

Idea

1 Just beginning

- a Someone else who reads my paper might have trouble figuring out what I'm trying to say.
- b I might not know enough yet about this topic to write.
- c My details are vague: "It was fun and stuff."
- d I'm still thinking on paper. I'm looking for an idea.
- e I'm not sure what my topic is ... OR... maybe my topic is too big: "All about Earth."

3 On my way -- Ready for serious revision

- a A reader would understand my MAIN idea. I could use more information, though. Also, I need to get choosy and toss out details that do not matter.
- b Some details are important and interesting: "She always wore non-matching socks." "The clouds were the color of tarnished pewter." Other details are too general or are things everyone already knows: "She was nice." "It was a July day in Arizona. The weather was warm."
- c My topic is still too big: "Weather" "World Peace" "All About Computers"
- d I think a reader would still have some important questions: "Who's Pearl? I can't tell if she's your aunt or your pet goldfish." "Does global warming affect weather?" "What actually caused the hot air balloon to crash? I kept waiting for your explanation."

5 That's it! Focused, clear, specific, concise

- a My writing brims with details that hold a reader's attention. The main point is very focused and easy to understand.
- b I think a reader would learn something reading this.
- c I showed what was happening ("The wildly spiraling tornado aimed straight for our barn") rather than just telling ("It was scary").
- d My topic is small and focused: "What to do when a tornado hits"
- e Interesting tidbits ("You hear a tornado before you see it") keep my readers reading; no one will get bored and doze off reading this.
- f I included what was important (whether a tornado can really pick up a house) and left out trivia and details not related to my topic (names of hurricanes since 1900).
- g I could easily answer the question: What is the point of this paper or story?

Organization

1 Just beginning

- a My writing doesn't have a real shape or direction yet.
- b I'm not sure where to begin or where to go next.
- c What goes with what?
- d How does my information connect to the main idea?
- e Ideas seem jumbled, scrambled. It's just a list of stuff.
- f How do I end this?

3 On my way -- ready for serious revision

- a It's partly smooth, partly bumpy. Some shape. Some direction. You won't feel lost if you pay attention!
- b I have a beginning, but I'm not sure if it's a grabber. How many readers will keep going?
- c Usually, you can see how I got from point to point, but you might need to make some leaps.
- d Most things are in the right spot. Some things might need to be moved.
- e I have a conclusion. It might not be as punchy or insightful as I'd like.

5 That's it! Clear and compelling, easy to follow!

- a I give my reader a strong sense of direction. The structure of my paper helps make the meaning clear.
- b My opening gets a reader's attention and gives a clue about what's coming.
- c Everything seems in order. You won't feel like reshuffling the deck.
- d I've made the connections so clear you'll see just how details link to the main idea.
- e The pacing is just right. I sped along when there wasn't much to tell, but slowed down when details and close-ups were needed.
- f I didn't stop suddenly or drag the paper out. I ended in a good spot—and with a good thought. My conclusion will make you linger a moment.

Voice

1 Just beginning

- a I don't feel engaged by this topic, so how can I get a reader interested?
- b If you didn't know, I'm not sure you could tell who wrote this. There isn't that much of me in here.
- c This writing might be flat, but it feels safe. I'm not taking any risks here.
- d To tell the truth, this topic bores me. I guess it shows.
- e I've hidden behind a lot of generalities: "School is important." "We should all get an education." "War is brutal." I've said what millions of others have said. It's not personal or individual.

3 On my way -- ready for serious revision

- a I hear myself in spots. My voice booms through for a moment here and there -- then fades to a whisper.
- b I don't think you'll fall asleep, but it isn't strong enough yet to make you laugh, cry, or pound the table.
- c I feel okay about this topic. I might like it more if I knew more or connected it to my own experience.
- d Sometimes I'm speaking to the reader. Other times, I don't even think about having a reader.
- e My writing is right on the edge of being funny, scary, dramatic, or strong. I just can't seem to get there.

5 That's it! It's me! Individual, expressive, engaging . . . hear it?

- a You could tell this was mine if you knew me. It's personal and unique -- like fingerprints.
- b I have put my personal stamp on this paper.
- c I'm speaking right to the reader. I picture my reader. I imagine how he or she will feel reading this.
- d I want the reader to feel what I feel, to see what I see.
- e Because I'm fascinated by this topic, my reader will be curious and involved, too. It's a journey of discovery for both of us.
- f The tone (humorous, serious, businesslike, friendly) and style (casual and chatty or formal and professional) are just right for my topic and for my audience.

Word Choice

1 Just beginning

a I can just picture my reader saying, “What did you mean by this?”

b These words are too general and vague to paint pictures: “Something neat happened.” “It was great.” “She was special.” “We had fun.” “We liked to do things and stuff.”

c Some of my words are mistaken—oops, I mean, misused.

d I use the same words over and over; it’s just those same words, over and over. They’re words, but they’re the same. And I use them over and over until my paper is over.

