

Module 1: Tools for Success
Topic 3 Content: POWER Up Your Writing

Prewrite

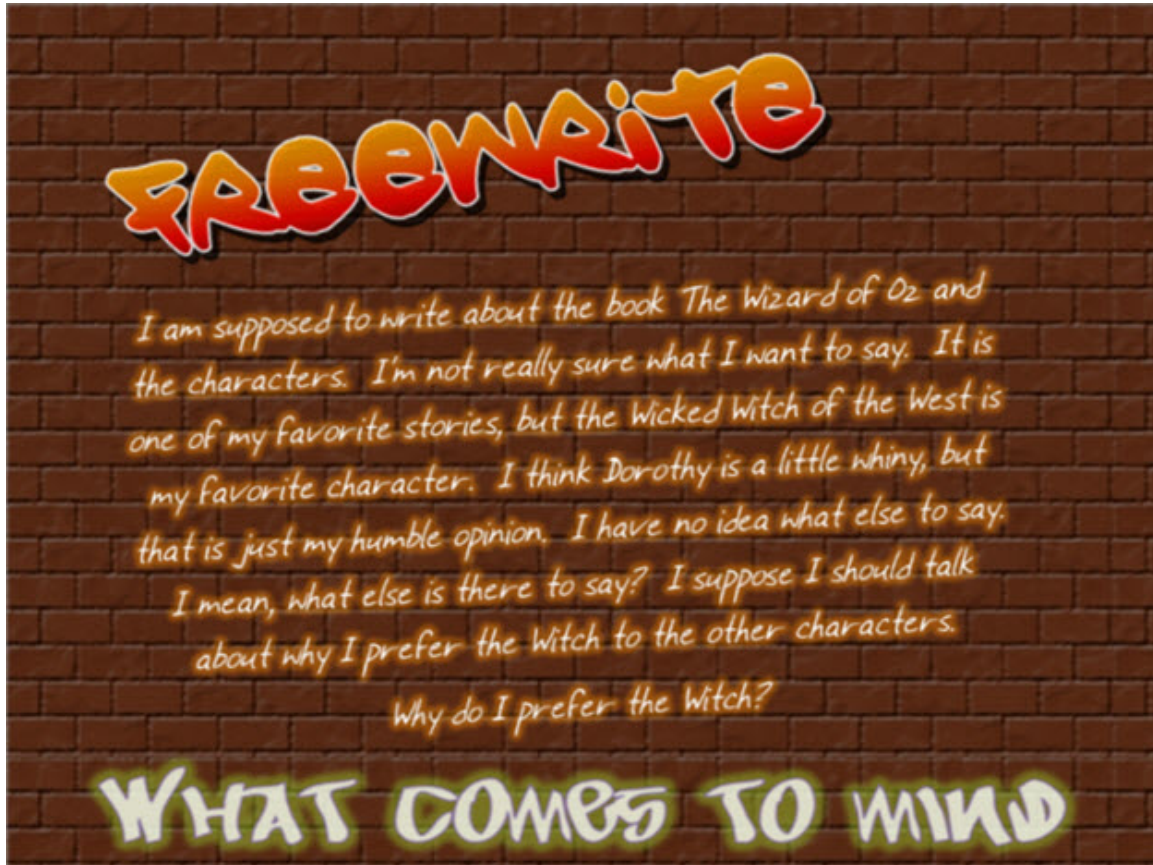


Before you start writing, you should always take the time to prepare yourself. Think about what you want to write about, figure out what the writing assignment is asking, and do your research. This is all part of the first step of the writing process: Prewrite. Prewriting is just what it says... everything that happens BEFORE you write.

Here are examples of several prewrite activities.

