

## D. Composition Instructions

### The Writing Course or Path

Earlier we provided a survey of the whole of English language with *The Twelve Turns of the English Language*. Below, we provide an overview of the composition process as a whole, and the instructions that accompany it.

This overview we call the **Writing Course**, meaning the path one must run or traverse to win the prize: writing well.

**The course has a definite beginning, middle, and end.** There are five checkpoints or stopping posts of the **Writing Course** which are identified with the five fingers of the right hand. Each of the five stopping posts can in turn be broken down into triads, or sets of three additional markers of the Writing Course. This means that there are altogether 15 aspects that must be understood and mastered, but they break down in a logical and consistent manner that is easy to reconstruct from memory. The charts of the Writing Course on the subsequent pages present an inclusive mindmap of the composition process that is easy to visualize, and, therefore, to conceive clearly and to remember distinctly.



WRITING COURSE (I)								
1. Writing Situation			2. Writing Process			3. Thesis Statement		
Author	Subject	Audience	Pre-writing	Drafting	Re-writing	Theme	Ideas	Facts
						One	Few	Many
<p>The writer must know the subject and must write as if speaking to an audience. Even if the paper or composition will only be read and not recited or given as a speech, the writer should write as if the reader is the audience and the writer is the storyteller with a voice, a heart, and a feeling for what he/she says. The writer has to know the audience or reader that s/he is addressing, and whether that reader will identify and relate to her/him. If the reader doesn't identify with the writer, or is turned off or offended by the writer, s/he just quits reading.</p>			<p>The writing process is a cyclic process. The first step is Pre-writing. One lets one's mind give way to Possibility. One lets go. The second step is Drafting. This is where one imposes Limitation on the Possibility conceived of in the first step. One perceives the parts, and holds on to them, and masterfully wrestles them down. The third step is Re-writing. This step is Fulfilment. One adds flesh and body, texture and distinctive features to the shapes and forms brought to paper in the second step.</p> <p>Let the spirit go, let it tap into the unconscious, but then write it down. Concentrate. Give it form. Put it into parts. Give it tangible flesh. Use words that are vital and practical. Do not worry about decorations but note down any metaphors or similes that pop into your mind.</p>			<p>In this step one sorts through what one has written, collates it with relevant facts, statistics, quotations, excerpts, etc. From this evidence, this sea of Facts, one looks for the prominent Ideas. From the few main ideas, one is starting to notice a central Theme, an axis, about which all the writing revolves.</p> <p>One can often do more research to gather more useful information. One clusters the facts into an organized array of main ideas. One begins to see if the main emerging Idea coincides with or constitutes the thesis, and corresponding title, for the composition.</p> <p>Once the thesis is determined, then you can deductively introduce the theme clearly, set out the main ideas and support them, and marshall the facts to prove the thesis. Once the thesis has been determined, you can then actually write the paper in a deductive manner. Thus, you can begin by clearly introducing the theme, then stating the key supporting ideas and developing them, and finally marshalling the facts, statistics, and examples to prove your ideas and unifying theme.</p>		
<p>This fact is summarized in the first three terms of the triads below.</p>			<p>One can compare it to these other triads:</p>					
Tone	Attitude	Effect	Music	Architecture	Sculpture			
Feeling	Thinking	Doing	Creative	Generative	Analytic			
Heart	Head	Hand	Whole	Parts	Pieces			

Before we continue with the fourth and fifth part of the writing course, let's look at a diagram of the dynamics involved here:

WRITING COURSE (II)					
4. Paragraph Development			5. Essay Organization		
Unity	Coherence	Cohesion	Opening	Body	Closing
			Beginning	Middle	End
<p>Pay attention now to each paragraph. Is it on one topic? If not, split it into two. This means each paragraph has <b>Unity</b>.</p> <p>Does each paragraph have <b>Coherence</b>? Is each of its sentences a proportional representation of the parts? Do the statements, facts, or ideas (the parts) clearly and visibly belong together? Does each paragraph contribute a proportional important part of the whole?</p> <p><b>Cohesion</b> refers to the way sentences and paragraphs link together and attach themselves one to another, and on how the essay transitions from one sentence or paragraph to another. From sentence to sentence, we need transition and linking devices. Between paragraphs, we also need transition and linking devices.</p> <p>Have you identified the few important parts which constitute the whole of your subject, and have you described these important parts, given them their proper proportional value and weight?</p>			<p>Now the essay has a shape, a contour, an organization all its own. <b>Check the beginning paragraphs</b>. Are they arresting? Do they bring the reader into your train of thought? Often a quotation or question will suitably catch the interest of the reader. As well, at the beginning, we should hint at or state the main idea. The Opening should not be too long or extensive. State the seed of your thought succinctly.</p> <p>Do the <b>Middle parts</b> have mass and substance and proportion? Trim away and prune off the deadwood or any new, unwanted, wild growth. Be wary of flotsam and jetsam. See how one sentence attaches to and clings to another to form a smooth and unbroken flow. Check again the effectiveness of your transitions between paragraphs. Check the bridges and points of contact between between the sentences.</p> <p>The <b>Closing</b> should be brief, and relate back to the Opening. It should tie together, bring to closure, and summarize the main theme of the essay.</p>		
Unity	Coherence	Cohesion	Top Apex	Base	Bottom Apex

Let us recall the dynamics of the writing process.

Good writing uses images. Through well-detailed descriptions, appropriate analogies, imaginative metaphors, arresting symbols, and other wordsmith devices, a good writer makes vividly and impressionably clear the imagined space and time to which the passage pertains, and the mental and physical states of the participants - be they people, animals, plants, or molecules.

Letting go during the process to let the Unconscious work, and to let the ideas surface and reach the conscious level, is as important as the necessity for focus to attention and rhythm and sound of the words that you have written.

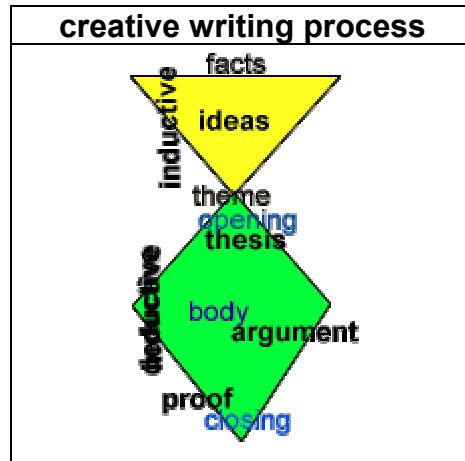


*“The hand that will help you is often at the end of your own sleeve.”*  
– American proverb

Traditional historical essay forms will be taught using a variety of ways to present the details. They include the following:

<b>TRADITIONAL RHETORICAL ESSAY FORMS</b>		
<p><b>Narrative</b> This tells something in chronological order.</p>	<p><b>Definitive</b> This defines the subject of the essay in clear rational terms.</p>	<p><b>Descriptive</b> This describes something in vivid details.</p>
<p><b>Persuasive</b> This uses emotion or emotion to try to convince somebody about something.</p>	<p><b>Argumentative</b> This uses logic to try to convince somebody about something.</p>	<p><b>Expositive</b> This explains clearly something without argument or persuasion. You say how. It explains the subject in easy to understand, sequential language, without bias.</p>
<p><b>Comparative/Contrasting</b> This compares or contrast two or more things.</p>	<p><b>Classifying</b> This sorts something and tells why and how the sorting was done.</p>	<p><b>Illustrative</b> This gives examples or instances that support a main idea or fact.</p>
<b>WAYS TO ARRANGE DETAILS</b>		
<p><b>Emphasis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● simple to complex</li> <li>● familiar to unfamiliar</li> <li>● important to unimportant</li> <li>● unimportant to important</li> <li>● funny to sad</li> <li>● sad to funny</li> <li>● ordinary to extraordinary</li> <li>● general to specific</li> <li>● from ridiculous to sublime</li> <li>● from national to international</li> </ul>	<p><b>Space</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● from outside to inside</li> <li>● from inside to outside</li> <li>● from near to far</li> <li>● from far to near</li> <li>● from local to global</li> <li>● from global to local</li> <li>● from front to back</li> <li>● from top to bottom</li> <li>● from side to side</li> <li>● linear</li> <li>● circular</li> </ul>	<p><b>Time</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● forward time order from the present</li> <li>● reverse time order from the present</li> <li>● forward time order in the past</li> <li>● forward time order in the future</li> <li>● straight line</li> <li>● pulsating, cyclic line</li> </ul>

