

CHAPTER 10: THE PLANNING AND PRE-WRITING STAGE

This chapter deals with the interim stage between your research and the writing stage—the crucial pre-writing or planning stage. Here, you learn how to draw your ideas together into an argument, how to work on your introductions and conclusions, and how to plan an outline and formulate a thesis statement.

Learning Objectives

This chapter seeks to answer the following kinds of questions:

- What are the basic kinds of essay types?
- How can you summarize your research notes by means of précis or paraphrase, and what is the difference?
- What are the basic ways of organizing a formal essay?
- How do you lay out and follow an outline?
- What is a thesis statement, and how does it lead a reader through your argument?

We all face deadlines and wish that we had all the time in the world to complete our research, preparation, and revision before we hand in that important final copy. You know ahead of time the deadlines for your assignments and can usually make reasonable projections about the demands on your time. Many students face the greatest difficulty just before the writing stage. Panic sets in when they have gathered the appropriate research materials and must formulate them into a coherent argument. The transition from research to entering the first page of an essay on the computer is the subject of this chapter.

Here is a detailed outline of Chapter 10:

Learning Objectives

Different Expectations and Different Essays

Are There Different Essay Standards?

Pre-writing

Kinds of Essays

Expository Essay

Persuasive Essay

Problem Essay

Research Essay (Formal Essay)

Review Essay

Informal Essay

From the Readings and Research Data to the Organization of the Essay

Organizing Your Reading Notes on Your Word Processor

Organizing Your Research Materials by Source

Organizing Research Thematically

Grouping Research Materials

Methods of Organizing an Essay

Process or Pre-determined Order

Parallelism, Comparison, and Contrast

Classification and Analysis
 Illustration and Example
 Thesis Statement
 Outline or Essay Plan
 Submitting Drafts or Outlines for Comment
 Chapter Summary
 Further Readings

FAQs

I think I have finished my research. Now do I just start writing my assignment? Writing without planning assumes that the material you have gathered has a pre-existing pattern of organization, a false assumption. To write effectively you have to organize your research materials systematically, according to demands of your assignment and the kind of argument you are trying to make. Begin by grouping your ideas and your research materials together, and formulate a topic sentence that explains how each group of materials fits into your overall argument. Once you have a pattern for your entire argument (which can be adapted), begin to write sections of it.

What is a thesis statement and why do I need one? A thesis statement introduces your reader to your argument by summarizing it, usually in one assertive sentence. It guides your reader by outlining your method, and briefly indicates the plan and main divisions of your argument. You have probably formulated a working thesis statement at the planning stage of your essay. But do not feel that you have to write it in its final form when you are working on the opening paragraphs of your essay. Revise the thesis statement as you work. After you have completed the argument for your whole paper you can incorporate a thesis statement in its final form into the opening paragraph. A thesis statement should complete a sentence that begins something like this: “I shall argue that . . . , and my analysis will use the categories of . . .” Check with your instructor about whether you can use the first person pronoun in your thesis statement.

WEBLINKS FOR CHAPTER 10

- “English Works!” from Gallaudet University has numerous links on planning an essay and the pre-writing stage
<http://depts.gallaudet.edu/englishworks/tablecontent.html>
- Luciano Floridi’s site at Wolfson College, Oxford has advice on “How to Write a Philosophical Essay” with a section on planning the essay
www.wolfson.ox.ac.uk/~floridi/howtowri.htm
- On developing a thesis from the University of Wisconsin
www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Thesis.html

- Planning an Essay with tips on getting started from the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_plan1.html
- Writing with Computers from the Hyper Text Books page at the College of DuPage
http://papyr.com/hypertextbooks/engl_103/compwrit.htm
- Writing a Thesis Statement from the University of Indiana
www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/thesis.html