I Getting Ready to Write

Purpose
Audience
General topic
Specific topic / Focus
Selection / Elimination / Addition
Organization
Outlining

II Writing

Stay focused
Follow your outline
Simplicity

III Editing / Re-Writing / Proofreading

General contents

Sentences
Subject-verb-pronoun-object agreement
Conjunction usage (but, and, or)
Orphan pronouns
Punctuation and capitalization
Grammar and usage

Paragraphs - General / Body
Indent first line / line space
Topic sentence
Supporting sentences
Optional: conclusion sentence

Introductory paragraph
State the topic
Define the limit and scope of the paper
Thesis statement that clearly expresses your position/opinion

Conclusion paragraph
General summary of main points
Re-expression of thesis statement
Organization

This is a jumble of objects of different shape, size, and color. They can be organized in different ways, just like your ideas. When you first think of a topic, your ideas will be disorganized, just like the shapes on this page. Your purpose, audience, opinion, etc., will determine the best way to organize them. You might organize them by time (forward or back), importance (small to great or great to small), location, quality, etc. You will also need to eliminate any irrelevant ideas or facts that don’t support your thesis, even if they are true.
Note that these shapes have been organized first by color, then by shape, and finally by size. You will do the same thing in organizing ideas for your paper. Note that the blue diamond and purple star have been eliminated because they did not fit the structure of the organization. Once your ideas are organized, you will form them into an outline.
Here are some ideas for a short paper on the topic of things tourists should do when visiting Chicago:

- navy pier
- natural history museum
- museum of science and history
- horse racing
- gambling nearby
- football (Bears)
- ethnic neighborhoods
- ethnic food
- ethnic festivals
- lakefront
- Chicago River
- beaches
- basketball (Bulls)
- baseball (Cubs, Sox)
- art museum
- architecture - suburbs
- architecture - downtown
- hockey - Blackhawks

Here are some ideas for a short paper on the topic of things tourists should do when visiting Osaka:

- architecture
- Bampaku Park
- Bunraku
- Ethnological museum
- Namba / Dotombori
- Osaka Castle / Osaka Castle Park
- Osaka Dome
- Osaka University
- Outdoor farmhouse museum - Toyonaka
- Shinsaibashi / Ame-mura
- Shitennoji monthly festival and market
- Sky Building
- Sumo
- Suntory museum
- Tempozan
- Tennoji Zoo
- Tony’s house
- Umeda - shopping

Choose one of these lists and try to organize them. Eliminate ideas if you want to or add your own. Put the ideas into groups, and order them with the groups. You can order them by location, cost, or degree of interest.
Compare and discuss your organization with several classmates.

Below is one way to organize the Chicago activities:

**sports**
basketball (Bulls)  
baseball (Cubs, Sox)  
football (Bears)  
hockey (Blackhawks)  
soccer (Fire)

**culture**
art museum  
architecture - suburbs  
architecture - downtown  
etnic neighborhoods  
etnic food  
etnic festivals

**general sightseeing / recreation**
museum of science and history  
navy pier  
natural history museum  
horse racing  
lakefront  
gambling nearby  
Chicago River  
beaches

Once this organization is done, the next step is to make an outline. It’s important to note that so far we’ve just been THINKING and dealing with IDEAS. WE STILL HAVEN’T WRITTEN A SINGLE SENTENCE. It’s important to have a a good, solid plan BEFORE we start writing. Sometimes it’s necessary to change your outline, but try to do it BEFORE you start writing. This is one reason why it’s dangerous to wait too long before you begin working on your paper: you need to give yourself enough time to think about what you’re going to write.

In our example, further thought indicated it was better to make the lakefront a separate category, and to move the ethnic items into the category of general sightseeing.

**Chicago lakefront**

- navy pier  
- beaches  
- boating  
- bicycling  
- concerts  
- movies  
- festivals (3)  
- parks  
- museums  
- skyline  
- lake shore drive  
- shopping  
- people watching  
- fireworks
Sometimes we discover that our topic is too broad or too general. In this case, we have so much information about the lakefront, we’ve decided to change the focus of our paper to JUST the things a visitor to the city can do at the lakefront. Really, we’re almost starting over. Instead of the colored shape analogy, we'll use what’s called a “mind map.”