## INSTRUCTIONS TO STUDENTS ON WRITING AN ESSAY



Once the students have mastered a few sentence forms, have them write a few paragraphs or a short essay on whatever topic they want. There is no restriction on content (within reason and propriety), but they must remember two things: **to include certain numbers of teacher-specified sentence forms, and to footnote them.** This gives the teacher great control and leaves the student with no excuse for not doing the work.

Today, students are told to write on themes with no specifications or guidance on how to produce a variety of sentences. **Students tend to repeat the same types of sentences again and again, and then the teacher must rewrite them (which does the student no good), or simply must give the student vague and general instructions on how to do it over again.**

## SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF CORRECTING STUDENT ESSAYS

Student lethargy and lack of skill and precision in writing a variety of sentences are not the only problems involved in teaching composition to students. Another big problem in teaching composition in high school is how to correct large sets of papers and how to insure steady progress along individual lines. Instructors often avoid trying to teach composition, because correction usually involves rewriting sections of the student's paper for the student, a remedial procedure which doesn't profit the student at all, and is enormously time-consuming

Most teachers do tell students that they should not submit a first draft only, but must rewrite their papers again and again. They tell students to **retain rough**

**copies of their successive revisions.** The fact is, however, most students fail to follow these instructions, no matter how often they are given.

**This system – by demanding endnotes or footnotes - means that students cannot write just anything they want, and then claim they spent hours doing it. It forces them to pay specific attention to what they write, because they must use specific forms.** They cannot write a first draft that demanded no attention. If they have no forms in their papers, the teacher does not have to engage in an argument with the student over how long they did or didn't spend writing their paper. The teacher can simply tell them: *You did not write the sentence forms assigned, so this paper is unacceptable. Please rewrite it with the assigned forms. End of discussion.*

The students, in other words, know that they can't fabricate excuses or talk or manipulate their way out of doing the specified assignments. So they try to find alibis less frequently, and do the work more often. Teachers can assign whatever grade is appropriate without unnecessary argument and debate.

Students are compelled to duplicate the forms. They cannot offer excuses or cop out or fudge the assignment by vague generalizations and verbiage.

For the teacher, moreover, continuous assessment does not become an onerous task. To the teacher, it becomes obvious by looking at the footnotes to see what forms the students have mastered or not mastered. Forms that are lacking or are few in number can become the target forms for the next assignment. Teachers can address student weaknesses, and turn them into strengths. Sheer practice and repetition of the Sentence Forms will produce quality, sooner or later.

A class website could be established at *e-groups.yahoo*, and students could upload their own compositions or sentences, or post them to the discussion board. It then becomes a knowledge asset for the class, the school, and all learners of English in the wired world.

## SENTENCE FORM MASTERY; COMPOSITION CODING POLICY

When first learning the forms, the students should be required to **learn all the individual types of the forms**. They should be tested for their ability

(1) *to recognize*, and

(2) *to write*

each of the individual types or sub-forms of all eleven forms.

Students progressively work with and use the forms until they can quickly recognize such forms in the written works of others. As the student becomes familiar with the forms, the teacher can de-emphasize the need for the exact identification code for the sub-form, and insist that the student endnote or footnote each form with its broader category one or two-letter code.

Thus, eventually, when writing compositions, however, students

(1) should **be given some choice and latitude** (but not too much) in their choice of forms, and

(2) should be required to **endnote or footnote** *using the code for the eleven main forms, and only occasionally using the codes for the individual sub-forms.*