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Freewrite



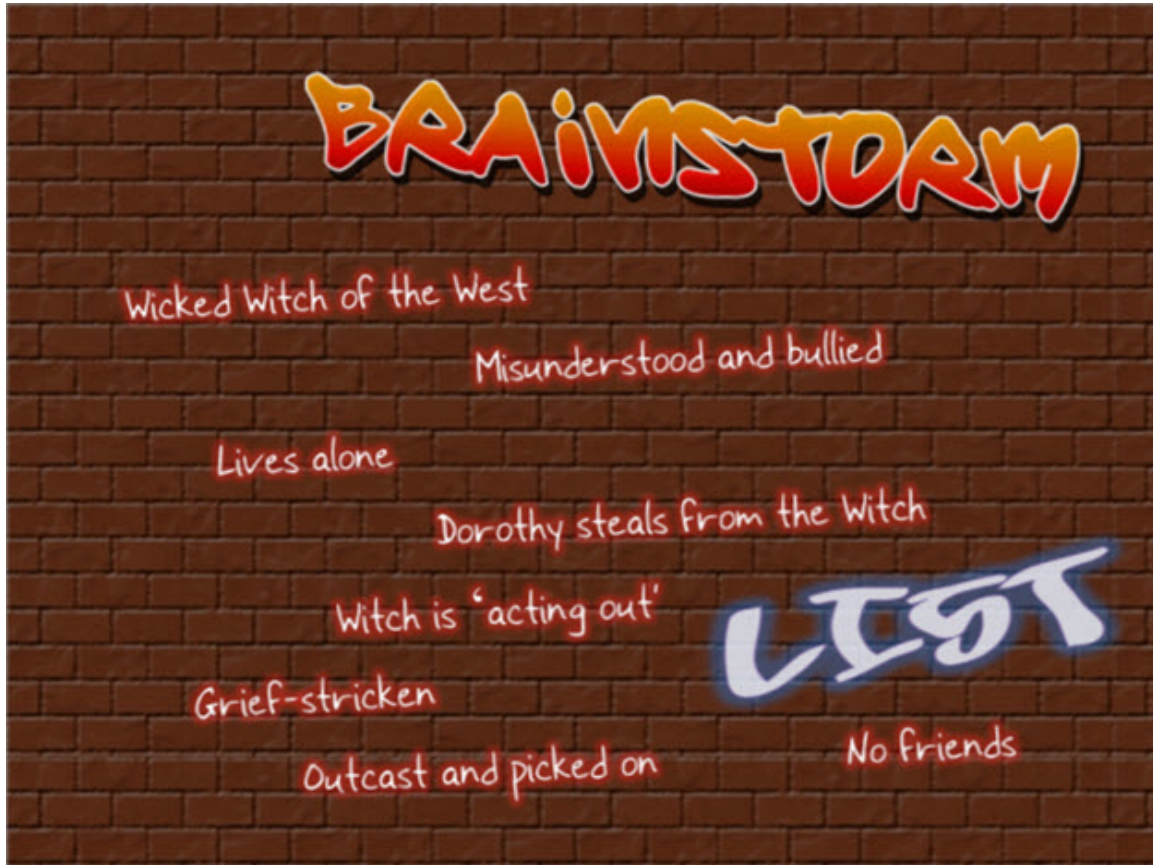
Freewriting is exactly what it sounds like. When you freewrite, you write what comes to mind without any worry about complete sentences or correct grammar. This allows you to express your initial thoughts about a topic without self-editing or judgment.

For example, you might write:

I am supposed to write about the book The Wizard of Oz and the characters. I'm not really sure what I want to say. It is one of my favorite stories, but the Wicked Witch of the West is my favorite character. I think Dorothy is a little whiny, but that is just my humble opinion. I have no idea what else to say. I mean, what else is there to say? I suppose I should talk about why I prefer the Witch to the other characters. Why do I prefer the Witch?

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Brainstorm



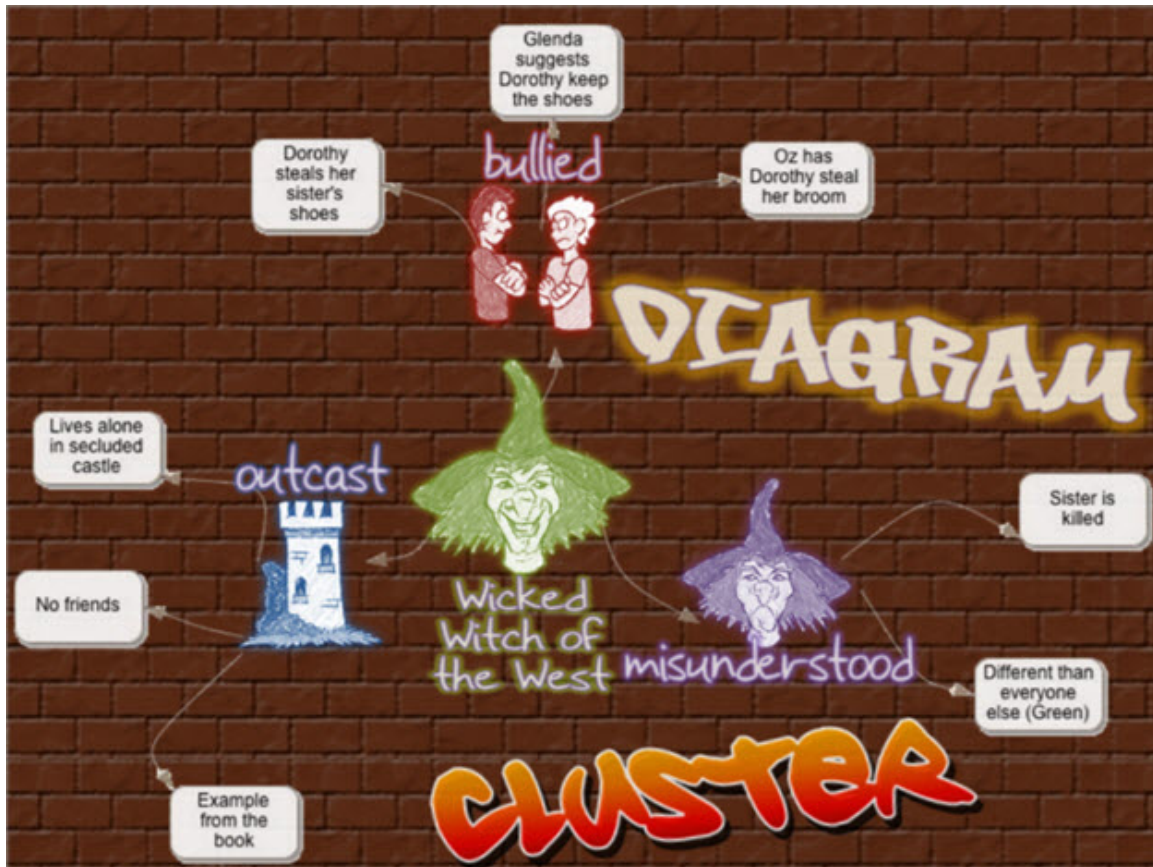
When you brainstorm, you make a list of what comes to mind. As with freewriting, there is no need to worry about complete sentences or grammar when you brainstorm. It is more important that you get your thoughts and ideas “down on the paper.”

