would you recommend this job to a friend? Why or why not?
9. Describe the good and bad points of being a "nontraditional" student (returning to school after employment, raising a family, or the like). Write for readers in a similar situation who are thinking about returning to school. What are the most important things they should know?
10. Explain to a skeptical audience the benefits of an alternative lifestyle choice you or someone you know has made (vegetarianism, cohousing, nontraditional family, male homemaker, back-to-nature, or the like). Dispel the negative stereotypes.
11. As a part-time student who balances work and school, give advice to a friend in your situation who wants to follow your example but feels fearful or discouraged. Explain how you manage to cope.

CHAPTER 2

Decisions in Planning

Why writers need to plan

Writing is a battle with impatience, a fight against the natural urge to "be done with it." Effective writers win this battle by *planning:* analyzing their writing situation, exploring their assets, and finding a voice. Of course, planning continues throughout the writing process, but an initial plan gives you a place to start and a direction for your decisions.

DECIDING ON A TOPIC, PURPOSE, THESIS, AND AUDIENCE

Your earliest planning decisions will require that you analyze your writing situation:

Questions for Analyzing a Writing Situation

- *What, exactly, is my topic?*
- *Why am I writing about it?*
- *What is my viewpoint?*
- *Who is my audience?*

Of course, you won't always follow a single order in making these decisions; in Chapter 1, Shirley Haley discovers her thesis before brainstorming for material. The key is to make all the decisions—in whichever order works best for you.

As with any stage in the writing process, you might have to return again and again to your plan.

Decide on Your Topic

In most out-of-school writing ("Why I deserve a promotion"; "Why you should marry me"; "How we repaired the computer"), topics are decided for you by the situation. But when you are asked to choose your own topic, remember one word: *focus.*

"What, exactly is my topic?"

Sometimes, afraid we'll have too little to say, we mistakenly choose the broadest topic. But a focused topic actually provides more to write about by allowing for the nitty-gritty details that show readers what we mean.

For instance, if you wanted to know the "personality" of a particular town, walking around and talking with the people would show a lot more than flying over the place at 10 000 feet. A *focused topic,* then, is something you know and really can talk about, something that has real meaning for you.

Decide on Your Purpose

"Why am I writing?"

Finding a *purpose* means asking yourself, "Why am I writing this piece?" Each writing situation has a specific goal. Perhaps you want audience members to see what you saw, to feel what you felt, or to think differently. To achieve your goal, you will need a definite *strategy.*

Goal plus strategy equals purpose. Consider one writer's inadequate answers to the familiar questions, "Why am I writing this paper?"

Inadequate Statements of Purpose

(a) I'm writing this essay to pass the course.
(b) My goal is to write an essay about student life.
(c) My goal is to describe to classmates the experience of being a nontraditional student.

Responses **a** and **b** above tell nothing about the specific goal. Response **c** defines the goal, but offers no strategy. Here, finally, is our writer's purpose statement (goal plus strategy):

> My purpose is to describe to classmates the experience of being a nontraditional student. I'll focus on the special anxieties, difficulties, and rewards.

A Useful Statement of Purpose

Sometimes you will be unable to define your purpose immediately. You might need to jot down as many purposes as possible until one pops up. Or you might need to write a rough draft first or make an outline. In any case, the purpose statement should provide the raw material for your thesis.

NOTE *While the purpose statement is part of the discovery process, the thesis is part of the finished essay.* *(See pages 52–53.)*

Decide on Your Thesis

In your purpose statement, you identify exactly what you want to *do*. In your thesis, you announce exactly what you want to *say*. Your thesis statement makes a definite commitment. It tells readers what to expect by making your viewpoint absolutely clear. Here are some different ways of expressing your viewpoint:

"What is my viewpoint?"

As an opinion	Starting university after age 30 hasn't been easy, but the good points definitely outweigh the bad.
As an observation	My high school education was mostly a waste of time.
As a suggestion	Computer literacy should be required for all applicants.
As an attitude	I want my life to be better than that of my parents.
As a question	Should university be for everyone?

Each of these thesis statements creates a clear expectation. They don't keep readers guessing. They make their points fast.

NOTE *Think of your thesis as the one sentence you would keep if you could keep only one.*

Thesis as Framework. Consciously or unconsciously, readers look for a thesis, usually in the essay's early paragraphs. Even a single paragraph is hard to understand if the main point is missing. Read this paragraph once only—and then try answering the questions that follow.

A paragraph with its main point omitted

> His [or her] job is not to punish, but to heal. Most students are bad writers, but the more serious the injuries, the more confusing the symptoms, the greater the need for effective diagnostic work. When an accident victim is carried into the hospital emergency ward, the doctor does not start treating the patient at the top and slowly work down without a sense of priority, spending a great deal of time on the black eye before [getting] to the punctured lung. Yet that is exactly what the English teacher too often does. The doctor looks for the most vital problem; he [or she] wants to keep the patient alive, and . . . goes to work on the critical injury.
>
> —Donald Murray

Can you identify the paragraph's main idea? Probably not. Without the topic sentence, you have no framework for understanding this information in its larger meaning.

Now, insert the following sentence at the beginning and reread the paragraph.

The missing main idea

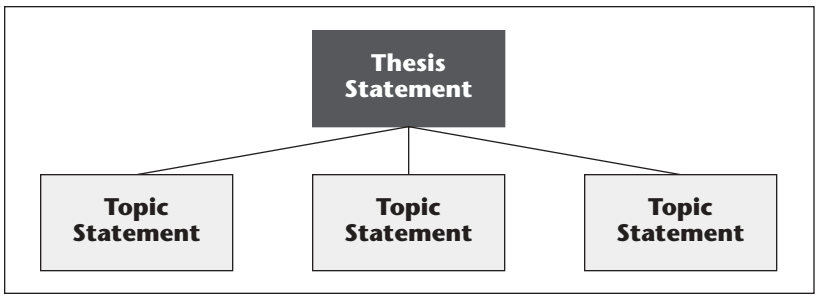
> The writing teacher must not be a judge, but a physician.

This orientation makes the message's exact meaning obvious.

In the basic essay framework, each body paragraph supports its own *topic statement*, which focuses on one aspect of the thesis. The thesis is the controlling idea; each topic statement treats one part of the controlling idea, as diagrammed here:

Introductory paragraph

Support paragraphs



Some writers include in the thesis a preview of supporting points; some don't. For instance, an essay titled "Beef Cost and the Cattle Rancher" might have this thesis statement:

A thesis that includes a preview

> Because of rising costs, unpredictable weather, and long hours, many cattle ranchers have trouble staying in business.

Including a preview in their thesis helps some writers stay on track as they develop each support paragraph. With or without the preview, be sure that supporting points appear as topic statements in subsequent paragraphs, as in this next example:

Introductory paragraph

Thesis

_____ Starting university after age 30 hasn't been easy, but the good points definitely outweigh the bad.

Although the above thesis does not preview the main supporting points, each point is spelled out in respective topic statements:

First support paragraph

My major obstacles were lack of self-confidence and fear of failure. [*topic statement*] _____

Second support paragraph

While struggling to overcome my panic, I worked at developing good study habits and sharpening my basic skills. [*topic statement*] _____

Third support paragraph

After realizing I could do the work, I began to relax and savour the "joy of learning." [*topic statement*] _____

Evaluating Your Thesis. The first thing readers want to know is this:

What readers ask about your thesis

What, exactly, is your point, and why is it worth reading about?

