

ST. CATHERINE WRITER'S MANUAL

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The Writing Process

Prewriting

In prewriting, a writer explores subjects and experiences, determines a focused purpose for writing, begins to consider the needs of an audience, selects ideas and support for the purpose, and begins to organize these ideas.

Drafting

In drafting, a writer begins to compose the work by drafting sentences and paragraphs connecting one thought to another. Writers concentrate on creating their meaning, developing thoughts, providing relevant support, addressing their reader's needs, and organizing their work.

Conferencing

During conferencing, writers acquire feedback concerning their writing, interacting with teachers, peers, and others. **Conferencing may occur at all stages of the writing process.** It is essential that (during these conferences) the student writer retain ownership of his/her writing. While responders (teachers, peers, or others) may ask questions and offer suggestions, the writer will decide what to incorporate and what to reject. Responders should assist students by

- questioning rather than dictating.
- critiquing rather than criticizing.
- coaching rather than correcting.
- guiding rather than directing.
- suggesting rather than imposing.

Revising

In revising, the writer begins to make appropriate changes to a draft. Revision is, in a sense, rethinking or "re-visioning" ideas. During revision, the writer reshapes and reorders the text to match it as closely as possible with the new ideas in his or her head. The general guideline in revision is that the students will make decisions about what to add, delete, or change. Teachers and others may provide response but should ensure that authors have the final say in the revisions they make in their writing.

Editing

In editing, the writer strives to create a correct piece of writing. The writer's goal in editing is to produce the best possible paper according to his/her developmental level. Arranging for a specific

time for editing can help students spot errors and correct them. Teachers should emphasize the role of students as owners of their work in making final decisions.

Publishing

In publishing, students make their writing public for others. Many forms of publishing are acceptable (bound books, pamphlets, brochures, illustrated works, regular manuscripts).

Forms of Student Writing

PERSONAL EXPRESSIVE WRITING

The personal expressive category includes several types of writing, each of which focuses on the life experiences of the writer. These types include personal narratives, memoirs, and personal essays. The characteristics of the form and the strategies for developing ideas may be different for each kind of writing included here.

- * **Personal Narratives** are focused on a **single** significant incident from the writer's life and are supported by details that emphasize the significance of the experience. While a personal narrative may relate any incident that the writer feels is significant, the success of the narrative lies in the writer's ability to provide the reader with an understanding of the events and feelings that make the incident important and the author's ideas and interpretation of the experience. This is accomplished through the inclusion of specific details, organization that emphasizes the importance of the event, and voice/tone that communicates the writer's ideas and feelings about the incident.
- * **Memoirs** are focused on the significance of a **relationship** and are supported by memories of specific experiences. While a memoir may focus on any individual person, place, animal, or thing, the success of the memoir lies in the writer's ability to provide the reader with an understanding of the importance of the relationship. This is accomplished through the writer's use of details and reflection to create a connection with the reader that shares the critical value of the relationship between the writer and the other individual person, place, animal, or thing.
- * **Personal Essays** are focused on a **central idea** about the writer or the writer's life and are supported by a variety of incidents from the writer's life. While a personal essay may focus on any central idea about the writer's life (e.g., the satisfaction of working with the elderly, the role of the oldest sibling in the family, the pain of loss), the success of the essay lies in the writer's ability to describe the central idea and build a framework of support for that idea. This is accomplished through the writer's use of broad reflection enhanced by specific, detailed incidents that are tied to the central idea.

LITERARY WRITING

The literary writing category includes several types of writing, each of which evolves from the imagination and experience of the writer. The success of literary writing is accomplished through the writer's thoughtful expression about human experience, specific and rich use of language, management of literary techniques, and effective organizational strategies to communicate ideas and feelings to the reader. Literary writing includes poems, short stories, and scripts/plays.

- * **Poems** are compositions in verse. Poetry may take many forms.

- * **Short Stories** are pieces of fiction that contain some, but perhaps not all, of the following elements that are characteristics of the genre: plot (conflict, crisis, resolution), setting, character development, theme, and point of view. Short stories may range in length depending on audience and purpose.
- * **Scripts/Plays** are pieces that reflect the third area of literary writing, drama. Drama by nature contains many of the elements of fiction: characters, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, etc. Drama also includes conventions specific to its genre (i.e., stage directions, dialogue, setting, cast lists, etc.). Plays may range in length depending on audience and purpose.