For example, you might brainstorm the following items about the Wicked Witch of the West:

- Misunderstood and bullied
- Lives alone
- Dorothy steals from the Witch
- Witch is ‘acting out’
- Grief-stricken
- Outcast and picked on
- No friends

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Cluster/Diagram




When you cluster, you diagram what comes to mind. You can include thoughts, ideas, images, and sketches in your diagram. Many students are most familiar with this technique, which is also called webbing or bubbling.

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KWL

WHAT I KNOW	WHAT I WANT TO KNOW	WHAT I LEARNED
The Wicked Witch is the antagonist in the story.	Why is the Witch outcast?	
She is green and disliked.	Why is she green?	
Dorothy is the protagonist.	Did Baum have any social/political motives behind writing the book?	
Dorothy mistakenly kills both the Witch of the East and West.		



The KWL technique is a chart that you can use to organize your thoughts. It not only helps with getting started, but helps with the research process. A KWL is an ideal strategy to use when beginning a research project. At the top of the chart, you list what you know, what you want to know, and what you learned after conducting your research.

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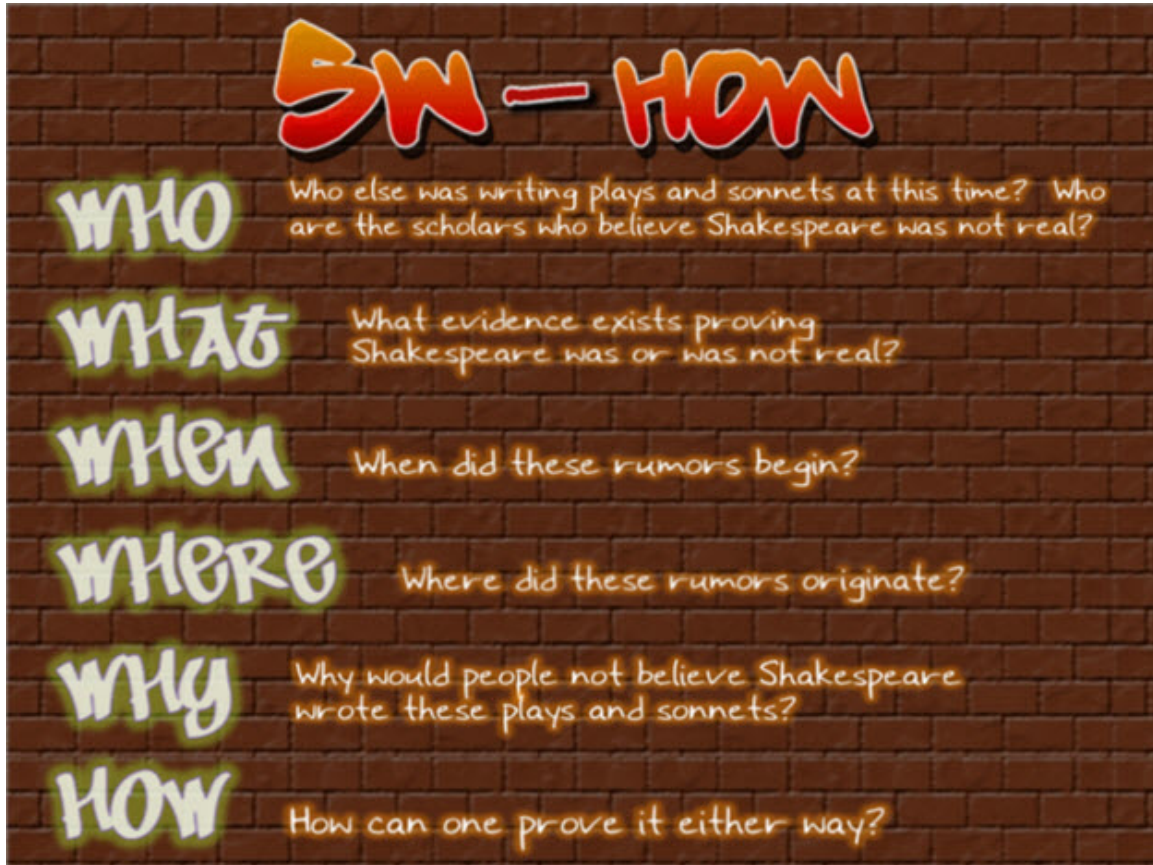
Explore Your Ideas



After you have compiled your initial thoughts, it is time to explore. This is the step in prewriting where you will do any research that is needed, as well as expand upon the ideas from the previous prewriting activities. If you are conducting research, make sure to keep accurate records and to follow any guidelines provided to you in the assignment.