Always check to see that your thesis provides a sharp focus and a definite and significant viewpoint.

A. *Is the Topic Sharply Focused?* In a short essay, avoid broad topics such as this one:

Too broad Some experiences can be unforgettable.

B. *Is a Definite and Informative Viewpoint Expressed?* Preview your exact meaning. These next thesis statements offer no such preview:

No clear viewpoint
I will discuss my experience as a nontraditional student.
I started university at age 35.
University can be a complex experience.

C. *Is the Viewpoint Significant?* Whether your thesis is expressed as an opinion, attitude, observation, suggestion, or question, it should

trigger some fresh insight or have some value or importance for readers. A thesis that contributes nothing new is worthless:

Insignificant viewpoints

The university years can be traumatic. [*Everyone would agree, and so why discuss it?*]

Every nontraditional student has a unique university experience. [*No big surprise here!*]

Variations in Your Thesis. The thesis statement can appear in different forms and different locations:

How thesis form and location can vary

- The main supporting points are not always previewed.
- A thesis does not automatically call for only three supporting points. Three is a good minimum, but some topics call for more, others for less.
- The thesis usually is the final sentence in the introduction. In this position it "bridges" the introduction and the body. But for some purposes it can appear elsewhere in the introduction (as on page 46).
- The thesis need not be limited to one sentence.

How you phrase the thesis and where you place it depends on your purpose and audience.

When to Compose Your Thesis. In an ideal world, writers would be able to (1) settle on a topic, (2) compose a purpose statement, and (3) compose a thesis. But these steps rarely occur in such neat order. If you have trouble coming up with a thesis right away, go on to some other activity: list some ideas, work on an outline, do some freewriting, or take a walk. Writing, after all, is a way of discovering what you want to say.

Even if you do begin with a workable thesis, it might not be the one you end up with. As you work and discover new meanings, you might need to revise or start again.

Decide on Your Audience

"Who is my audience and what do they expect?"

Audiences you might encounter

Except for a diary or a journal, everything you write is for readers who will react to your information. You might write to a prospective employer who wants to know why you quit a recent job; or to a committee who wants to know why you deserve a scholarship; or to a classmate who wants to know you better; or to a professor who wants to know whether you understand the material. For any audience, your task is to deliver a message that makes a difference with readers, that helps them see things your way.

What audiences expect

Out of school you will write for diverse audiences (customers, employers, politicians, and so on). But in school, you can envision a definite audience besides your instructor: your classmates. Like any audience, they expect your writing to be clear, informative, and persuasive. Whoever

your readers are, they need enough material to understand your position and to react appropriately. Readers don't need repetition of material they already know. To put readers in your place, first put yourself in theirs. Anticipate their most probable questions.

Anticipating your readers' questions gives you a better chance of discovering and selecting material that really makes a difference—that offers readers what they need and expect.

CASE STUDY

ANALYZING YOUR WRITING SITUATION

Assume you are writing in response to this assignment:

> Illustrate some feature of our societal values or behaviour that you find humorous, depressing, contemptible, or admirable. Possible topics: our consumer or dress habits, the cars we drive, our ideas of entertainment, and so on.

First, you focus your topic:

Focusing your topic

societal values or behaviour
↓
the cars we drive
↓
our love affair with cars
↓
why we love our cars

This last topic seems focused enough for a short essay. But what in this topic do you wish to explore? What do you want readers to see and understand?

Your focused topic

How cars appeal to our sense of individualism

Now that you have a suitable topic, you're on your way. You might get stuck later and have to discard the whole thing, but for now you can decide on your purpose.

Because the essay examines "How," you organize a rough outline to lay out a sequence of examples:

Your rough outline

a. The car as individual statement
b. The car as political statement
c. The car as personal sanctuary

Now you can compose your statement of purpose:

Your purpose statement

> My purpose is to poke fun at our obsession with cars by explaining to classmates how cars appeal to our sense of individuality. I'll discuss uses of the car as lifestyle statement, personal billboard, and private sanctuary.

This is your map for reaching your goal. (Keep in mind that the purpose statement is part of the discovery process, but the thesis is part of the finished essay.)

Based on the above purpose statement, assume you derive the following thesis:

Your thesis

> Today's self-centred consumers demand cars that satisfy a craving for individuality.

As you consider your audience here (teacher and classmates), you anticipate the following general questions about your thesis:

General questions you can anticipate

- *Exactly what do you mean by "individualism"?*
- *What is the connection between cars and individualism?*
- *Can you give examples?*
- *Who cares?*

As this case continues, after the following section, you will identify more specific audience questions you need to answer.

DISCOVERING, SELECTING, AND ORGANIZING YOUR MATERIAL

Once you have analyzed your writing situation, you set out to answer these questions:

Questions for Exploring Your Assets

- *What do I know about the topic?*
- *How much of my material is useful in this situation?*
- *How will readers want this organized?*

Discover Useful Material

"What do I know about the topic?"

Discovering useful material is called *invention.* When you begin working with an idea or exploring a topic, you search for useful material, for content: insight, facts, statistics, opinions, examples, images that might help answer this question: *How can I find something worthwhile to say—something that will advance my meaning?*

Some people use invention as an early writing step, a way of getting started. Others save the invention stage until they've made other decisions. Regardless of the sequence, all writers use invention throughout the writing process.

The goal of invention is to get as much material as possible on paper, through the use of strategies like the following.

Keeping a Journal. A *journal* is an excellent way to build a personal inventory of ideas and topics. Here you can write for yourself only.

How to make a journal

To start, buy a hardcover notebook with a sewn binding (so that whatever you write becomes a permanent part of your journal). Record your reactions to something you've read or seen; ask questions or describe people, places, things, feelings; explore fantasies, daydreams, nightmares, fears, hopes; write conversations or letters that never will be heard or read; examine the things you hate or love. Write several times a day, once a week, or whenever you get the urge—or put aside some regular time to write. Every so often, go back and look over your entries—you might be surprised by the things you find.

Freewriting. *Freewriting* is a version of the "quickest-effort" approach discussed in Chapter 1. Shirley Haley's first attempt (page 11) is the product of freewriting. As the term suggests, when freewriting, you simply write whatever comes to mind, hoping that the very act of recording your thinking will generate some useful content.

How to freewrite

Try freewriting by exploring what makes you angry or happy or frightened or worried. Write about what surprises you or what you think is unfair or what you would like to see happen. Don't stop writing until you've filled a whole page or two, and don't worry about organization or correctness—just get it down. Although it will never produce a finished essay, freewriting can give you a good start by uncovering all kinds of buried ideas. It can be especially useful for curing "writer's block."

