

A VIEW OF THE WRITING PROCESS

Writing always begins with an intellectual problem or question. For example:
 What did Jefferson mean by the word "liberty"?

My answer to the intellectual problem (my main point or idea) is now clear to me:
THESIS STATEMENT OR CLAIM OR MAIN POINT
 When Jefferson uses the word "liberty," he means....

In this part of the process, I write to & for myself to discover what I think.

I write to make my own sense of the intellectual problem

X
 assignment given

X

Now that I know what I think, I write to other people to explain to these human beings how & why I arrived at this conclusion

REVISION

X
 polished draft

Putting my thinking on paper at this stage has many advantages:

- I don't have to remember all the thoughts that are going through my mind
- I lower the start-up cost of writing; I can begin by simply doing a memory dump (the plot, a summary of what the author said, etc.)
- I separate myself from my thinking so I can critically examine it: does this make sense to me? is this really what I think?
- I put to use the incubation facility of my brain—it will continue working on this material while my conscious attention is elsewhere
- I should find myself writing down exciting insights I didn't know I had!

Outlines & multiple drafts help me decide the best way to present my thinking to others. I have to answer such questions as:

- how should I order my points so that my line of reasoning is clear?
- what am I trying to do in this paragraph? given this purpose, how should I structure it?
- what sentence structure & words enable me to best express this thought?

COPYEDITING:
 Once I have a solid draft, I go over the whole paper to be sure each paragraph & sentence is clear, explicit, and coherent

PROOFREADING:
 After I've copyedited my paper, I go through it one last time to eliminate all mechanical & grammatical errors