

Tips for Writing a Rough Draft



- A good technique for getting ideas is free writing. Set yourself a period of time — say, 10 minutes — and write anything that comes to mind without pausing to think about it. The goal here is to write continuously for the entire period of time. What you write doesn't have to be on the subject. The process of doing free writing helps open up the "ideas" areas of the brain. Writers usually use free writing to get ready for the process described below.
- Yet another technique for getting ideas is brainstorming: set yourself a period of time — say, 10 minutes — and write everything that comes to mind concerning the subject. What inspired you about the subject? What confused you? What made you mad? All those things may lead you to your main idea.
- Once you have a general idea of your topic, you can make a list of everything you want to say about the subject. Listing is done without concern for spelling, punctuation, or grammar. Those things come later! After the list is finished to your satisfaction, you can number the points on the list in the order that you want to present them. This numbered list serves the purpose of an outline. Many writers write their first drafts from their numbered list.
- In order to free your mind to develop ideas, you should not worry about mechanics in the writing of your first draft, unless mechanical errors distract you and you feel compelled to correct them. In his book *How a Writer Works*, Roger Garrison wrote, "Premature editing doesn't make writing dull; it makes it dead. A collection of correct sentences that have no content sometimes gets you a good grade in high school but almost never does in college."
- It's important that your paper proves a point or answers a question. The best way to make your case is with lots of specific examples. If I write that Callie Khouri is a very smart woman, I won't be nearly as convincing as if I write that Callie Khouri is the Academy Award-winning author who wrote *Thelma and Louise* and *Something to Talk About*.
- People tend to be able to grasp ideas best if they are divided into three parts. Therefore, it is useful to present your case with three main ideas, points, and/or specific examples.
- Five paragraph essays are not the only way to write a paper. Use as many paragraphs as you need. Keep in mind three things, however:
 1. The introductory paragraph or paragraphs should contain your thesis statement. It usually comes at the end of the first paragraph but can go elsewhere if you have a good reason.
 2. The ideas presented in the introduction should be in the order you will present them in the body of the paper.
 3. If you deal with one point in two paragraphs, try to use two paragraphs for the other points if possible. Don't add random material just to even up the space used, though.
- Many writers write their introductions after they've written the rest of their essays. It's easier to introduce the material after you know what you're actually saying.