Using Journalists' Questions. To probe the many angles and dimensions of a topic, journalists ask these questions:

Questions Journalists Ask

- *Who was involved?*
- *What happened?*
- *When did it happen?*
- *Where did it happen?*
- *How did it happen?*
- *Why did it happen?*

Unlike freewriting, the journalists' questions offer a built-in organizing strategy—an array of different "perspectives" on your topic.

Asking Yourself Questions. If you can't seem to settle on a definite viewpoint, try answering any of these questions that apply to your topic.

Discovery Questions You Can Ask

- *What is my opinion of X?*
- *Am I for it or against it?*
- *Does it make me happy or sad?*
- *Is it good or bad?*
- *Will it work or fail?*
- *Does it make sense?*
- *What have I observed about X?*
- *What have I seen happen?*
- *What is special or unique about it?*
- *What strikes me about it?*
- *What can I suggest about X?*
- *What would I like to see happen?*
- *What should or should not be done?*

From your answers, you can zero in on the viewpoint that will provide the organizing insight for your essay.

Brainstorming. You can also try brainstorming—a sure bet for coming up with useful material. Here is how brainstorming works:

GUIDELINES FOR BRAINSTORMING

1. Find a quiet spot and bring an alarm clock, a pencil, and plenty of paper.
2. Set the alarm to ring in 30 minutes.
3. Try to protect yourself from interruptions: phones, music, or the like. Sit with your eyes closed for two minutes, thinking about absolutely nothing.
4. Now, concentrate on your writing situation. If you've already spelled out your purpose and your audience's questions, focus on these. Otherwise, repeat this question: *What can I say about my topic, at all?*
5. As ideas begin to flow, record every one. Don't stop to judge relevance or worth, and don't worry about complete sentences (or even correct spelling). Simply get everything on paper. Even the wildest idea might lead to some valuable insight.
6. Keep pushing and sweating until the alarm rings.
7. If the ideas are still flowing, reset the alarm and go on.
8. At the end of this session, you should have a chaotic mixture of junk, irrelevancies, and useful material.
9. Take a break.
10. Now confront your list. Strike out what is useless, and sort the remainder into categories. Include any other ideas that crop up. Your finished list should provide plenty of raw material.

NOTE *Try brainstorming at the computer. Try freewriting with the monitor turned off or covered, then, after 15 minutes, look at the screen and review your list.*

Reading and Researching. Some of our best ideas, insights, and questions often come from our reading (as discussed in Chapter 9). Or we might want to consider what others have said or discovered about our topic (as discussed in Chapter 19), before we reach our own conclusions. Reading and research are indispensable tools for any serious writer.

Select Your Best Material

"How much of my material is useful in this situation?"

Invention invariably produces more material than a writer needs. Select only the material that best advances your meaning (see Chapter 5, Revising the Content).

If you do find yourself trying to include everything you've discovered, you probably need to refocus on your purpose and audience.

Organize for Readers

"How will readers want this organized?"

When material is left in its original, unstructured form, readers waste time trying to understand it. With an outline, you move from a random listing of items as they occurred to you to a deliberate map that will guide readers from point to point.

All readers expect a definite beginning, middle, and ending that provide orientation, discussion, and review. But specific readers want these sections tailored to their expectations. Identify your readers' expectations by (1) anticipating their probable questions about your thesis, and (2) visualizing the sequence in which readers would want these questions answered.

Some writers can organize merely by working from a good thesis statement. Others prefer to begin with some type of outline. And some writers like to write a draft and then an outline to check their line of thinking. You might outline early or later. But you need to move from a random collection of ideas to an organized list that helps readers to follow your material.

NOTE

No single form of outline should be followed slavishly by any writer. The organization of any writing ultimately is determined by its audience's needs and expectations.

CASE STUDY

EXPLORING AND ARRANGING ASSETS

For your essay on our obsession with cars, assume you've developed the brainstorming list that follows.

Your brainstorming list

1. to get us from point A to point B, junkers would suffice
2. we demand variety in our lives
3. we want cars that make us look cool
4. people seem to love their bumper stickers

5. with bumper stickers we exercise our right to free speech
6. nobody likes driving an old bomber
7. no matter what the sticker price we don't care
8. off-road vehicles are everywhere, but most of them never leave the pavement
9. "creativity is more important than knowledge"—what kind of bumper-sticker logic is that?
10. Henry Ford's Model Ts all looked exactly alike—they were basic transportation, not fashion statements!
11. today's cars are fibreglass and metal gods
12. today's automakers cater to our self-centred fantasies
13. we can run much of our lives without leaving the comfy car
14. the car is the ultimate personal space
15. a great way to escape the daily hassles
16. cars give us the freedom to go where we want when we want
17. we love to do our own thing—what Canada's all about
18. the car's popularity has led to the phenomenon of drive-through windows
19. people in other countries don't mind public transportation, but we seem to hate it
20. what about the bumper stickers that announce "I'm a tough guy" or "I'm an intellectual"?
21. we can even sing aloud in the car without seeming weird

With your raw material collected, you can now move into the selection phase—leaving open the possibility that new material may surface.

As you review your brainstorming list, you decide to cut items 11, 16, and 19.

Your selection of material to omit

- *Item 11 doesn't relate to the theme of individualism*
- *Item 16 is a cliché, and too general to have real meaning in this essay.*
- *Item 19 makes an unsupportable generalization*

(If you end up trying to include *all* your raw material, you probably need to refocus on your purpose and audience. Chapter 5 offers advice for selecting fresh and worthwhile material.)

Next you try to anticipate specific readers' questions about your essay, and you come up with this list of possibilities:

Specific reader questions you anticipate

- *Can you set the scene for us, and give us a context for your thesis?*
- *Why do we identify so strongly with our cars?*

- *Where do bumper stickers fit in?*
- *Why do we often hang out in the car?*
- *What does all this say about us as a culture?*

Your readers' expectations give you a basis for organizing your brainstorming material into categories:

Your general outline

I. How Our Relationship to Cars Has Evolved

II. How Cars Help Us Project an Ideal Self

III. Why We Decorate Our Cars with Stickers

IV. How Cars Provide a Private Space

V. How Cars Serve as the Ultimate Mechanism for Achieving Individuality

Within each category, you arrange your brainstorming items, along with any other worthwhile material that occurs to you. Your final outline might resemble this one:

Your final outline

I. Why do we love our cars so much?
   A. Cars originally were merely basic transportation.
   B. All Model Ts looked alike.
   C. Today's automakers cater to our urge to do our own thing.
   D. Consumers love this kind of attention.
   E. Thesis: Today's self-centred consumers demand cars that satisfy a craving for individualism.

II. We want cars that make a unique lifestyle statement.
   A. If basic transportation was the issue, an old junker would do.
   B. But we want to project that special image.
   C. Roughly 50 percent of consumers buy some type of off-road vehicle.
   D. Most of these jeeps and SUVs never leave the pavement.
   E. Driving a sports car really makes us feel special.

III. Stickers serve as our own personal billboard.
   A. They allow us to exercise our right to free speech.
   B. They announce exactly where we stand.
   C. They tell the world that we're animal lovers, intellectuals, tough guys, or whatever.
   D. Volvos often display political or intellectual statements.
   E. CUPE stickers remind me of summer-long strikes.