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Five W and How



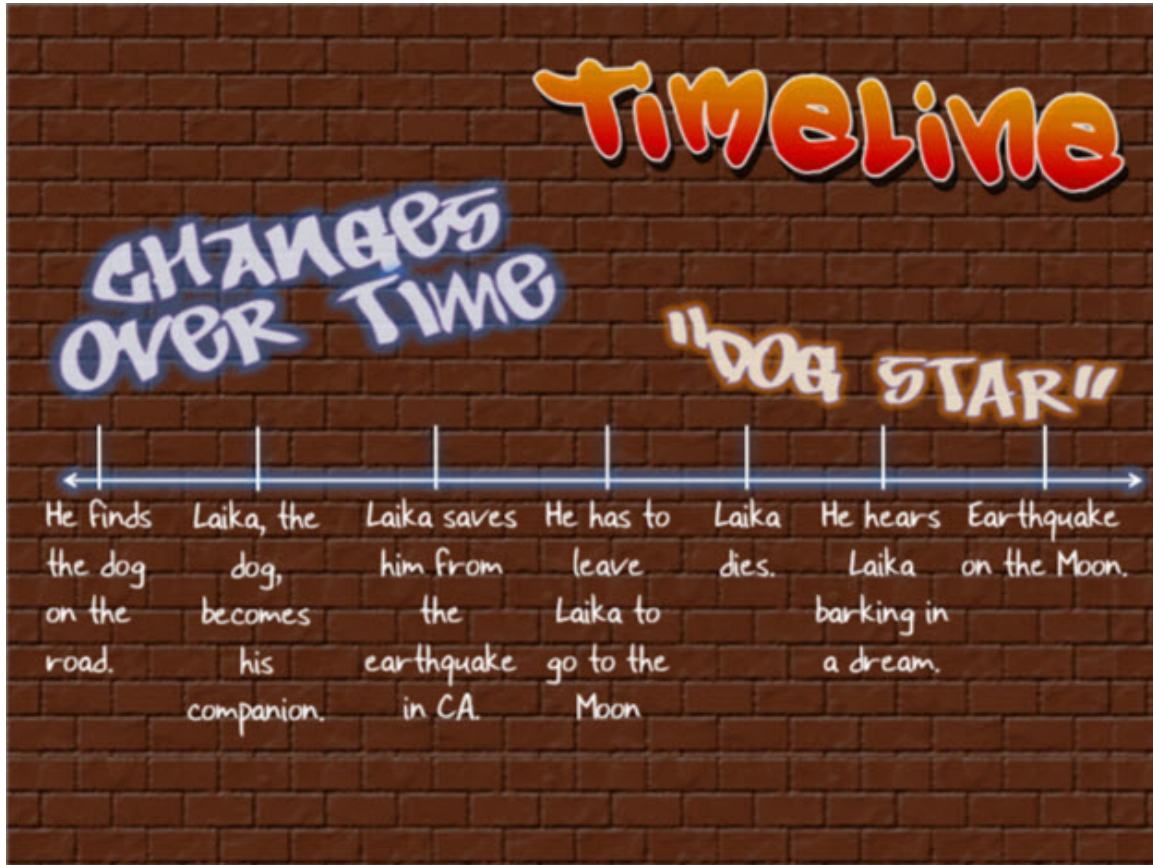
With the five w and how technique, you ask *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* about your subject. This is where you create your research questions, in other words, you figure out what you will research.

For example, pretend you were assigned the following prompt for an essay:
There is speculation among scholars about the authenticity of William Shakespeare's writings. Some believe that William Shakespeare was not real, that someone else wrote all of this plays and sonnets. Research this controversy and develop and defend your own opinion.

Based on this prompt, your five w's and how might look like this:
WHO? – Who else was writing plays and sonnets at this time? Who are the scholars who believe Shakespeare was not real?
WHAT? – What evidence exists proving Shakespeare was or was not real?
WHEN? – When did these rumors begin?
WHERE? – Where did these rumors originate?
WHY? – Why would people not believe Shakespeare wrote these plays and sonnets?
HOW? – How can one prove it either way?

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Timeline



With a timeline, you draw a sequential diagram which covers the changes in your subject over a period of time.

Shown here is an example of a timeline for a writing assignment that asks a student to discuss how the use of flashback moves the plot along and creates suspense in the short story "Dog Star."

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Chart

MISUNDERSTOOD	BULLIED	OUTCAST
Witch is acting out	Dorothy steals from her	Lives alone
Grief-stricken	Picked on	No friends

CHART

DIVIDE IDEAS INTO LOGICAL PARTS

In the chart method, you divide ideas about your subject into logical parts using a chart.

This example uses the ideas generated in the previous brainstorming example that analyzed one of the characters from the story *The Wizard of Oz*.

- The Wicked Witch of the West
- She is misunderstood and bullied.
- She lives alone.
- Dorothy steals from the Witch.
- The witch is “acting out.”
- She is grief-stricken.
- She is outcast and picked on.
- She has friends.