TRANSACTIVE WRITING

Transactive writing, which is written from the perspective of an informed writer to a less informed reader, is functional writing intended to present information and ideas in order to accomplish any one or more of a variety of realistic purposes in “getting things understood and done” in the world. Transactive writing often draws a conclusion, advocates a position, and/or solves a problem. Much of the writing done in academic contexts and in the workplace is transactive writing. In fact, academic writing and technical writing are examples of transactive writing that can be Portfolio-appropriate.

In order to present authentic purposes to real-world critical readers, students may choose from a variety of forms such as: a letter for the local newspaper, an editorial published in the school newspaper, an article for a class or team magazine, or a speech or proposal for the school-based council.

Transactive writing should

- * have a focused purpose – an authentic reason for being written besides completing an assignment;
- * take the form of writing seen in the world beyond the classroom (e.g., article, letter, editorial, speech, proposal, brochure, manual);
- * address a targeted audience besides the teacher as an assessor;
- * engage the reader with an interesting beginning – one which gives some context/reason for the information which follows;
- * develop ideas with specific, relevant details; and
- * move the reader(s) through the piece with logical, appropriate transitional strategies.

Content Area Writing

Content area writing is writing that is produced in a class other than English/language arts classes.

Glossary of Terms Used when Writing

audience – the specific person or readership for whom a piece of writing is intended. Awareness of an authentic audience affects important decisions the writer makes about the piece (e.g., purposes, methods of support, organization, word choice, details, form, voice, tone).

conference – writer-centered conversation with teacher, peer, or others about a piece of writing with the intent of exploring process strategies and/or revision and editing possibilities. Conferencing is an important instructional strategy. It provides specific feedback at the point when the writer can best make use of it.

correctness issues – a feature of writing such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Concern with correctness too early in the process inhibits fluency and revision.

editing – checking for and correcting errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and usage; proofreading. Editing becomes a concern only after the writer is satisfied that the writing clearly says what he/she wants it to say; editing is the final stage of document preparation.

fluency – the flow of words and ideas and the ease with which a writer generates and expresses those ideas in writing.

focus – the writer’s main point or idea.

genre – form of writing (e.g., article, short story, poem, editorial).

memoir – writing that reflects on the relationship of the writer with a particular person (usually older), place, animal, or thing and is supported by memories of specific experiences.

Mode – the genre chosen to communicate a particular message.

personal essay – writing that is focused on a central idea about the writer or the writer’s life and is supported by a variety of incidents from the writer’s life.

personal narrative – writing about one significant incident from one’s life. It is not a discussion of future plans, the relating of an event in which the writer is neither a participant nor an observer, or the writer’s assumption of the role of another person or of an animal.

plagiarism – the act of a writer using the exact words, unique ideas, or the intellectual property (e.g., charts, graphics, designs, etc.) of another’s work and representing it as his or her own original work.

poem – compositions in verse.

purpose – the reason for a piece of writing. Portfolio-appropriate writing calls for authentic purposes.

revision – the process of looking again at a draft to ask, “Does this writing clearly say what I want it to say, and if it does not, what changes do I need to make?” Revision is centered on audience and purpose, idea development, and organization. **It is not editing.**

script/play – the written text of a stage play, screen play, radio or television broadcast, commercial or video. (See Chapter 10, “Categories and Forms in the Writing Portfolio.”)

short story – a short piece of fiction that contains some, but perhaps not all, of the following elements: plot (conflict, crisis, climax, resolution), setting, character development, theme, and point of view.

tone – appropriateness of attitude toward the subject based on audience and purpose. The author’s choice of attitude influences such things as word choice, details, sentence structure, and organization. Tone and voice often go hand in hand, yet they are distinct. For example, a business letter may have a formal tone or reveal the unique voice of the writer; technical writing usually employs a scholarly voice and a formal tone.

technical writing- writing that focuses on a technical subject or brings technical knowledge and understanding to a subject in order to accomplish one or more realistic, functional purposes (adapted from Dr. Charles Whitaker). Technical writing is “objective and factual, reporting information without reflecting personal opinion.” It may include “headings” for organizational signals, and “visual aids” (graphs, charts, diagrams) for idea development and support, and may follow commonly used organizational patterns (*from Webster’s New World Student Writing Handbook*).

voice – the feature of writing that has unique personality and conveys a sense of sincere investment from the writer. This quality reveals an authentic sound, rhythm, and natural language. Writing with strong voice is honest and written with conviction, not just “cute” language. The reader feels a strong sense of interaction with the writer. When students choose their own topics, purposes and audiences, their writing is more likely to have strong voice. While voice and tone often go hand in hand, they are distinct.