IV. Public transportation is torture for individuals like us.
   A. Canada's cars are personal hideaways, places to escape other humans.
   B. Drive-through windows are one popular form of escape.
   C. We can transact business, order meals, and dine without ever leaving the car.
   D. We can sing along with the radio as we eat our Big Mac.
   E. If you try singing on a bus or subway, people look at you funny.

V. Cars entice us because they provide the ultimate mechanism for achieving individuality.
   A. The cars we drive and the stickers we sport proclaim our prepackaged uniqueness.
   B. We can do what we want without seeming weird.
   C. We can avoid direct human contact.
   D. Our car is who we are.

This outline takes the form of short, kernel sentences that include key ideas for later expansion. Some writers use a less formal outline—a simple list of phrases without numerals or letters. (Use the form that works best for you.)

Later, during various drafts, you will discover more material and probably will delete some original material (as in the final draft, pages 52–53).

FINDING YOUR VOICE

Your planning inventory is nearly complete: you have a topic and a thesis, a clear sense of purpose and audience, a stock of material, and some sort of outline. In fact, if you were writing merely to get your message across, you could begin drafting the essay immediately. Except for diaries or some technical reports, however, we write not only to transmit information, but also to connect with readers.

Why voice matters

Whether your writing connects with readers depends on how it "sounds." The way your writing sounds depends on its *tone,* your personal mark—the voice readers hear between the lines. Readers who like the tone like the writer; they allow contact.

Consciously or unconsciously, readers ask three big questions about the writer:

Readers' questions in sizing up a writer

- *What type of person is this (somebody businesslike, serious, silly, sincere, phony, boring, bored, intense, stuck-up, meek, confident, friendly, hostile)?*
- *How is this person treating me (as a friend, acquaintance, stranger, enemy, nobody, superior, subordinate, bozo, somebody with a brain and feelings)?*

- *What does this person really think about the topic (really involved or merely "going through the motions")?*

How readers answer these questions will depend on your voice.

Why fancy words don't always work

Some inexperienced writers mistakenly think that fancy words make them sound more intelligent and important. And sometimes, of course, only the complex word will convey your exact meaning. Instead of saying "Sexist language contributes to the ongoing existence of stereotypes," you could say more accurately and concisely, "Sexist language perpetuates stereotypes." (One "fancy" word effectively replaces six "simpler" words.) But when you use fancy words only to impress, your writing sounds stuffy and pretentious.

Find a Voice That Connects with Readers

Personal essays ordinarily employ a conversational tone: you write to your audience as if you were speaking to them. Look again at Shirley Haley's opening lines from page 13:

Conversational tone

> I'm probably the only person I know who still has the same two parents she was born with. We have a traditional Canadian family: we go to church and hockey games; we watch the Olympics on television and argue about politics; and we have Thanksgiving dinner at my grandmother Clancy's and Christmas dinner with my father's sister Jess, who used to let us kids put pitted olives on our fingertips when we were little.

Haley's tone is friendly and relaxed—the voice of a writer who seems at home with herself, her subject, and her readers. We are treated to comfortable images of family things. But the long list of "traditional" family activities also hints at the writer's restlessness and lets us share her mixed feelings of attraction and repulsion.

Suppose Haley had decided to sound more "academic":

Academic tone

> Among my friends and acquaintances, I am apparently the only individual with the good fortune to have parents who remain married. Our family activities are grounded in Canadian tradition: we attend church services and hockey games; we watch televised sporting events and engage in political debates; at Thanksgiving, we dine at Grandmother's, and at Christmas, with an aunt who has always been quite tolerant of children's behaviour.

Which is better? To see for yourself which version is more inviting, test each against the three big questions for readers on pages 34–35.

Avoid an Overly Informal Tone

How tone can be too informal

We generally do not write in the same way we would speak to friends at the local burger joint or street corner. Achieving a conversational tone does

not mean lapsing into substandard usage, slang, profanity, or excessive colloquialisms. *Substandard usage* ("He ain't got none"; "I seen it today"; "She brang the book") ignores standards of educated expression. *Slang* ("hurling," "phat," "newbie") usually has specific meaning only for members of a particular in-group. *Profanity* ("Pissed off"; "This idea sucks"; "What the hell") not only displays contempt for the audience but often triggers contempt for the person using it. *Colloquialisms* ("O.K.," "a lot," "snooze," "in the bag") are understood more widely than slang, but tend to appear more in speaking than in writing.

How tone can offend

Tone is considered offensive when it violates the reader's expectations: when it seems disrespectful or tasteless, or distant and aloof, or too "chummy," or casual, or otherwise inappropriate for the topic, the reader, and the situation.

When to use an academic tone

A formal or academic tone, in fact, is perfectly appropriate in countless writing situations: a research paper, a job application, a report for the company president, and so on. In a history essay, for example, we would not refer to Pierre Elliott Trudeau and John Diefenbaker as "those dudes, Pete and John." Whenever we begin with freewriting or brainstorming, our tone might be overly informal and is likely to require some adjustment during subsequent drafts.

But while slang is usually inappropriate in school or workplace writing, some situations call for a measure of informality. The occasional colloquial expression helps soften the tone of any writing.

THE WRITER'S PLANNING GUIDE

Decisions and strategies covered in this chapter apply to almost any writing situation. You can make sure your own planning decisions are complete by following the Planning Guide whenever you write. Items in the Planning Guide are reminders of things to be done.

PLANNING GUIDE

Broad subject:

Limited topic:

Purpose statement:

Thesis statement:

Audience:

Probable audience questions:

Brainstorming list (with irrelevant items deleted):

Outline:

Appropriate tone for audience and purpose:

Your instructor might ask you to use the Planning Guide for early assignments and to submit your responses along with your essay. Remember that your decisions for completing the Planning Guide need not follow the strict order of the items listed—so long as you make all the necessary decisions.

This next Planning Guide has been completed to show a typical set of decisions for "Cars R Us."

THE COMPLETED PLANNING GUIDE

Broad topic: Societal values or behaviour

Limited topic: How cars appeal to our sense of individualism

Purpose statement (what you want to do): My purpose is to poke fun at our obsession with cars by explaining to my classmates how cars appeal to our sense of individualism. I'll discuss uses of the car as lifestyle statement, personal billboard, and private sanctuary.

Thesis statement (what you want to say): Today's self-centred consumers demand cars that satisfy our craving for individualism.

Audience: Classmates

Probable audience questions:

Can you set the scene for us, and give us a context for your thesis?
Why do we identify so strongly with our cars?
Where do bumper stickers fit in?
Why do we often hang out in the car?
What does all this say about us as a culture?

Brainstorming list:

1. to get us from point A to point B, junkers would suffice
2. we demand variety in our lives
3. we want cars that make us look cool . . . and so on

Outline:

I. Why do we love our cars with such passion?
   A. Cars originally were merely basic transportation.
   B. Every Model T looked alike.
   C. Today's automakers cater to our urge to do our own thing . . . and so on.