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Narrow Your Focus

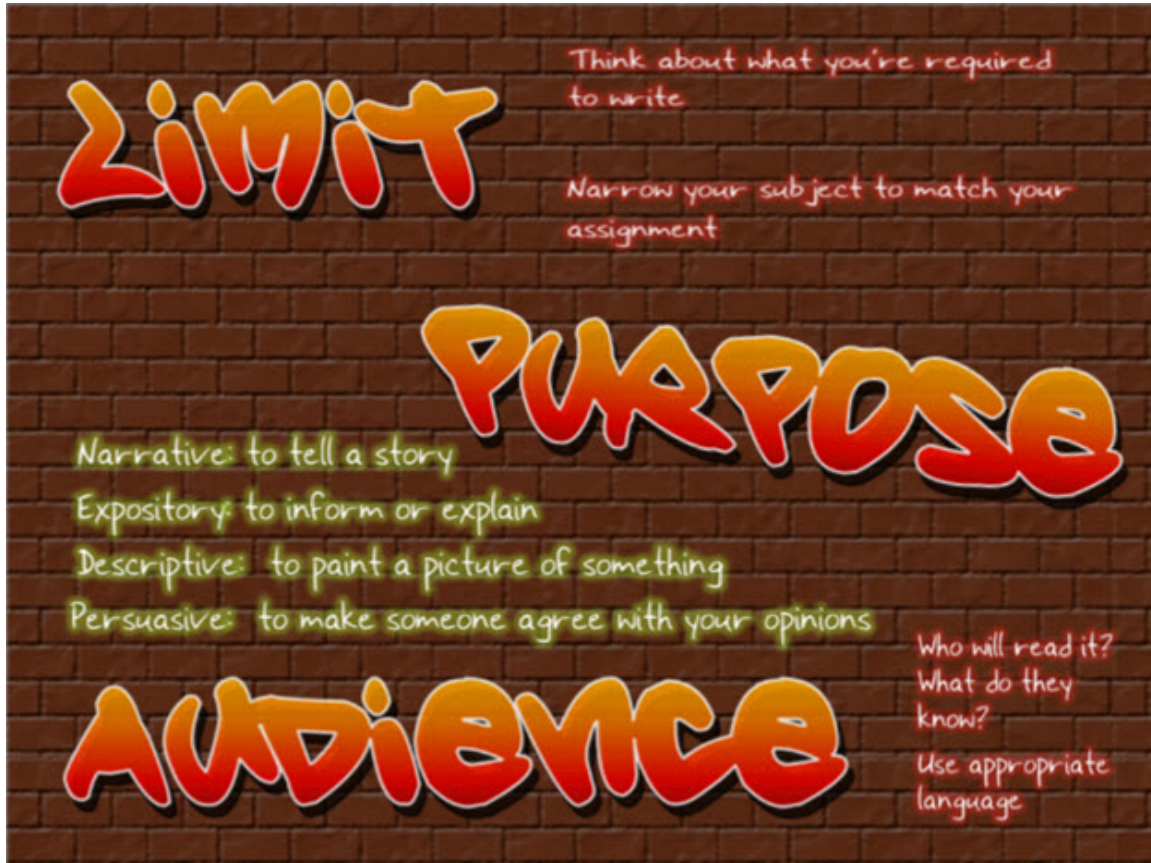


Now that you have an idea of what to write about, now you need to start to narrow your focus. This is the step in prewriting where you limit the topic and identify your purpose and audience.

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Limit, Purpose, and Audience



First, you should limit your subject, making sure not to make your subject too narrow or too broad.

- Think about what you are required to write. Is the requirement a paragraph or an essay?
- Narrow your subject to a topic that has enough information to match your assignment.

Next, identify your purpose. What kind of writing will fulfill the purpose and the requirements of the writing assignment?

- Narrative writing tells a story.
- Expository writing informs an audience or explains a subject.
- Descriptive writing paints a picture of something using sensory words.
- Persuasive writing attempts to make someone agree with your opinions.

Finally, identify your audience or for whom are you writing.

- Think about who will be reading what you are writing. Also, think about what the audience may already know. For instance, if the audience is a baseball player, and the essay is about baseball-related injuries, the essay does not have to cover what a bat is.
- Use language appropriate for the intended reader, which is your audience.

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Plan



Once you have completed the prewrite step, then it is time to get organized. At this point in the writing process, your head is full of all that great information you just found and fabulous ideas about which you want to write. Before you start typing away, or scribbling on that paper, however, you need to form a plan. This is the second step in the writing process: Organize.

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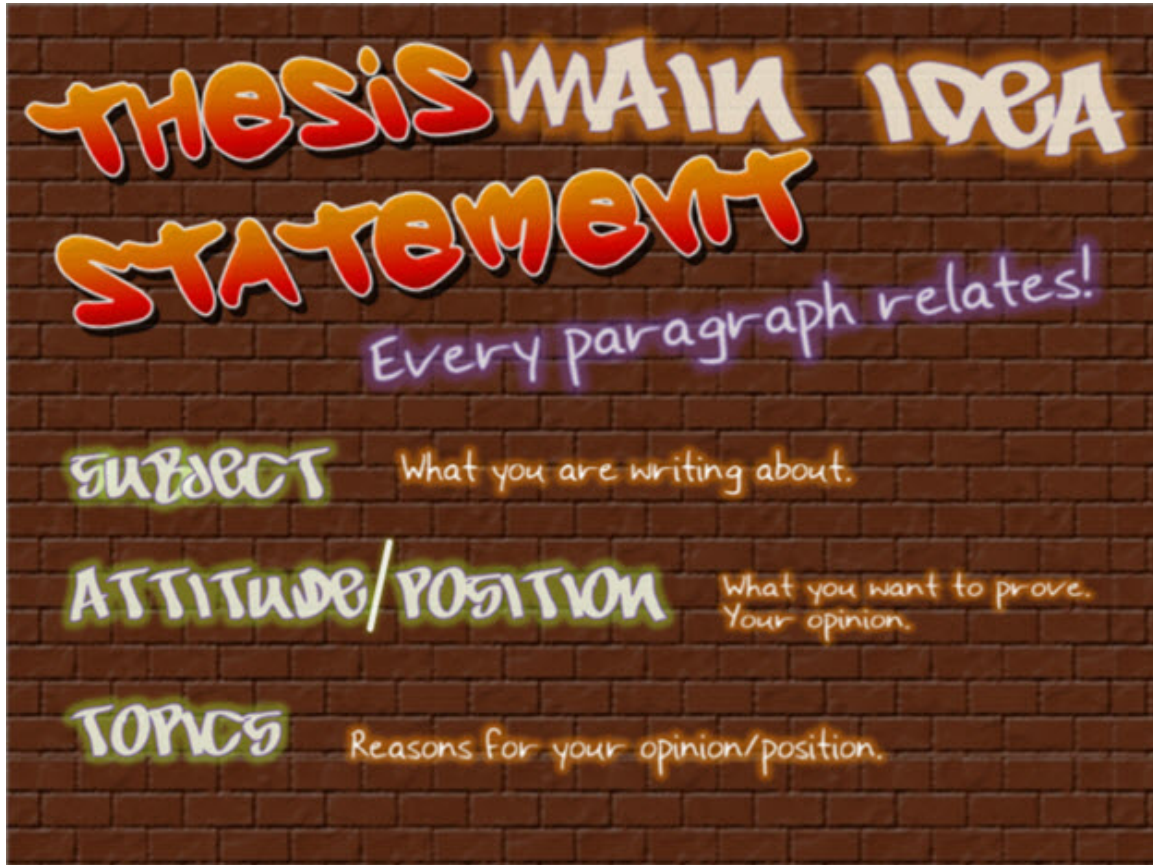
Format