3 On my way -- ready for serious revision

a These words get the general message across. But I don’t see many “quotable moments.”

b My reader will figure out what I mean, but I’m not stretching here.

c I’m settling for basic meaning. It’s clear. But it could use imagination, flair, pizzazz.

d Did I write to impress? Well, I may have engaged in the practice of jargonistic over-inflated expressionism for the purpose of creating an impression. Did it facilitate your engagement—or generate decline in your attention quotient?

e Instead of settling for “The sun set,” I could have said “The sun sagged into the outstretched arms of the trees.”

f Tired clichés are like little anchors in my paper: “Bright and early,” “Quick as a flash.” A few original phrases—“Freeze drying is a sort of mummification of the 90s”—breathe life into the text.

5 That’s it! Fresh, original, precise. Every word counts.

a I searched. I stretched. I found just the right words and phrases to make my meaning clear.

b Look at my energetic verbs: leaped, raged, tumbled, flailed, quaked, moped, launched, pitched, shrieked, wheedled, nudged.

c Some words or phrases will linger in your memory...”The pond was alive with frogs.” “I went headfirst into murky, shadowy waters.” “Not everything about chocolate marshmallows is sweet.”

d The words I’ve chosen will help my reader picture what I’m talking about, and understand my message.

e Not a word is misused. Every word carries its weight.

f I’ve considered my reader, and used words that will be appealing, informative, and understandable. You might even learn a new word or two reading this.

g No clichés, no redundancy—except for effect. I rejected jargon in favor of language that speaks to readers.

Sentence Fluency

1 Just beginning

a This paper is hard to read aloud, even with practice.

b As I read, I find myself stopping, going back, rechecking the meaning.

c I’m having a hard time telling where one sentence ends and the next begins.

d Help! Some of these sentences don’t make sense.

e All my sentences begin with the same two or three words.

f I’ve got a problem! Either (1) everything is strung together in one endless “sentence,”

OR (2) many choppy tiny sentences make for a bump-bump-bumpy ride.

g I’d need to do a lot of oral editing (putting words in, taking words out) to make this clear for a reader.

3 On my way -- ready for serious revision

a It’s pretty easy to read aloud if you take your time, but I wish it sounded smoother in places.

b I’ve noticed something about my sentences. My sentences are all about the same length. Maybe I could combine some. Maybe I could shorten others.

c I could use some connecting phrases—*When this happened... Later... Another thing to consider... On the other hand... For example... Nevertheless... However*—to show how ideas are linked.

d These sentences are readable and clear, but wordy! I should cut some deadwood.

e Here and there, I really like the way I strung words together. It’s smooth—easy to read.

5 That’s it! Smooth, rhythmic, easy to read. It just flows along.

a These sentences almost sing. It is very easy to read this paper aloud with lots of inflection (expression).

b Some sentences are long and stretchy, some short and snappy.

c Sentence beginnings vary and show how ideas connect with phrases like... *As a matter of fact, Next, On the other hand, Taking a closer look at the evidence, Looking at it from a different perspective, To cite another argument, In addition, etc.*

d Excess baggage has been cut. These sentences are lean and clean.

Conventions

1 Just beginning

a My editing is not under control yet. You might need to read once to decode, then again to focus on meaning.

b Spelling errors our commun, evin on simple werdz.

c I sometimes, used, “punctuation,” where it, wasnt needed and in other places’s I forgot to put it in

d Or I use the wrong punctuation??

e i’ve got capiTAI IETTERs scaTtered around, or else i forgot to use them at all.

f I haven’t got the hang of paragraphs yet. When do you indent again? After each sentence? Each page?

g The truth is, I haven’t spent much time editing this paper.

3 On my way -- ready for serious editing

a I took a look. I made corrections. But some bothersome little mistakes still need cleaning up before I’m ready to publish.

b You won’t find BIG GLARING errors—the kind that make it hard to understand what I mean.

c Little hard-to-spot errors, though? Yes, you’ll find sum—uh, make that some.

d Spelling is correct on most simple words. I may have small errors on big words. Is it broccoli or brocoli?

e Sentences and most proper nouns begin with capitals.

f I used paragraphs. Do they ALL begin in the right spots? I need to check.

g Minor problems with grammar or usage could make a careful reader pause now and then.

Subjects and verbs agree, but I’m not always sure about who and whom, I and myself.

h My paper is readable, but it’s a draft shy of “ready” when it comes to editing. I’ve put most of my effort into getting the message across.

5 That’s it! Edited, polished, correct. Beautiful!

a There are so few errors in this paper, you’ll have to hunt for them!

b It would be a snap to get this ready to publish.

c I have used capitals correctly.

d My spelling is accurate; I have checked words I did not know.

e Paragraph indentations clearly show where discussion of a new topic begins.

g Punctuation is used correctly and makes it easy to read and interpret each sentence.

h Grammar and usage are correct and consistent.

i My conventions are as formal as they need to be, given the purpose and audience for this writing.