

## 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.