Stages of the Writing Process

The five stages of the writing process allow you to explore, investigate, and write about any topic. In the following pages you will follow the investigation and writing process of a high school student, Shella Calamba.

The Five Writing Process Stages

Writing is a process with different stages. Professional and student writers all follow processes made up of combinations of the stages shown below.

**Prewriting**

The first stage, called prewriting, is the idea stage. By probing your thoughts, you can discover a topic and a purpose for writing about it. This is the stage in which information or details are gathered and the paper is planned. Shella Calamba began investigating her family's history by using a prewriting technique called freewriting.

During the freewriting stage, Calamba’s ideas are random and free flowing, but they lead to a writing topic.

**Drafting**

Drafting is writing your ideas down in related sentences and paragraphs. You can draft in any order and in any form you wish. You may include rough drafts, outlines, or storyboards. This is the stage in which initial ideas are formed. Shella Calamba composed a paragraph about her mother’s early years, arranged in time order.

**Revising**

Revision means reading your draft closely, reminding yourself of your purpose, and reworking and clarifying your ideas, as Calamba did here.

**Editing/Proofreading**

During this stage, you revise your work, focusing on details such as grammar, spelling, and mechanics. Shella Calamba checked her work carefully, combining related ideas in a paragraph.

**Publishing/Presenting**

Publication or presentation allows you to share your writing with others. Shella Calamba gave a presentation to her classmates, including a graph showing her family tree.

*It is far from a coincidence that my* 
*great-grandfather was the mayor of a* 
*Philippine province. My great-grandmother,* 
*Josefa, a religious woman, taught my mother* 
*Latin prayers. They would pray together,* 
*My grandparents raised eight children. Two aunts* 
*were teachers, and one has a* 
*store. My mother is a pharmacist in Chicago.* 
*Two uncles were teachers, and one has a* 
*firm eye. Later, she spent her teenage years* 
*in Manila, where she studied in high school* 
*and college.*

Using the Model

Ask students to mention specific ways that each stage of Calamba’s writing is different from the prior stage. In drafting, Calamba expressed her ideas in full sentences, adding a paragraph about her mother’s early years, arranged in time order. In revising, Calamba added details like “every afternoon at precisely five” and "a restaurant owner" to provide a clearer picture of her family and background. She also moved a sentence to add emphasis and changed certain words to express her meaning more exactly.

Freewriting

Ask what students notice about Calamba’s freewriting. (She wrote mainly in words and phrases.) Explain that correct grammar and spelling do not matter in freewriting. The idea is to capture thoughts on paper.

Two-Minute Skill Drill

Have students write three ways to correct run-on sentences.

Journal Writing Tip

Recalling Before students begin this activity, you might have them each examine a few pieces of their best earlier writing. Ask them to recall where they got their ideas—from daydreams, friends, or their own experiences, for example—and what process students engaged in to get the finished pieces of writing. Encourage them to record discoveries they make about how they write.

Journal Writing

In your journal analyze your own writing process. Which of these first three stages do you find easy? What are your stumbling blocks? Do you always move straight forward, or do you sometimes return to a previous stage?
**Using the Model**

Examining editing changes in Calamba’s paragraph, students wonder why Calamba decided to spell out “U.S.” Explain that names of countries are usually spelled out when used as nouns. Stress that even the United States is occasionally spelled out. If your students have read U.S. News & World Report, they might have encountered the United States spelled out in a headline. In general, however, American students are taught to write as they would speak: as they would say “I went to the United States.”

**Additional Resources**

- For further stimuli for writing, see Fine Art Transparencies, 7–12.
- Writing Across the Curriculum Cooperative Learning Activities
- Writing Process Transparencies, 2–8
- Thinking and Study Skills, pp. 5, 15, 26
- Listening and Speaking Activities, pp. 6–8
- Composition Practice, p. 7

**Move Among the Stages**

Good writers move back and forth among stages in the writing process. For example, you might reach the revising stage and notice that one section needs more explanation. You could return to a prewriting task, such as freewriting, to explore those ideas in greater detail.

When you write, your mind is in a state of motion. This perpetual movement is absolutely necessary; after all, you are involved in an investigation to discover your thoughts.

**PUBLISHING/PRESENTING**

Sometimes sharing your writing with a reader simply means handing it in to your teacher. At other times you want your thoughts and ideas to go far beyond the teacher’s desk. For example, Calamba might decide to submit her essay to her high school’s prose contest. Notice how Calamba edited the paragraph below.

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**Writing Activities**

Write a Personal Response

Follow the five stages of the writing process as you write a response to a painting in this book. What does the subject or mood of the painting remind you of? Explain your thoughts and ideas.

**Cross-Curricular Activity**

**Music**

Use the writing process to draft a paragraph about a song or a music video. Begin by listening to the music or viewing the video. Notice the artistic qualities of the performers’ presentations. Then identify your topic and your purpose for writing about it. Progress through the steps of the writing process to create your paragraph.

**Writing Across the Curriculum**

**Art Transparencies, 7–12.**

See also Writing Assessment & Evaluation Rubrics.

**Cross-Curricular Activity**

Student copy should include these elements:

- select topic
- statement of purpose

**Reteaching**

**Composition Reteaching, p. 7**

**Enrichment**

**Composition Enrichment, p. 7**

**Use Fine Art Transparencies 7–12 for enrichment activities also.**

**Close**

Have students list the five stages of the writing process and write a one-sentence definition of each.