

THE RHETORIC OF WRITING

I. What do I need to take into account about the situation involved?

What exactly does the assignment call for? Who is my intended audience?

What do I know or can I assume about my audience's interests, concerns, values, attitudes, feelings, knowledge, beliefs, etc.?

What is my subject?

What do I know or can I assume about my audience's knowledge of and response to this subject?

What would my intended audience be likely to know or feel about me?

What do I know and how do I feel about my subject? About my audience?

II. What is my purpose or set of purposes?

What precisely do I want to do to, for, or together with my intended audience? Where and how explicitly should I state my purpose or set of purposes?

What main idea or thesis about this subject does my purpose or set of purposes entail? Where and how explicitly should I state this thesis?

To what extent is my purpose or set of purposes going to be affected by the genre and format?

III. What support should I provide for my thesis?

What strategies of argument should I use?

Factual evidence (inductive argument)?

Analogies?

Examples?

Statistics?

Anecdotes?

Logical proof (deductive argument)?

Axioms or general rules?

Authority?

Analogies?

From where can I derive or develop my arguments?

Personal experience?

First-hand observation?

Conversation with friends or acquaintances?

Radio, television, or films?

General reading?

Research?

Would it be useful to try one of the techniques of invention?

Keeping a journal?

Meditating?
Brainstorming?
Clustering?
Free Writing?
Constructing ladders?
Asking random questions?
Asking journalistic questions?
Asking logical questions?
Exploring the classical topics?
Researching?

How convincing are my individual arguments likely to be?

Is my factual evidence firm and accurate? Are my generalizations sound? Is my reasoning sound?

Overall, given my audience and purpose(s), will there be sufficient support for my thesis?

IV. How should I organize my essay?

What ways of organizing the essay are implicit in or suggested by the assignment, purposes, and support?

Which way would be most effective for my purpose(s) and audience?

What will be the main parts?

Should I point to or explicitly state what the overall design is? Where?

Should I use devices such as headings, enumeration, or typographical spacing to indicate important divisions? Where?

Should I use explicit connections? Which? Where?

To what extent should the overall design be structured according to one or more of the methods of development?

Description?

Narration?

Enumeration?

Comparison/contrast?

Classification?

Illustration?

Definition?

Analysis?

Problem/solution?

Cause/effect?

To what extent should the overall design take into account considerations of audience psychology?

Should I use any of the following principles of order?

From the familiar to the unfamiliar?

From the easy to the difficult?

From the readily accepted to the controversial?

From the weakest to the strongest?

From the least dramatic to the most dramatic?
From the least important to the most important?
From the general to the particular?
From the particular to the general?
From one step to the next?

How should the beginning or introduction be organized?

What audience expectations do I want to fulfill or create in the beginning?

How should I do so?

Stating the thesis?
Describing the problem?
Stating the conflict?
Establishing a larger context?
Sketching the background?
Giving an overview?
Catching the audience by surprise?
Identifying the source of interest?
Presenting an antithesis?
Defining a term?
Relating an anecdote?
Asking a question?
Using a quotation?
Using a combination of strategies?

How should the middle or development be organized? (Same questions as under main parts of the overall design.)

To what extent should the middle or development be structured according to one or more of the methods of development? (See the methods listed under overall design).

To what extent should the organization of the middle be affected by considerations of audience psychology? (See the principles of order listed under overall design.)

How should the ending be organized?

What audience expectations should I fulfill in the ending?

How should I do so?

Returning to the thesis?
Making a recommendation?
Summarizing major points?
Ending with a quotation?
Giving warning?
Making a forecast?
Calling for further study?
Showing applications?
Using a hook?

How should individual paragraphs be organized? How should they flow?

To what extent should I use a topic sentence to indicate the point of a paragraph?

To what extent should I use one of the methods of development to organize paragraphs? (See the methods listed under overall design.)

To what extent should I use an explicit connection to indicate some aspect of the organization of a paragraph?

To what extent should the organization of paragraphs be affected by considerations of audience psychology? (See the principles of order listed under overall design.)

V. How should I present myself in the essay?

What kind of person do I want to be seen as?

What should my voice be like? What image of myself should I project in and through the essay?

How can I convey this image?

How will it tie in with my purpose(s)?

How effective will it be?

What tone should I use?

What attitude(s) do I want to convey toward my subject and toward my views on it? How can I convey this attitude or set of attitudes?

What is my attitude toward my audience?

What feelings do I want to project toward my audience?

How can I do so?

How do my attitudes toward subject and audience tie in with my purpose(s)? How effective is my tone likely to be?

VI. What kind of style should I use?

On a scale from formal to colloquial, where do I want the style to fall?

What features of vocabulary, sentence structure, and punctuation will I need to use to achieve this kind of style?

How readable can I make my style?

How easy will it be to follow the sentence structure?

How effective will the wording be?

Will the wording be precise in denotation?

Will there be any use of jargon?

Will the wording be appropriate in connotation?

Will there be any use of euphemism?

Will there be any use of slanted language? Where?

Will the wording be specific enough?

Will the wording be sufficiently concrete?

Would it help to use figurative language anywhere?

Will the writing be free from distracting deviations from the conventions of edited American English?

VII. How effective is my *essay* likely to be?

Will my handling of thesis, support, organization, voice and tone, and style enable me to accomplish my purpose(s)?