Things for tourists to do when visiting Chicago’s lakefront
Whatever method you use, the ultimate goal is to organize your ideas into an outline. Here’s what an example of an outline might look like for this paper:

**Topic:** Things for tourists to do when visiting Chicago's lakefront

**Thesis statement:** Even if you have a short time, there are many, many things for tourists to enjoy on Chicago’s lakefront.

**Outline:**

I **Introduction**
- Topic explained - what’s the paper about?
- Limit & scope of the paper: Chicago lakefront, tourist attractions
- Thesis statement: Even if you have a short time, there are many, many things for tourists to enjoy on Chicago’s lakefront.

II **Sightseeing**
- Lake Shore Drive
- Lake
- Skyline
- Navy Pier
- Lincoln Park Zoo
- Architecture

III **Recreation**
- Beaches
- Swimming
- Boating
- Bicycling
- Parks

IV **Culture**
- Art Institute
- Outdoor and indoor concerts, classical and jazz
- Outdoor movies

V **Major City Festivals**
- Blues Fest
- Taste of Chicago
  - Food
  - Rock music
  - Fireworks
- Jazz Fest

VI **Conclusion**
- Summary of main points
  - sightseeing
  - recreation
  - culture
  - festivals / city support
- Repeat of thesis statement
- Concluding sentence(s)
Once you have your outline, you can BEGIN writing. Don’t try to start writing until you have a solid working outline. The outline is your blueprint for your paper. No one would start building a house without a blueprint; a detailed plan is necessary so that everything is in its proper place. The organizational patterns of written English are VERY different from those in written Japanese. Make a good outline and FOLLOW IT. Trying to write a paper without an outline or straying too far from it will mean trouble for you and your paper.

For a short paper, each of these sections would become a paragraph. For a longer paper, more research would give you more detail for each item in the list, and each item would become its own paragraph.

Here is what a short paper paragraph would look like for the “Major City Festivals” section:

The City of Chicago actively supports citizens’ use of the lakefront by sponsoring several major festivals each summer in Grant Park, a huge, sprawling, beautiful park right on the lake front. The first, the Blues Festival, is held in early June. Chicago, of course, is the home of the blues, and world-famous blues artists from Chicago and all over the world can be seen and heard. The Independence Day weekend is time for the biggest festival. The Taste of Chicago is a three-day food orgy at which restaurants from all over the city set up stalls in Grant Park to sell small portions of their various specialties; come hungry and gorge on fajitas, gyros, dim sum, pierogi, pad thai, bulgogi, sushi, or even a Chicago hot dog. Meanwhile, a three-day rock festival provides background music from three stages. The weekend ends with a spectacular fireworks display. The end of summer is marked by the three-day Labor Day weekend Jazz Festival. Chicago’s winters are long and severe, so all Chicagoan make the very most out of every summer day; have a great time and join them.
EXERCISES

The following exercises have been borrowed or adapted from Ready to Write and Ready to Write More by Karen Blanchard and Christine Root.

Choosing a Topic Sentence

Choose the best topic sentence for each of the following paragraphs and write it on the line provided.

EXAMPLE:

______________________________________ . Many of the buses need repair work. City officials say there is not enough money to fix them. They will borrow money from the state.

a. The city needs the money.
b. The city needs money to fix the buses.
c. The state has lots of money.

The correct answer is b.

1. ______________________________________ . The city needs more money and will have serious problems if it is not raised soon. We need money to pay for new roads and the repair of old roads. We also need money to pay teachers’ salaries and to pay for services such as trash collection. In addition, more tax money is needed for financial aid to the poor.

   a. Taxes should be raised.
b. Many teachers are not paid.
c. Tax money is used to build new roads.

2. ______________________________________ . It will be more difficult for you if you wait until just before Christmas. Many stores run out of the more popular items, so it will be harder for you to find what you want. The stores are also more crowded, and the lines are much longer.

   a. Shopping is difficult.
b. The stores are crowded at Christmas.
c. It is better to do your Christmas shopping early.