The first step in organizing your ideas is to decide on a format for presenting your information, which is based on the purpose of your writing. For instance, a narrative may take the form of a short story, an expository or descriptive writing may take the essay format, and a persuasive writing could be a speech.

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Thesis Statement



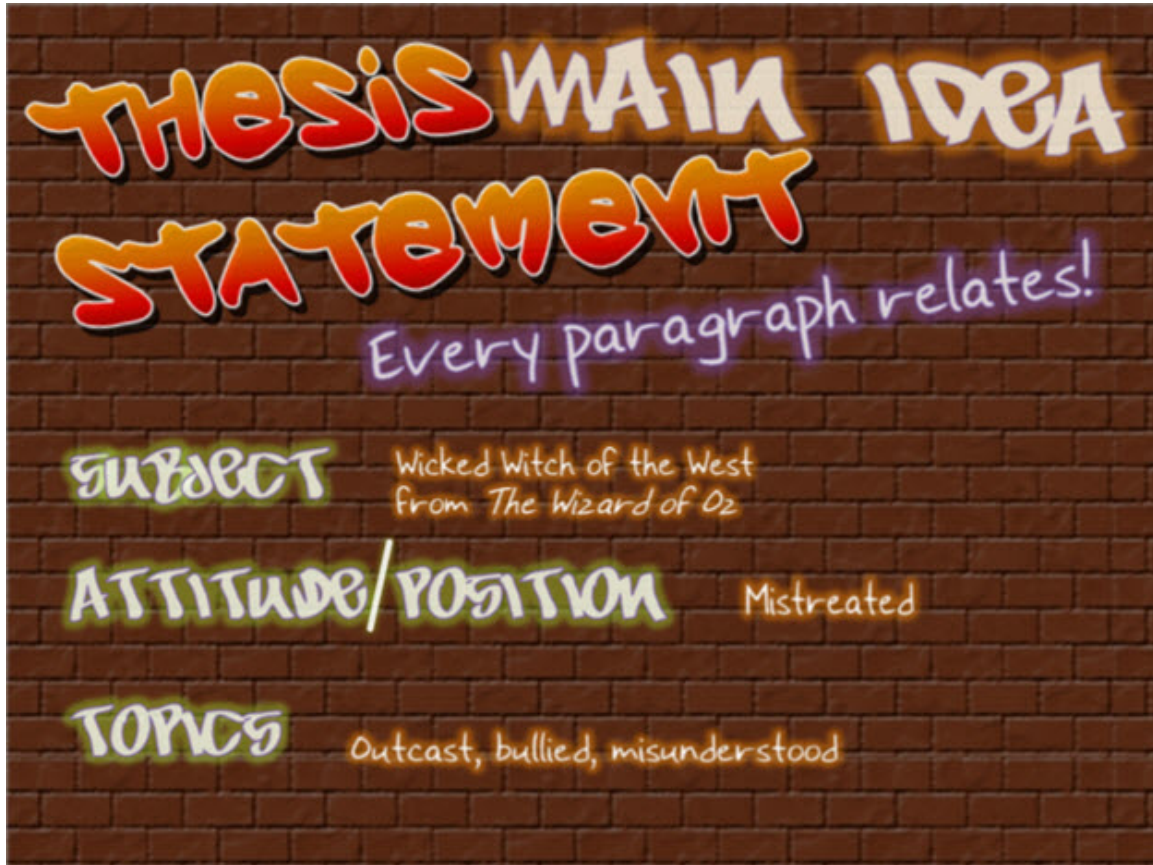
The next step is to develop a working thesis statement. A thesis statement is the main idea of your entire essay. This is the driving force behind your essay, and can help keep you focused and on track. Every paragraph in your essay needs to relate directly back to this sentence.

