

An Overview of the Writing Process

Writing is thinking. It generates ideas by encouraging the kind of sequential, cause-and-effect thinking that leads your mind into new territory. Researchers have spent years studying this sequence of thinking, and have found that writing involves distinct cognitive acts that generally build one upon the other as the writer works through a project. We can both identify these stages and develop the tools and skills we need to manage the challenges we will face at each stage.

Good writers can and often do move backwards as well as forward in the process. Thinking and writing are not linear. When you write a draft, for example, you might discover that you need to collect more information about one example, which might lead you to revise your focus, which might lead to a new draft. Don't worry if you find yourself moving back and forth between the stages. That's actually a good thing.

While every writer has different ways of handling the particular challenges at each stage, the basic shape of the process holds true for any writing task. Most problems we face result from something we did, or failed to do, in the preceding stages of the writing process.