3. ______________________________________ . Many people enjoy it even though it is expensive and dangerous. A lot of people spend every winter weekend skiing, and many families go on winter ski vacations. Neither the high cost of equipment nor the severe cold keeps skiers away from the slopes.

   a. Skiing is expensive.
b. Skiing is a popular sport.
c. Skiing has many disadvantages.
4. For example, a person can have breakfast in New York City, board an airplane, and have dinner in Paris. A businessman in London can instantly place an order with a factory in Hong Kong by picking up the telephone. Furthermore, a schoolboy in Tokyo can turn on a TV set and watch a baseball game being played in Los Angeles.

   a. Airplanes have changed our lives.
   b. Advances in technology have made the world seem smaller.
   c. The telephone was an important invention.

5. First of all, you must consider the quality of the university's academic program. The university's size and location should also be given careful thought. Finally, you must always be sure to consider the tuition before you decide which university to attend.

   a. It is expensive to attend a university in the United States.
   b. There are many things to consider when choosing a university.
   c. A good education is important.

Writing a Topic Sentence

Decide what each of the following paragraphs is about. Then write a topic sentence in the space provided. Make sure your topic sentence is neither too specific or too general.

EXAMPLE

   Miami is a nice place to take a vacation. It is always sunny and warm. The beaches are gorgeous with soft, white sand and beautiful, blue water. There are many fine restaurants in the Miami area, and most of the big hotels offer terrific entertainment nightly.

1. He has collected stamps and coins ever since he was a child. He is very proud of his valuable collections. He also enjoys painting and drawing. Recently he has become interested in gardening. Out of all his hobbies, Paul's favorite one is reading. He tries to read at least one book every week.

2. First of all, the plumbing doesn't work properly and the landlord refuses to fix it. I also have noisy neighbors who keep me up every night. Furthermore, there are so many bugs in my apartment that I could start an insect collection.

3. Some people hijack airplanes for political reasons. Others do it for financial reasons. Still others hijack airplanes because they want to be famous.

4. Books have been our main source of information for centuries. I can pick up a book and be in another place or another time without leaving my room. I could spend my whole life reading books.
5. I can’t wait to come home from school to eat the delicious meals she has prepared. She is always experimenting with different ingredients and recipes. No one in the world can cook the way my mother does.

6. It never starts in cold weather and uses too much gasoline. The horn and the left turn signal don’t work properly. I wish I could get a new car.

7. First of all, the work is very interesting. I learn new things every day, and I get to travel a lot. Secondly, my boss is very nice. He is always willing to help me when I have a problem. I have also made many new friends at my job. And last, but not least, the salary is fantastic.

8. My plane was six hours late. The hotel was horrible. On the third day my wallet was stolen, so I lost all my credit cards. It rained every day I was gone except for one day, and on that day I got a terrible sunburn.

Supporting Sentences
Recognizing Irrelevant Sentences

The following paragraphs each contain one sentence that is irrelevant. Cross out that sentence and be prepared to explain why it does not belong in the paragraph.

1. Cats make wonderful house pets. They are very loving and friendly. They are also clean. They don’t eat much, so they are not expensive. Many people are allergic to their hair. They look beautiful.

2. There are several reasons why many American women are waiting until they are thirty years old or older to have their first baby. Some women have good jobs and want to continue their careers. Many American couples have two children. Other women don’t want the responsibility of having children until they are older. Still others are waiting until they are financially secure before they start a family.

3. Running has many positive effects on the body. First of all, it increases the efficiency of the heart and lungs. Running also helps the body develop greater physical endurance. However, many people prefer swimming. Finally, it helps the body become more mechanically efficient.

4. The Japanese automobile industry uses robots in many phases of its production process. In fact, one large Japanese auto factory uses robots in all of its production stages. Some Japanese universities are developing medical robots to detect certain kinds of cancer. Another automobile factory in Japan uses robots to paint cars as they come off the assembly line. Furthermore, most Japanese factories use robots to weld the parts of the finished car together.
5. The packaging of many products is very wasteful. Often the packaging is twice as big as the product. Packaging is used to protect things that are breakable. Many food items, for example, have several layers of extra packaging. Most of these extra layers are absolutely useless.

Identifying Topic and Supporting Sentences

A. Read the following sentences about Springfield Academy, a boarding school for high-school students. There is too much information here for one paragraph. Some of the sentences are about the quality of education. Others are about school rules. Divide the sentences into two groups.