A good thesis statement has three parts:

- The subject tells what you are writing about.
- The attitude or position explains what you want to prove about the subject; your opinion about the subject. This cannot be merely fact. It has to be an opinion that you can prove and debate.
- The topics include how you are proving your point. These are the reasons for your opinion and the “because” answers to your position.

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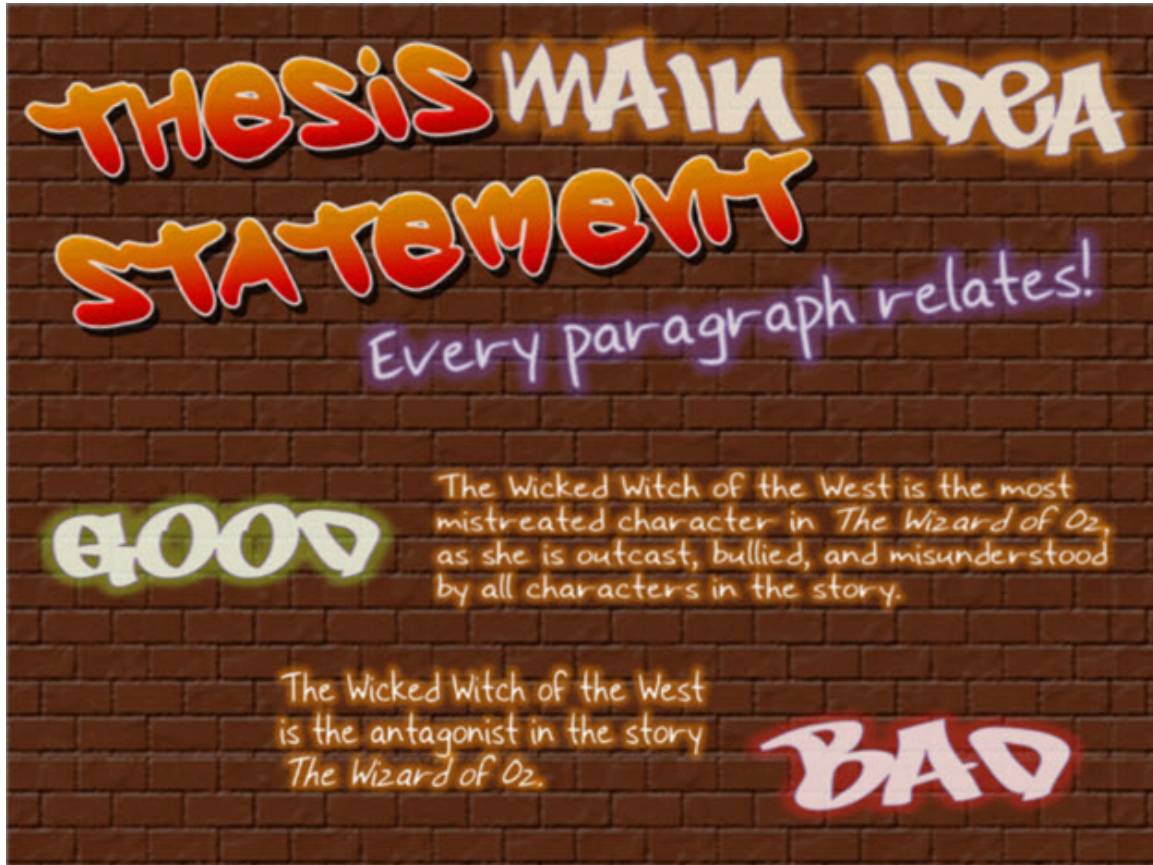
Thesis Statement (continued)



To develop a thesis statement for the Wicked Witch of the West writing assignment, your subject would be the Wicked Witch of the West from *The Wizard of Oz*. The attitude or position is that she is mistreated, and the topics would include that she is an outcast, bullied, and misunderstood.

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Thesis Statement (continued)



Taking all those points into account, a good working thesis statement would be: The Wicked Witch of the West is the most mistreated character in *The Wizard of Oz*, as she is outcast, bullied, and misunderstood by all characters in the story.

A bad thesis statement would be: The Wicked Witch of the West is the antagonist in the story *The Wizard of Oz*. This is a bad thesis statement because it is a fact. It cannot be debated.

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Outline

Outline

GROUP ORDER

THESIS: The Wicked Witch of the West is the most mistreated character in *The Wizard of Oz*, as she is outcast, bullied, and misunderstood by all characters in the story.

I) The Wicked Witch is an outcast.

- a) Lives in an isolated and remote castle.
- b) Has no friends.
- c) Rejected by other characters.

II) Dorothy, Glenda, and all the other character bully the Witch.

- a) Glenda threatens to drop a house on the Witch.
- b) Dorothy kills her sister and steals shoes that should go to the Witch.
- c) The Wizard of Oz send Dorothy and her group to steal the Witch's broom.

III) No one tries to understand the Witch's motives.

- a) She is feared because she is different.
- b) Not allowed to mourn her sister or recover stolen property?

The final step in organizing your thoughts and ideas is to create an outline. When developing your outline, group all your related ideas together. Then, order your ideas into subsections based on the purpose of your essay. Notice in this example outline, each of the topics listed beside each Roman numeral relates back to the thesis by working to prove the opinion or position given in the thesis statement. Beneath each topic are points that illustrate, explain, or support each topic.