Appropriate tone for audience and purpose: relaxed and humorous

Remember that your decisions for completing the Planning Guide need not follow the strict order of the items listed—so long as you make all the necessary decisions.

PLANNING FOR GROUP WORK

In the Introduction to Section One, you practised thinking ahead to the kinds of decisions groups must make if they are to benefit from all members' contributions. The following guidelines will enable your group to prepare for collaborative work.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING COLLABORATIVELY

1. *Appoint a group manager.* The manager assigns tasks, enforces deadlines, conducts meetings, consults with the instructor, and generally "runs the show."
2. *Compose a purpose statement (pages 23, 37).* Spell out the project's goal and the group's plan for achieving the goal.
3. *Decide how the group will be organized.* Some possibilities:
   a. The group researches and plans together, but each person writes a different part of the document.
   b. Some members plan and research; one person writes a complete draft; others review, edit, revise, and produce the final version. Keep in mind that the final revision should display one consistent style throughout—as if written by one person only.
4. *Divide the task.* Who will be responsible for which parts of the essay or report or which phases of the project? Who is best at doing what (writing, editing, using a word processor, giving an oral presentation to the class)?
5. *Establish specific completion dates for each phase.* This will keep everyone focused on what is due and when.
6. *Decide on a meeting schedule and format.* How often will the group meet, and for how long? In or out of class? Who will take notes?
7. *Establish a procedure for responding to the work of other members.* Will reviewing and editing (pages 70, 71) be done in writing, face-to-face, as a group, one-on-one, or online? Will this process be supervised by the project manager?
8. *Establish procedures for dealing with group problems.* How will gripes and disagreements be aired and resolved? How will irrelevant discussion be curtailed? Can inevitable conflict be used positively?
9. *Select a group decision-making style beforehand.* Will decisions be made alone by the group manager or be based on group input or majority vote?
10. *Appoint a different "observer" for each meeting.* This group member will make a list of what worked or didn't work during the meeting.
11. *Decide how to evaluate each member's contribution.* Will members evaluate each other? Criteria for evaluation might include dependability, cooperation, effort, quality of work, and the

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING COLLABORATIVELY (continued)

ability to meet deadlines. Figure 2.1 shows one possible form for a manager to evaluate members. Equivalent criteria for evaluating the manager include open-mindedness, fairness in assigning tasks, ability to organize the team, ability to resolve conflicts, and so on.

Note that any evaluation of strengths and weaknesses should be backed up by comments that explain the ratings (as in Figure 2.1). A group needs to decide beforehand what constitutes "effort," "cooperation," and so on.

12. *Prepare a project management plan.* Figure 2.2 shows a sample plan sheet. Distribute completed copies to members and the instructor.

FIGURE 2.1
Sample form for evaluating team members

Performance Appraisal for J. Fishkill
(Rate each element as *[superior], [acceptable],* or *[unacceptable]* and use the "Comment" section to explain each rating briefly)

- *Cooperation:* [superior]
  Comment: works extremely well with others; always willing to help out; responds positively to constructive criticism
- *Dependability:* [acceptable]
  Comment: arrives on time for meetings; completes all assigned work
- *Effort:* [acceptable]
  Comment: does fair share of work; needs no prodding
- *Quality of work produced:* [superior]
  Comment: produces work that is carefully researched, well documented and clearly written
- *Ability to meet deadlines:* [superior]
  Comment: delivers all assigned work on or before the deadline; helps other team members with last-minute tasks

R. P. Ketchum
Project manager's signature

Management Plan Sheet

Project title:
Audience:
Project manager:
Team members:
Purpose of the project

Specific Assigments	**Due Dates**
Research:	Research due:
Planning:	Planning due:
Drafting:	First draft due:
Revising:	Reviews due:
Preparing final document:	Revisions due:
Presenting oral briefing:	Final document due:
	Progress report(s) due:

Specific Assigments

Group meetings:	*Date*	*Place*	*Time*	*Note taker*
#1				
#2				
#3				
etc.				
Mtgs. w/instructor				
#1				
#2				
etc.				

Miscellaneous

How will disputes and grievances be resolved?
How will performances be evaluated?
Other matters (Internet searches, e-mail routing, computer conferences, etc.)?

FIGURE 2.2
Sample plan sheet for managing a collaborative project

APPLICATION 2-1

Narrow two or three of the broad topics in this list to a topic suitable for a short essay. (Review page 22.)

EXAMPLE

social rituals

↓

high school grad formals

↓

how the romantic image of grad night has become a myth

↓

how today's typical grad night is based on competition and appearances and polluted by drugs, alcohol, and sex

TOPICS TO BE NARROWED

entertainment	careers	war	family
life	sports	crime	sex
social rituals	automobiles	fashion	music
marriage	alcohol	studying	drugs

APPLICATION 2-2

Compose statements of purpose for essays on three or more of the topics in Application 2-1. (Review pages 22–23.)

EXAMPLE

Topic The problems with grad night

Purpose statement My purpose is to persuade past and present high school students that high school grad formals have become a waste of time. I will discuss four major problems with grad night: drugs and alcohol, sexual promiscuity, competition, and danger.

APPLICATION 2-3

Convert your statements of purpose from Application 2-2 into thesis statements. (Review pages 23–26.)

EXAMPLE

Purpose statement My purpose is to persuade past and present high school students that grad formals have become a

	waste of time. I will discuss four major problems with grad night: drugs and alcohol, sexual promiscuity, competition, and danger.
Thesis statement	High school grad formals have lost their value as social events and have become expensive and exaggerated rituals that entrap students in situations they often despise.

APPLICATION **2-4**

For each thesis statement in Application 2-3, brainstorm and write three or four topic statements for individual supporting paragraphs. Arrange your topic statements in logical order. (Review pages 24–25.)

EXAMPLE

Thesis statement	High school grad formals have lost their value as social events and have become expensive and exaggerated rituals that entrap students in situations they often despise.
First topic statement	Parents, teachers, coaches, and other role models seem to merely accept the fact that students are going to drink or get high on grad night.
Second topic statement	It is almost an unspoken law that a couple (no matter how unacquainted) should have sex on grad night.
Third topic statement	Competition over who has the most expensive dress, the most unusual tux, the biggest limousine, or the cutest date also detracts from the evening.
Fourth topic statement	Not only do many feel obliged to attend the grad formal in order to fit in, but they also feel obliged to participate in often-dangerous after-grad events.

APPLICATION **2-5**

From Application 2-4, select the most promising set of materials, and write your best essay. Use selected items from your brainstorming list to develop each support paragraph. Outline as necessary. Provide an engaging introduction and a definite conclusion. Use the questions on page 18 as guidelines for revising your essay.

