

# **PLANNING STRATEGIES**

## **Make A Plan “To Do”**

This plan focuses on how you will accomplish your goals. What do you expect the piece of writing to do for you? What writing strategies will you need?

## **Make A Plan “To Say”**

This focuses on how you will use information to accomplish the goals in the “To Do” plan. The best plan combines information from the “To Say” plan with strategies for using that information from the “To Do” plan. Move from the “To Do” plan to the “To Say” plan by looking for connections between the purpose, audience and context for your writing.

## **Adjust the Plan If Necessary**

Plans can be abandoned if they don’t work or if you discover something new while writing. Try planning in different ways:

- Plan and write.
- Plan, abandon and replan.
- Write, then plan.

## **Reveal the Plan to the Reader**

The opening problem/purpose statement should do two things:

- 1) Explain the problem, issue or thesis that will be the focus of the article.
- 2) State the purpose of the article—how you will solve the problem, examine the issue or explain the thesis.

# **FOCUS**

A problem-solving approach can help you explore a problem, narrow it and arrive at a thesis.

## **Establish the Purpose**

Good writing is interesting to the reader and accomplishes something for the author. To establish purpose ask the following questions:

- What is the article’s purpose? Does it show, establish, explain, describe, prove?
- What point does the article make—and why is it important?

## **Relate the Purpose to Audience**

A writer must understand how reading his/her article will change what the audience thinks, feels or knows about the topic.

## **Problem Analysis**

- **Define the conflict or key issue.** Most real-world problems represent a conflict between two goods or between the conflicting needs of two groups. Real problems are complex and difficult to solve without some compromise.
- **Place the problem in a larger context.** Step back and get a broader view by considering the social, political, economic, historical or legal setting.

- **Make the problem definition specific and concrete.** Explore the constituent parts of the problem. Break it up into manageable parts.
- **Come to an open-minded conclusion.** Show the reader that you have seriously considered the alternatives, recognized the implications of your position and have taken a reasoned stance.

### **Establishing a Thesis**

Once you have defined and explored the problem, you will have the information you need to make an assertion about the topic. A strong thesis is one that makes an assertion, then defends it with reason and evidence. Theses can take different forms:

- Assert that a problem exists.
- Assert a hypothesis or new understanding of the problem.
- Assert a solution to the problem.

## **GENERATING IDEAS**

### **Brainstorming**

- **Listing.** List all ideas you can think of that relate to the topic.
- **Clustering.** Write the main topic in the middle of a sheet of paper, circle it and draw lines to the next idea in the cluster. This method reveals connections between ideas.
- **Treeing.** The idea cluster takes the shape of an inverted tree. Start with the most general idea at the top and “branch” into more specific ideas.
- **Freewriting.** Give yourself about 10 minutes to write on your topic without stopping to think or correct grammar, spelling or punctuation.

### **Analogies**

- **Personal.** Put yourself in the position of problem solver.
- **Direct.** Compare your topic to something concrete.
- **Symbolic.** Compare your topic to an abstract principle.

### **The Aristotelian Topoi**

- **Definition.** Define key terms or concepts that are crucial to the discussion. Are there conflicting definitions of these terms? Are you debating them or simply adopting one? How does your definition affect your position?
- **Comparison/Contrast.** Use the discussion of the differences and similarities between two objects, options, courses of action, to make your case.
- **Cause/Effect.** Show the connection between taking an action and a possible outcome.
- **Evidence.** To prove an argument, make judicial use of data, statistics and expert opinion.

## **The Journalist's Questions**

The five Ws:

- Who
- What
- When
- Where
- Why

## **Burke's Pentad**

- **Act.** What action is in question and why is it important?
- **Agent.** Who performed the action and how does the performer's position affect what has happened?
- **Agency.** By what means was the action performed and how does this affect the outcome?
- **Scene.** In what context did the action occur?
- **Purpose.** For what purpose was the action performed?

## **Tagmemics**

- **Particle.** Consider your topic as a thing in itself.
- **Wave.** Consider your topic as a thing changing over time.
- **Field.** Consider your topic as a thing with context.

# **ORGANIZATION**

Organizing well begins at the highest level, that of your idea or focus. If you are having organization problems, first ask whether you have a clear focus. Can you point to a problem/purpose statement or thesis early on? If so, then you may just need to reorganize your argument; if not, then you probably want to clarify your purpose before you reconsider the presentation of your ideas.

## **Expanding Code Words**

Look for key words that have a great deal of meaning to you, but which may not be clear to the audience. Defining these terms will help you to consider the order in which you present ideas. Before you discuss a key concept, you must give your reader a definition to work with.

## **Nutshelling & Teaching**

By putting your ideas into a few sentences, you can sort out the more important points from the less important supporting information. Teaching ideas to a willing listener will force you to think about how to present them so the audience will be able to follow and understand.

## **Building an Issue Tree**

The issue tree can help you organize before you begin writing. It gives you a structure for your article. The issue tree is an upside down tree that allows you to arrange your ideas in a hierarchical order. The top level represents the most-inclusive idea and each lower level

represents a less inclusive idea. Issue trees also help a writer sketch out ideas and relationships; visualize the whole argument/thesis to see how the pieces fit together; generate new ideas.

## **WRITE FOR THE READER**

When we write, we often record ideas as they occur to us. This isn't always the best way to communicate with a reader. The following strategies will help transform "writer-based" prose into "reader-based" prose the audience needs to understand your message.

### **Analyze the Audience**

Thinking about the needs of the reader helps at any stage of the writing process. Determine the audience's knowledge and attitude toward your topic as well as its needs. How much does the audience need to know about the topic and how will its attitude affect your presentation?

### **Anticipate Your Audience's Response**

People read creatively by supplying a context for what they read, making predictions about what will come next and organizing ideas into a hierarchy. How should you structure information so the reader will understand your point?

### **Sources**

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