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Time to Write



Now that you have all of your ideas gathered and organized, it is time to write! This is the third step of the writing process. It may sound a little odd that you do not start writing until the third step of the writing process. You need to gather and organize all of your ideas first. Next, you need to pick the point of view and verb tense for your essay and start writing. Make sure to use your outline from the organize step. If you have a good working outline, all you need to do is fill in the details to create your own piece of writing.

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Point of View

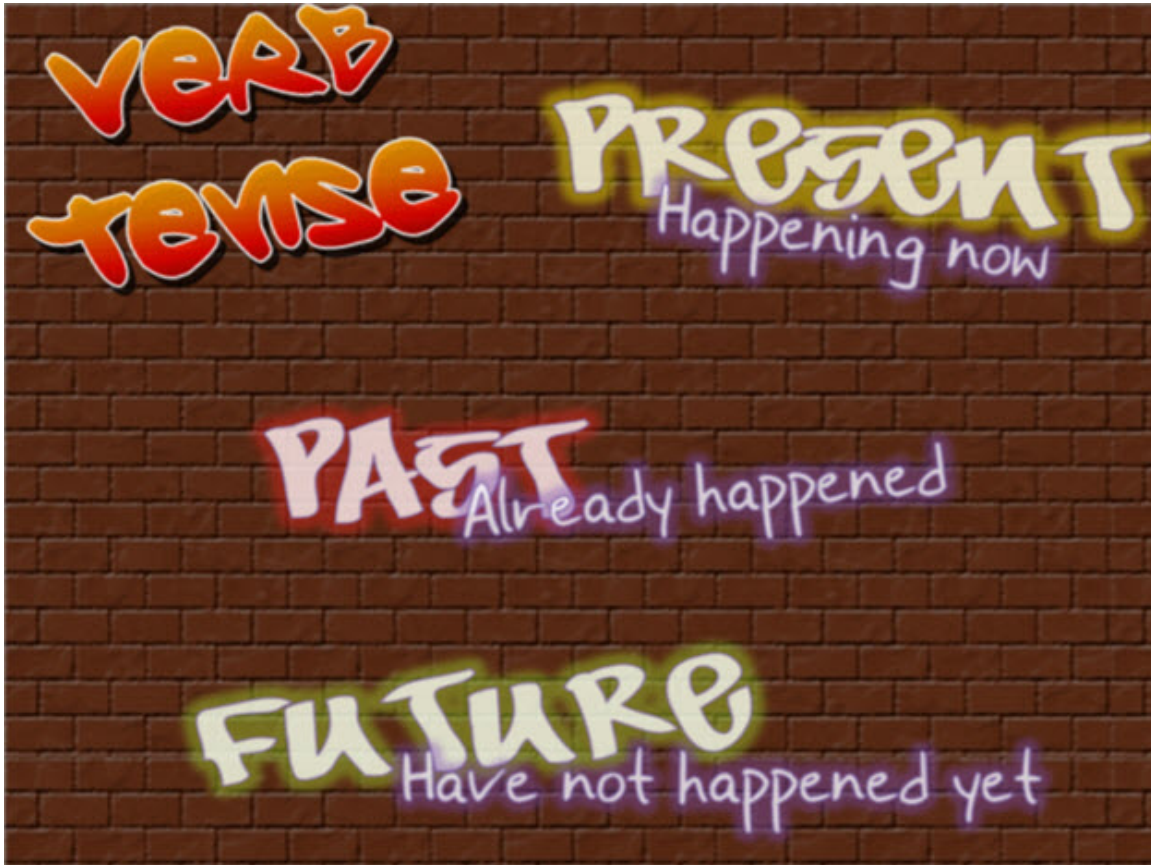


The point of view (or POV) you use depends largely upon the type of writing needed for the assignment. The following are different points of view that you can use:

- First person – You should use the first-person point of view for personal narratives or eyewitness accounts. Examples of words associated with the first person include I, we, me, and us.
- Second person – The second-person point of view is rarely used, and when it is used, it is mainly for process essays and directions. Examples of words associated with the second person is you and your.
- Third person – Third-person point of view is the most common point of view used for academic writing. Examples of words associated with the third person is he, she, it, they, him, her, and them.

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Verb Tense



Next, choose your verb tense, then stick to it throughout your writing. The following are the different verb tenses that you can use:

- Present – The present tense is best for writing about events that are happening now. This tense is ideal for stories and narratives. An example would be “I write.”
- Past – The past tense is used when writing about events that have already happened. This tense is best for most academic writing. An example would be “I wrote.”
- Future – When writing about events that have not happened yet, use the future tense. This tense is best for persuasive essays. An example would be “I will write.”

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Edit



The fourth step of the writing process is mainly concerned with proofreading. In the edit step, you look for all of those errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics – in other words, the “silly” mistakes. When you edit, make sure to:

- Carefully check the writing for mechanical errors, such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
- Check that your sentences are complete.
- Check that you have followed the proper format for the writing assignment.

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Revise



The final step of the writing process is to revise. The revise step is all about making sure that what you have written makes sense, that you have stayed on topic, and that you have included all the necessary details. It helps to have someone else read your essay at this point to help you make the necessary corrections. Make sure to check:

- To see if what you have written is consistent with your prewriting choices.
- For sufficient details and elaborate and add more where necessary.
- To see if you have repeated yourself and delete where necessary.
- That your vocabulary is appropriate for your audience.
- For unrelated information and delete where necessary.