APPLICATION 2-6

Collaborative Project: Organize into small groups. Choose a subject from the list at the end of this exercise. Then decide on a thesis statement and (not necessarily in this order) brainstorm. Identify a specific audience. Group similar items under the same major categories, and develop an outline. When each group completes this procedure, one representative can write the outline on the board for class suggestions about revision. (Review pages 30–31.)

a description of the ideal classroom

instructions for surviving the first semester of college or university

instructions for surviving a blind date

suggestions for improving one's college or university experience

causes of teenage suicide

arguments for or against a formal grading system

an argument for an improvement you think this college or university needs

the qualities of a good parent

what you expect the world to be like in ten years

young people's needs that parents often ignore

difficulties faced by nontraditional students

APPLICATION 2-7

Collaborative Project: Exchange electronic copies of an essay you've written (or, in a lab, switch computers) and examine your partner's essay. Saving your edits in a new file, put the main topics in boldface and underline the supporting points. Assemble this material to form an outline of your partner's essay and then try out different arrangements of the headings or suggest new ones. Show your original and new outlines to your partner and discuss whether the essay achieved what she or he intended.

CHAPTER 3

Decisions in Drafting

Once you have a definite plan, you are ready to draft your essay. Here is where you decide on answers to some tough questions:

Decisions in Drafting Your Essay

- *How do I begin the essay?*
- *What does my reader need to know first?*
- *What comes after that?*
- *How much is enough?*
- *Am I forgetting anything?*
- *How do I end?*

As you work, remember that each writing sample in this book is the product of multiple drafts and revisions. None of these writers expected to get it right the first time—neither should you.

DRAFTING THE TITLE AND INTRODUCTION

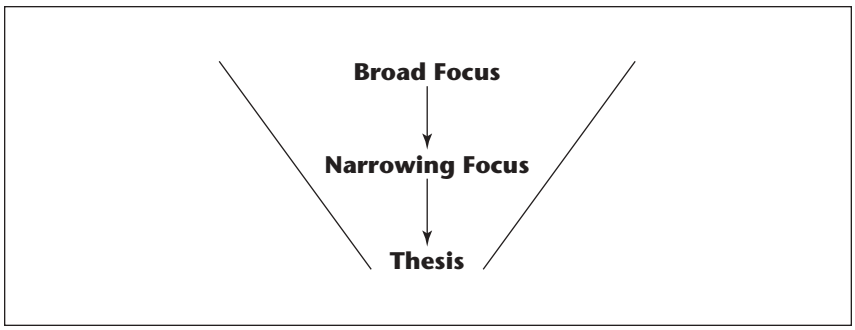
Why titles are important

Titles—which are sometimes chosen after the essay is complete—should forecast an essay's subject and approach. Clear, attention-getting titles, such as "Let's Shorten the Baseball Season" or "Instead of Running, Try Walking," help readers plan how to interpret what they read.

Assume you are continuing your work from Chapter 2 where you planned your essay about Canada's obsession with cars. You have chosen the title, "Cars R Us."

The Introductory Paragraph

Introductions differ in shape and size and may consist of more than one paragraph; however, basic introductory paragraphs often have a funnel shape:



Now that you have decided on a title—"Cars R Us"—you can introduce your essay's final draft, using a funnel pattern:

Broad focus (1–5)

Narrowing Focus (6–7)

Thesis (8)

CARS R US

[1]We Canadians love our automobiles, no question. [2]But why is next year's new model always front-page news? [3]Cars once were merely a way to get from point A to point B faster than by foot or horse and buggy. [4]Henry Ford's Model Ts all looked identical, like boxes on wheels, all painted black. [5]People bought Model Ts for basic transportation—and not to make a fashion statement. [6]As we leave the 20th century in the dust, however, automakers cater to our desire to "do our own thing." [7]We love their attention and they know it. [8]Today's self-centred consumers demand cars that satisfy our craving for individuality.

Why introductions are important

Introductory paragraphs do more than just lead into the essay; they invite readers in and set a tone. The first-person plural (we, us, our) invites us to look at ourselves. Amusing images (horse and buggy, boxes on wheels) and deliberate clichés (in the dust, do our own thing) signal the writer's intention to have fun with this essay. If your only aim were to lead into the main discussion, you might have given this introduction instead:

A lifeless opening

We love our cars because they enhance our sense of individuality.

But this version lacks the inviting tone and the images that engage our attention and make us want to read on.

Placing the Thesis

In a standard essay, the thesis often appears at the end of the introductory paragraph, as a bridge to the discussion. But sometimes readers want to know where you stand immediately, especially when the topic is controversial.

A controversial thesis as opener

Single-sex schools offer distinct advantages over coeducational schools. Coeducational classrooms inhibit student participation and tend to ignore gender-specific learning styles. Single-sex classrooms not only encourage participation but also allow for the kinds of gender-based teaching strategies that promote effective learning.

Sometimes, even personal writing can open directly with the thesis, especially when the viewpoint is unexpected.

A surprising thesis as opener

I hate summer beaches. Ocean swimming is impossible; upon conquering a wave, I simply lose to the next, getting pushed back onto the hard-packed, abrasive sand. Booby-traps of bottles, soda cans, toys, and rocks make walking hazardous. Heavy with the stench of suntan lotion, greasy French fries, dead fish, and sweat, the thick, searing air hangs motionless about the scorching sand. Blasting radios and growling hot rods cut the slap-swoosh of the green-grey surf to a weak hiss. People devour a summer beach, gouging the sound with umbrella spikes and gripping it with oiled limbs, leaving only trampled debris at summer's end.

In some essays, the thesis appears later, even near the end (as on page 226). A delayed thesis is especially useful in a story leading to some larger meaning (*Here is what happened,* and then, *Here is what it means*).

Selecting an Opening Strategy

"How do I begin?"

The specifics of your introduction are determined by what you know about your readers and your purpose.

Decisions in Analyzing Your Audience

- *Are my readers likely to be interested in this topic?*
- *How can I make them want to read on?*
- *Are they likely to react defensively?*
- *Is my purpose to describe something, to tell a story, to explain something, to change somebody's mind?*

The opening strategies that follow offer various possibilities for connecting with your audience.

Open with an Anecdote. An anecdote is a brief, personal story that makes a point.

> Last weekend, I gave a friend's younger brother a ride from the mall. As we drove, I asked him the same old questions about high school, marks, football, and girlfriends. He answered me in one-word sentences and then pulled out a cassette tape. "Wanna hear somethin' cool?" I shrugged and popped it into the tape player. What came pouring through my car speakers made me run a stop sign. The "rap" song spelled out, in elaborate detail, 101 ways to violate a woman's body. Needless to say, it was a long ride across town.
>
> I borrowed the tape and listened to every song, horrified by their recurrent theme of sexual violence and domination. But most horrifying is that a 15-year-old kid actually considers this music "cool."

Open with a Background Story. For example, in an essay that challenges a popular attitude, trace the development of that attitude.

> In 1945, a terrifying blast shook the New Mexico desert. Shortly afterward, the new, awesome force literally vaporized hundreds of thousands of lives, to end World War II. Thus began the atomic era. This horrid beginning, along with recent nuclear accidents and scandals, has caused increasing criticism. However, as we enter a new century the nuclear breeder reactor offers a promising energy alternative, but critics have drastically reduced its development and production. We need the breeder reactor, because it is one of our best long-range sources of energy.

This kind of opening is especially effective in persuasive writing, because it acknowledges opposing views, creating empathy (identification with the reader's attitude).

