Academic Writing

Academic writing is not easy. It takes study and practice to develop this skill. For both native speakers and new learners of English, it is important to note that writing is a process, not “product.” This means that a piece of writing, whether it is a composition for your English class or a Hemingway short story, is never complete; that is, it is always possible to review and revise, and review and revise again.

There are four main stages in the writing process: prewriting, planning, writing and revising drafts, and writing the final copy to hand in.

1. Prewriting

When you are faced with a writing assignment, you may sometimes suffer from “writer’s block”;nthat is, ideas will not easily come into your head, and you sit staring at your blank paper. Writer’s block can happen to anyone, even professional writers. There are some techniques to overcome this.

1. Choosing and narrowing the topic

You have to choose a subject you are interested in, and then you must narrow the subject to a particular aspect of that general subject.

Example:

Environment

Pollution

Ocean Pollution

Oil Spills

1989 Alaskan Oil Spill

General topic

Specific

Very Specific

Practice 1 : Choosing and Narrowing the topic

* 1. School
  2. Television
  3. Sport
  4. Entertainment
  5. Food

1. Brainstorming
   1. Listing

Listing is a brainstorming technique in which you think about your topic and quickly make a list of whatever words or phrases come into your head. Your purpose is to produce as many ideas as possible in a short time; your goal is to find a specific focus for your topic.

Follow this procedure:

1. Write down the general topic at the top of your paper.
2. Then, make a list of every word or phrase that comes into your mind about the topic. Don’t stop the free flow of ideas by jugging or editing them before you write them down. Keep the ideas flowing. Try to stay on the general topic. If however, you write down information that is completely off the subject, don’t worry about it-you can cross it out later.
3. Use words, phrases, or sentences. Don’t worry about spelling or grammar. Remember, your primary goal is to jot down ideas as quickly as they come too you without worrying about whether an idea is important, interesting, or related to your subject (Try to focus on the topic)

Here is the example of the listing technique on the topic of fitness

**Getting Fit**

Eating right

Junk food

Good diet

Lots of fresh fruit/ vegetables

3 meals a day

Regular exercise

Lose weight

Join health club

Swim every day

Regular homework schedule

Weightlifting

Work hard

Play hard

Jog before breakfast

Feel and look younger

Watch less TV

Don’t eat snacks

Lose weight

Drive carefully

No red meat

Aerobics

Drink less coffee

Sleep 8 hours

No candy, soda

1. Now rewrite your list and group similar ideas together. Cross out ideas which don’t fit or are duplicating

**Getting Fit**

Eating right

Junk food

Good diet

Lots of fresh fruit/ vegetables

3 meals a day

Regular exercise

Lose weight

Join health club

Swim every day

Regular homework schedule

Weightlifting

Work hard

Play hard

Jog before breakfast

Feel and look younger

Watch less TV

Don’t eat snacks

Lose weight

Drive carefully

No red meat

Aerobics

Drink less coffee

Sleep 8 hours

From this new list, it is clear that “good diet” and “regular exercise” have the most ideas, so these are circled. The writer can choose either as a specific focus for his/her paragraph.

Practice 2: Brainstorming by Listing

Choose one topic below

1. Bank
2. Finance
3. Advertisement
   1. Freewriting

Freewriting is a brainstorming activity in which you write freely about the topic because you are looking for a specific focus. While you are writing, one idea will spark another idea. As with listing, the purpose of freewriting is to generate as many ideas as possible and to write them down without worrying about appropriateness, grammar, spelling, logic, or organization.

Follow this procedure:

1. Write the topic at the top of your paper
2. Write as much as possible