

The Writing Center

at
Trident Technical College

The Writing Process--Writing is a process, which means it is best accomplished in steps, rather than all at once. Most students cannot sit down and write a flawless paper on the first draft; therefore, students should follow the writing process. The three main steps of the writing process are:

1. **Drafting**--This is the stage where you decide what information you are going to include in the piece of writing and you actually write or type a draft of the paper. Focus on getting your **ideas** on paper.
2. **Editing/Revising**—This is the stage when you make sure you've included all the necessary information in your paper and that you've expressed your ideas in clear and complete sentences. During the editing stage, you should read each sentence to be sure it fits in the paper and to be sure it is grammatically correct and clearly written.
3. **Proofreading**—This is the final stage of the writing process and generally is done after you've finished the first two steps of drafting and editing. Proofreading takes time. Give yourself enough time to proofread your paper several times before you turn it in for a grade.

- ***Don't try to proofread at the same time you are drafting the paper.*** Worrying about how a word is spelled or where a comma goes can interfere with your thought processes while writing. Proofread as the final step in the writing process.
- Set the paper aside for a while (preferably a day or two) before you proofread, so that you can look at the writing with a fresh eye. The more time you've had to clear your mind of what you originally wrote, the more likely you are to notice errors while proofreading.
- Use the grammar and spell checkers on the computer to call your attention to places in your writing that might contain errors. However, don't rely entirely on the computer to catch all mistakes; it doesn't!
- Proofread a piece of writing several times. **Proofread aloud!** **Proofread backwards!** [See below].

Tips for locating specific problems:

Compound sentence commas: Read the entire piece of writing through and circle the coordinating conjunctions *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so* (FANBOYS). If there is an independent clause (complete thought) on each side of the conjunction, place a comma *before* the conjunction.

Introductory information followed by a comma: Focus on the first two or three words of each sentence. If you find a preposition, a transitional word, or a subordinating conjunction (see *Subordinating Clauses/Prepositions/Transitions* handout) read the sentence again, looking for a possible break point before the main clause.

Comma splices: Read the entire piece of writing through and circle each comma in a sentence. Notice commas that appear in the middle of sentences. If there is an independent clause (a complete thought)



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on each side of the comma, add a coordinating conjunction (fanboys--for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) after the comma **OR** replace the comma with a semicolon **OR** put a period between the two sentences.

Fragments: Identify the subject and verb in each sentence. Pay careful attention to sentences that begin with subordinating conjunctions (words like “after”, “because”, “when” and “while”—see *Subordinating Clauses/Prepositions/Transitions* handout for a full list).

For omitted words: As you read aloud, point to each word as you read it. Take your time and *read each word on the page* to be sure you have not omitted words in the sentence. This will also help you locate misspelled words and extra words that are not necessary to the sentence. (01/10)

Tips to help you proofread effectively:

1. **Read the writing aloud.** Your ear will hear mistakes that your eye might miss. Even if you feel silly doing it, you should always read the work aloud when proofreading.
2. **Read the writing backwards, one sentence at a time.** In other words, begin with the last sentence of the piece, read it carefully for errors, then move to the next-to-last sentence, etc. This forces you to slow down and concentrate on one sentence at a time, so you can be sure the words you put on the paper are actually the words you meant to write and that each sentence is clear and smoothly written.
3. **Read the writing backwards, one word at a time.** Reading the writing starting with the last word and working backwards helps you catch spelling errors.
4. **Read S-L-O-W-L-Y and read exactly what you have written on the page.** Take your time when reading and read the words that are actually on the page. You can use a ruler or a sheet of paper to cover up lines below the one you are reading, which helps you clearly see the line you are reading. Read each word as it appears on the page (*Slow down!* When you read quickly, you tend to self-correct to what you wanted to write, instead of what you actually wrote.)
5. **Change how the writing looks on the page.** Change the font to a larger size that is easier to read. Separate each sentence onto one line by hitting the “Enter” key after each period. [*Be sure to undo these changes before you submit a final copy of the paper for a grade.*]
6. **Be prepared to proofread your writing several times.** This is the final step in the writing process, but it is important, so *don't rush it.*



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