Open with a Question. An opening question can get readers thinking right away, especially when you write instructions, give advice, or argue for action.

> What do you do when you find yourself in the produce room cooler with your manager and he nonchalantly wraps his arm around your waist? Or how about when the guys you work with come out with a distasteful remark that makes you seem like a piece of meat? These are just a couple of problems you might face as the only female in a department. There are, however, ways of dealing with this kind of harassment.

Open with a Short Quotation. If a quotation can summarize your point, use it—and clarify its significance immediately.

> "The XL Roadster—anything else is just a car," unless the XL happens to be mine. In that case, it's just a piece of junk.

Open with a Direct Address. The second-person *you* can involve the readers and helps them pay attention—especially when you are giving instructions or advice or writing persuasively.

> Does the thought of artificially preserved, chemically treated food make you lose your appetite? Do limp, tasteless, frozen vegetables leave you cold? Then you should try your hand at organic gardening.

Use direct address in ads, popular articles, and brochures but not in academic reports or most business and technical documents.

Open with a Brief, Vivid Description. Instead of a thesis, some descriptive essays simply have an orienting sentence to set a scene or create a mood, to place readers at the centre of things.

> The raft bobs gently as the four divers help each other with scuba gear. We joke and laugh casually as we struggle in the cramped space; but a restlessness is in the air because we want to be on our way. Finally, everyone is ready, and we split into pairs. I steal a last glance over the blue ocean. I hear the waves slap the boat, the mournful cry of a seagull, and a steady murmur from the crowded beach a mile away. With three splashes my friends jump in. I follow. There is a splash and then silence. The water presses in, and all I hear is the sound of my regulator as I take my first breath. All I see is blue water, yellow light, and endless space. While the world rushes on, we feel suspended in time. Then my buddy taps me on the shoulder, and we begin a tour of a hidden world.

Description can also be a powerful way to make a point.

> They appear each workday morning from 7:00 to 9:00, role models for millions of career-minded women. Their crisp, clear diction and articulate reporting are second only to their appearance. Slender and lovely, the female co-hosts of morning news shows radiate that businesslike "chic" that networks consider essential in their newswomen. Such perfection is precisely why the networks hire these women as anchors. Network television rarely tolerates women commentators who are other than young, stylish, and attractive.

Notice how the businesslike tone parallels the topic itself.

Open with Examples. Examples enable readers to visualize the issue or problem. Consider the following (taken from a 1999 EAP/EFAP Newsletter), in which Dave Howard warns us of "Violence in the Workplace."

> In Ottawa, a public transit employee walks into his company's garage with a rifle and kills four fellow employees. . . . A nurse is threatened with a knife by a mentally ill woman in a hospital waiting room. . . . A secretary at her workstation is visited by her husband who pushes her against the wall, slaps her, and then leaves. All of these incidents are examples of the phenomenon of rising violence in the workplace.
>
> *—Dave Howard*

Open with a Definition. Clarify abstract terms for both writer and reader. In "Management of Breast Cancer Related Lymphedema" included in *Abreast in the Nineties* (Summer 98), Dr. Maria Hugi (BC Cancer Agency) starts by defining lymphedema:

> Lymphedema is a build-up of lymph fluid in your arm. Lymph fluid is a clear liquid that bathes all the tissues (muscles, tendons, ligaments, fat) of the arm to keep them clear and free of infection. The lymph fluid is filtered through lymph nodes (glands) in the armpit on its way to the blood stream. In breast cancer treatment, the lymph nodes in the armpit are often taken out by surgery (axillary dissection) to see if the cancer has spread there. You have developed lymphedema because lymph fluid can no longer leave your arm through its normal channels in your armpit. These channels have been disrupted by your treatment.

As you draft your introduction, consider the following suggestions:

Hints for an engaging introduction

- The introduction can be the hardest part of an essay. Many writers complete it last. If you do write your introduction first, be sure to revise it later.

- In most college/university writing, avoid opening with personal qualifiers such as "it is my opinion that," "I believe that," and "in this paper I will."
- Let your introduction create suspense that is resolved by your thesis statement, usually at the end of the opening paragraph(s).
- If the opening is boring, vague, long-winded, or toneless, readers may give up. Don't waste their time.

DRAFTING THE BODY SECTION

"How much is enough, and how can I shape it?"

The body section delivers on the commitment made in your thesis. Readers don't want details that just get in the way, or a jigsaw puzzle they have to unscramble for themselves. To develop the body, therefore, answer these questions:

Decisions in Developing the Body of Your Essay

- *How much is enough?*
- *How much information or detail should I provide?*
- *How can I stay on track?*
- *What shape will reveal my line of thought?*

Decide about purpose and unity. Here you discard some material you thought you might keep, and maybe discover additional material. Look hard at everything you've discovered during freewriting, brainstorming, or questioning. Stand in the reader's place. Keep whatever belongs, and discard whatever doesn't.

Decide how many support paragraphs to include. College and university essays typically have three or more, but use as many as you need. Decide how to develop each support paragraph and how to order them. What paragraph order will make the most sense and provide the best emphasis?

Elements affecting the shape of your writing (unity, coherence, emphasis, and transition) are discussed fully in Chapter 6, "Revising the Paragraphs." Principles of developing the individual paragraph are principles as well of creating the whole essay—or of writing at any length.

DRAFTING THE CONCLUSION

Why conclusions are important

An essay's conclusion refocuses on the thesis and leaves a final—and lasting—impression on readers. Your conclusion might evaluate the meaning or significance of the body section, restate your position, predict an outcome, offer a solution, request an action, make a recommendation, or pave the way for more exploration. Avoid conclusions that repeat, apologize, or belabour the obvious:

Don't repeat | I have just discussed my views on the role cars play in our lives.

Don't apologize | Although some readers might disagree, this is how I see it.

Don't belabour the obvious | Now that you've read my essay, you should have a clear picture of the importance we place on our cars.

Selecting a Closing Strategy

"How do I end?"

Forgettable endings drain the life from any writing. This list of strategies samples ways of closing with meaning and emphasis.

Close with a Summary. A review of main points helps readers remember what is most important.

Close with a Question. A closing question provides readers something to think about.

> Overall, the advantages of the breeder reactor seem immeasurable. Because it can produce more fuel than it uses, it will theoretically be an infinite source of energy. And efficient use of the fuel it does burn makes it highly desirable in this energy-tight era. What other source promises so much for our long-range energy future?

Close with a Call to Action. Tell readers exactly what you want them to do.

> Just imagine yourself eating a salad of crisp green lettuce, juicy red tomato chunks, firm white slices of cucumber, and crunchy strips of green pepper—all picked fresh from your own garden. If this picture appeals to you, begin planning your summer garden now, and by July the picture of you eating that salad will become a reality. *Bon appetit!*

Close with a Quotation. This next writer quotes from journalist Ellen Goodman's essay, "Blame the Victim."

> I agree with Ellen Goodman's assertion that there is "something malignant about some of the extremists who make a public virtue of their health." The cancer is in the superior attitudes of the "healthy elite"—an attitude that actually discourages exercise and healthy habits by making average people feel too intimidated and inferior even to begin a fitness program.

