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# The Writing Process

## - An Introduction

### WHAT IS THE WRITING PROCESS?

Knowing and understanding the writing process will help you in focussing on your ideas, organising your ideas, reducing errors in your writing, and sharing your work. The writing process consists of four stages: (1) prewriting, (2) drafting, (3) revising and editing, and (4) sharing. Read about the four stages in the sections below.

### 1. Prewriting

Before you begin writing, you need to determine your purpose, topic, and audience.

The **purpose** of your paper is your reason for writing it, and this largely depends upon the genre you are writing. For example, you may write a letter telling a friend what you experienced during a world event, or you may write a report to provide information to your audience about some aspect of science.

The **topic** is the subject about which you are writing. It could be a person, place, thing, idea, or event.

Your **audience** is the person or group of people who will read your writing. Knowing your audience is important as it helps guide you in your selection of information and how to present it.

Next, it is time to brainstorm, record, and organise your ideas. During the **prewriting** stage, you will use graphic organisers and outlines. Both of these are writing tools to help you brainstorm what you want to write about and organise how to present your ideas in writing it. While it may be tempting to jump right into your paper, it is important not to skip this step since your prewriting is what informs the writing of your paper. In this book, you will learn how to use specific prewriting tools for each genre.

### 2. Drafting

Using your prewriting from the previous step, it is time to turn your notes into an actual piece of writing. This step, where you flesh out your ideas, is known as **drafting**. Your main goal in writing your draft is to get your thoughts down on paper. Don't get caught up in things like spelling; you'll have time to fix errors in the next step.

## Why is this sample a good note?

Let's take a look at why this is a good example of a note.

- (1) The note is written on a card or stationery, as is evident by the “stamp” at the top.
- (2) The first element of the note is the **date** it was written. Notice how it is flush left.
- (3) Below the date is the **greeting**. The greeting includes an introductory word followed by the name of the note's recipient. Examples of greetings include the following:

Formal	Informal
Dear (name), Greetings (name),	Hello (name), Hi (name),

“Dear” is the most common greeting used in notes.

- (4) The first paragraph of the note expresses the **purpose**, in this case, thanking the recipient for a birthday gift. Notes usually communicate words of thanks, encouragement, sympathy, congratulations, or good wishes.
- (5) The body of the note expresses the sender's **feelings or sentiments** (e.g., why the gift is special, how happy she is for the recipient's good fortune).
- (6) The final paragraph **restates** the purpose of the note (e.g., Thank you again for your thoughtfulness.).
- (7) The note ends with a **closing**, followed by the sender's **signature**. Examples of closings include the following:

Formal	Informal
Regards, Sincerely, Yours truly,	Cheers, Love, Warm Wishes,

### Sample 3

**Prompt:** Write a letter of complaint to a company about its service/product.  
**Topic:** T-shirt order not received by buyer

3 Childress Street  
Town End  
Bromford, BR5 3FD  
United Kingdom

19<sup>th</sup> June 2010

Mr Nigel Clark  
President  
T-Shirt International  
Unit 7 Fabric Business Park  
Seamstress Rd.  
Sewmitch, SE8 6RT  
United Kingdom

Dear Mr Clark,

On June 1, 2010, I ordered a dozen custom t-shirts from your company. My order number is T789. As yet, I have not received any of the t-shirts I ordered.

I am disappointed with your service in which a two-week delivery time was advertised on your website for all custom orders. Your website misrepresented the prompt service and delivery time for t-shirt orders, which are the reasons I chose to order from

For professional correspondence, use correct **business letter format**. The **return address** is that of the sender.

As with any correspondence, include the **date**.

The **inside address** is that of the letter's recipient.

In a business letter, end the **greeting** with a comma.

For a letter of complaint or compliment, include the date the service was performed or when the product was purchased. Include the order number if available.

Explain the problem in a **neutral voice**, stating the **facts** about what happened.

## Practice

Now it is your turn to show what you know about *business letters*. Use the sample letter to answer the following questions.

(1) Which elements of formatting are the same between notes and letters?

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(2) How does the tone of this business letter compare to the tone of the sample notes?

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(3) What is the purpose of this letter?

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(4) Explain what the word “Enclosure”, after the signature, means.

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## Sample 6

**Prompt:** Write to a teacher in your school requesting a letter of recommendation.

**Topic:** a request for a college recommendation

909 Green Lake Rd.  
Big Timber, MT 87432

September 4, 2007

Mr Terrance Grant  
Unit #4 Timberlake Park  
Big Timber, MT 87432

Dear Mr Grant,

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to write a letter of recommendation for me. My name is Carl Forrester, and I was in your Biology class during my sophomore year at Big Timber High School. I am applying to the Honours Program at Southwestern University where I plan to major in Biology. My admission application is due on Friday, October 15<sup>th</sup>.

State who you are and your **purpose** for writing the letter. Mention a class or classes you had with this teacher.

Although I had always liked my science classes in middle school, I had never considered majoring in any science subject, specifically Biology, until I took your Biology class. After researching schools in the state, I discovered Southwestern University has a world-class Biology program. I also remembered from your class that you mentioned you are an alumnus of Southwestern University.

Explain why you have chosen this teacher to write a letter of recommendation.

My other references are from Coach Johnson and Mrs Kramer. Coach Johnson will talk about my performance on the track team, and Mrs Kramer will be writing about my participation in the Student Council. Your reference would be about my academic ability in an upper level class. As you know, although I am a good student, I still had to study and work for my grades.

Let the recipient know specifically what you hope to receive from him.

If you decide to write the letter of recommendation, it needs to be sent to Dr Eleanor Frank, Department Chairperson of the Honours Program. I would need the letter to be sent to Dr Frank before or on the October 15<sup>th</sup> deadline I have mentioned above.

Make sure you mention your deadline.