1. ______ Springfield Academy is famous for the high quality of its education.
2. ______ Students are not allowed to leave campus without permission.
3. ______ Students are required to wear uniforms.
4. ______ The laboratories have the latest equipment.
5. ______ Stereos and televisions cannot be played after 7 PM.
6. ______ Most of its graduates attend very good universities.
7. ______ Many of the students at Springfield Academy feel that the rules are too strict and old-fashioned.
8. ______ Students who do not maintain a B average are put on probation.
9. ______ Teachers assign a minimum of one hour of homework per class.

B. Read the following sentences about San Francisco. Two of the sentences are topic sentences, and the rest are supporting sentences. Put a T in front of each topic sentence, and an S in front of each supporting sentence. Then divide the sentences into two groups.

1. ______ San Francisco is usually warm and pleasant during the day.
2. ______ Some of the country’s most famous restaurants and hotels are in San Francisco.
3. ______ There are many things to see and do in San Francisco.
4. ______ The city has many interesting tourist attractions.
5. ______ There are many excellent art galleries.
6. ______ The weather in San Francisco is very pleasant.
7. ______ It is never too hot or too cold.
8. ______ The nightlife is exciting.
9. ______ San Francisco has a ballet company, an opera house, and a symphony orchestra.
10. ______ It is cool and breezy at night.
11. ______ The winters are mild and it rarely snows.
YOU BE THE EDITOR

Find the mistakes in the following paragraph:

There are a lot of interesting things to see and do in New York City. It is home to over 150 world-class museums. These are art museums, science museums, photography museums, natural history museums, and even a museum of seaport history. New York is known for its rich variety of theater, music, and dance. From the bright lights of Broadway and the respected stages at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall to the high kicks of the Rockettes at Radio City Music Hall and incredible jazz at intimate clubs, there is something for everyone. Many people go to New York. For the wonderful restaurants. There are thousands of restaurants to please every palate and wallet. If you are looking for a place to shop, you will find everything you can imagine. With more than 10,000 shops filled with brand names and bargains from around the world, NYC is a shopper’s paradise. As for me, people-watching is my favorite New York pastime.
Presentations and Essays: Spoken vs. Written Communication

Purpose
Whether you are writing or speaking, your general purpose is the same: to communicate an idea to others. The language and other communication tools you use need to be chosen with the goal of maximizing the chance that your idea will be communicated fully and accurately. SIMPLICITY increases understanding. When writing your paper or presentation, keep your language simple. That will make it easier for your audience to understand you.

Speaking vs. Writing
Despite this common purpose, speaking and writing are two very different methods of communication, requiring different language and other communication tools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voice: volume, speed, tone, intonation, cadence, timing.</td>
<td>Paragraphs, text format (underline, italic, bold), punctuation, medium (book, essay, web page, blog, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter sentences, easier words, repetition of main points.</td>
<td>Less need for repetition. Language can be more complex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact</td>
<td>No eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body language</td>
<td>No body language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>No movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate audience feedback</td>
<td>Delayed feedback, if any.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision on the fly</td>
<td>Delayed revision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**English vs. Japanese**

In addition to the differences among languages speaking and writing, there are differences between writing and giving speeches or presentations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Japanese speeches</strong></th>
<th><strong>English speeches</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>begin with apologies</td>
<td>begin with jokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deferential</td>
<td>authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal and emotional</td>
<td>casual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suggestive rather than imperative</td>
<td>rational (facts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>direct, specific</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Japanese writing</strong></th>
<th><strong>English writing</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Direct, specific: opinion, thesis statement, cause &amp; effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circular</td>
<td>Strict paper and paragraph structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Tell, don’t ask or suggest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Support with facts, examples, reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalizations and analogies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dangers of translation**
- words are often not equivalent
- ideas not grouped and split the same way in different languages (i.e., causality)
- paragraph structure
- frequent omission of subject in Japanese
- different ideas about effective support (emotion vs, reason)
- tone
- register
plagiarism |ˈplæɡərɪzəm| noun

the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own.

DERIVATIVES

plagiarist |ˈplæɡərɪst| noun
plagiaristic |ˈplæɡərɪstɪk| adjective

ORIGIN early 17th cent.: from Latin *plagiarius ‘kidnapper’* (from *plagium ‘a kidnapping,* from Greek *plagion*) + -ism.