Close with an Interpretation or Evaluation. Help readers understand the meaning of things.

> A growing array of so-called private information about Canadian citizens is collected daily. And few laws protect our right to be left alone. In the interest of pursuing criminals, government too often sacrifices the

privacy of innocent people, and new technology is making old laws obsolete. Huge collections of data are becoming available to your insurance company, to prospective employers, to companies doing mass mailings, and even to your neighbour. The invasion continues, and no one seems to know how to stop our world from fulfilling the prophecy in George Orwell's *1984.*

Whichever strategy or combination of strategies you select, make your conclusion refocus on your main point without repeating it.

CASE STUDY

DRAFTING THE ESSAY

As an illustration of how these drafting decisions produce a completed essay, consider "Cars R Us," reproduced below. (Chapter 4 traces the steps in revision that created the final version shown here.)

Notice that the thesis and each topic sentence appear in boldface and italics.

CARS R US

Introduction

We Canadians love our automobiles, no question. But why is next year's new model always front-page news? Cars once were merely a way to get from point A to point B faster than by foot or horse and buggy. Henry Ford's Model Ts all looked identical, like boxes on wheels, and were all painted black. People bought Model Ts for basic transportation—and not to make a fashion statement. As we enter the 21st century, however, automakers cater to our desire to "do our own thing." We love their attention and they know it. ***Today's self-centred consumers demand cars that satisfy our craving for individuality.***

First support paragraph

We want automobiles that make a unique lifestyle statement about who we think we are. If today's cars were only a means to cruise to the grocery store, we'd all be willing to drive junkers. But most people hate rusty, old bombers. We want to be able to see our ideal (or idealized) images mirrored in our car's glossy paint job or our truck's chrome hubcaps. For example, roughly fifty percent of today's rugged individuals buy 4-wheel drive, off-road vehicles that never leave the pavement. Instead we navigate our urban and suburban wilderness in Hummers, Big Wheel trucks, and SUV land barges because these vehicles symbolize toughness and an uncompromising attitude. We buy sports cars not so much to impress others, but to impress ourselves: "Hey, I'm driving this red convertible Miata and I'm special."

Second support paragraph

Cars provide each individual with a personal billboard. As a way to exercise our right to free speech, bumper stickers announce exactly where we stand. They tell the world that we're intellectuals or tough guys or sensitive types. One of mine reads, "I love my humpback whale." Another promotes my favourite radio station. For some reason Volvos often carry political statements such as "Women, unite," or "Make love, not war," or profound observations such as Einstein's "creativity is more important than knowledge"—which might be fine for an individual like Einstein, but what about the rest of us mere mortals? Some individuals like to be more rugged than others. Pick-up trucks, for instance, often sport CUPE stickers that tell us to support unions.

Third support paragraph

Owning a car means not having to rely on—yikes—public transportation, torture for individuals like us. Our cars are personal sanctuaries, places to escape other humans. One popular form of escape is the drive-through window. Banks, doughnut shops, even dry cleaners enable us to transact business without leaving the car. Snug in our mobile dining rooms, we no longer have to budge from our orthopedically correct leather seat to order a meal. A simple adjustment of the tilt-steering allows laptop dining as we savour our grease-laden food in private, far from the noisy restaurant and screaming kids. We just stay in our cars. How convenient. We can even sing along to the stereo between bites or hum along as we chew. If you sing on a bus or subway, other commuters look at you strangely and hide their valuables.

Conclusion

Cars entice us because they offer the ultimate mechanism for achieving individuality. Through the kind of car we drive and how we adorn it, we can really "be somebody" and proclaim to strangers our singular selves. We can dine à-la-car and sing aloud without seeming weird. Isolated in our climate-controlled, stereophonic capsule, we can avoid direct human contact and concentrate full time on being individuals. At the beginning of *Mother Night,* novelist Kurt Vonnegut observes, "We are what we pretend to be"—a condition made increasingly possible by the cars we choose to drive.

—Maureen Malloy

Discussion

This essay presents a focused picture. And the picture is unified: nothing gets in the way; everything belongs.

But content alone cannot ensure contact. Thoughts need shaping to help us organize our understanding of the writer's way of seeing. Each paragraph helps detail the prepackaged identity offered by the automobile.

Finally, the concluding paragraph offers perspective on the whole essay, refocusing on the thesis, summing up the main points and leaving readers with a quotation that suggests a larger meaning for the essay. Readers remember last things best, and this essay's conclusion leaves us with something worth remembering.

DRAFTING ON THE COMPUTER

Word processing is especially useful as a drafting tool, enabling you to delete, move, or design text instantly. The following guidelines will help ensure that you capitalize on all the benefits a computer can offer.

GUIDELINES FOR DRAFTING ON THE COMPUTER

1. *Decide whether to draft on the computer or by hand for later transfer to the computer.* Experiment with each approach before deciding which works best for you.
2. *Beware of computer junk.* The ease of cranking out words on a computer can produce long, windy pieces that say nothing. Cut anything that fails to advance your meaning. (See pages 119–124 for ways to achieve conciseness.)
3. *Never confuse style with substance.* Laser printers and choices of typefaces, type sizes, and other design options can produce attractive documents. But not even the most attractive format can redeem worthless or inaccessible content.
4. *Save and print your work often.* Save each paragraph as you write it; print out each page as you complete it; and keep a copy of your document on a backup disk.
5. *Consider the benefits of revising from hard copy.* Nothing beats scribbling on the printed page with pen or pencil. The hard copy provides the whole text, right in front of you.
6. *Never depend only on automated "checkers."* Not even the most sophisticated writing aids can replace careful proofreading. A synonym found in an electronic thesaurus may distort your meaning. The spell checker cannot differentiate among correctly spelled words such as *their, they're*, or *there,* or *it's* versus *its.* And neither spell nor grammar checkers can evaluate *stylistic appropriateness* (the subtle choices of phrasing that determine tone and emphasis). Page 148 summarizes the limitations of computerized aids.
7. *Always print two final copies.* With all the paperwork that writing instructors (and their students) shuffle, papers sometimes get misplaced. Submit one copy and keep one for yourself—just in case!

APPLICATION 3-1

Plan and draft an essay based on one of the writing options on pages 19–20. Decide on an audience: your classmates, readers of the campus paper, or the like. Have a thesis and deliver on it.

Also, find a voice that will appeal to your readers. Create unity so that your writing sticks to the point; create order and use transitions so that it stands together. Use the questions on page 18 for guidance in improving your essay.

APPLICATION 3-2

Collaborative Project: Locate a good introduction or a good conclusion to a short article in a popular magazine such as *Maclean's* or *Reader's Digest.* As a group, analyze the strategies that make the writing effective. (Review pages 45–50 and 50–52.)

APPLICATION 3-3

Computer Application: Save three copies of your essay under different file names. Revise one of the copies, keeping in mind the ideas from this chapter. Take an overnight break and then revise a second copy of the original. Print the three versions and read them carefully. Then write a summary (pages 352–354) of your favourite version and explain why you think the changes improve the essay.