

Writing as Shepherding Practice

Robyn Braun, PhD

The Writing Process

Most Important Point

- Think of the reader as a small child or a puppy. It is your responsibility to shepherd the small child or puppy safely from point A to point B.
- Guide the reader from point A to point B by ensuring that all your information is connected.
- All information should be connected to the thesis statement and all information within the essay should connect.

Your Process

- Be aware of what you need to write.
 - Do you need to outline extensively? Do you need to work with references by your side?
- Develop habits that make writing possible.
 - Writing first thing in the morning can create a sense of accomplishment for the day.
- Develop automatic procedural or mechanical writing functions.
 - Mimic writing techniques you see in scholarly writing.

Getting Organized

- Keep your material organized in whatever format is going to work for you.
- Allow yourself time to organize your materials before you start to write.
- Keep your references and citations as completely and accurately as possible!

Writing an Outline

- It's never too early to begin an outline and there are many starting points.
 - You can begin an outline once you have a sense of the literature and your place in it, or once you have a hypothesis, or once you have some results.
 - Outlining helps you organize your thoughts and can help you think more clearly about your topic.
 - You will organize and re-organize your outline many times over the course of the writing process.

Writing for Coherence

- Paragraphs, sentences and words should connect the ideas within the text.
- Put old information first and new information last.
- Structure the paper so that you are guiding the reader from one idea to the next.
- Structure paragraphs so that you are guiding the reader from one paragraph to the next.
- Structure sentences so that you are guiding the reader from one sentence to the next.
- Ensure the reader can see how the ideas connect.

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Components of the Essay

Provisional Thesis Statements

Definition: A thesis statement provides the governing principle of the essay's organization as well as its arguable claims.

Function: The thesis statement articulates and limits the scope of the essay and guides the reader's expectations for what's in the essay.

Drafting a Provisional Thesis Statement – How To

- How does your research answer these questions: Why? How? What? What if?
- What claim do I want to make?
- Consider your results in light of the literature review and ask yourself “so what?”

Provisional Thesis Statement Checklist

- Does the thesis statement reflect the restrictions that your essay puts on the subject?
- Does the thesis present a proposition that can be supported with the evidence?
- Does the thesis statement answer the question, “so what?”
- Can you draft an outline for the essay using the thesis statement?

Writing the Introduction – How To

- Use the introduction to contextualize the thesis.
- Use the introduction to establish your paper's organization.
- Use the introduction to tell your reader the connections you are going to make in the paper.
- Use your outline to write the introduction.

Introduction Checklist

- Does the introduction tell the reader what you will argue?
- Can the reader anticipate the direction your paper will take?
- Does the introduction create reader expectations?
- Does the paper deliver on those expectations?

Conclusion – Dos and Don'ts

Do use the conclusion to tie up your paper's arguments.

Do use the conclusion to convey and clarify what you want the reader to know.

Don't use the conclusion to introduce new ideas or evidence.