

## **OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 9 AND 10 WRITING/HANDOUT 3**

The notes and activities from this handout are from Teresa D. O'Donnell and Judith L. Paiva's *Independent Writing* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), page 18 to 21. We will read "Introduction to the Writing Process" (page 18 to 20) and complete an assignment in class by following the instructions from page 20 to 21. Use the space below to brainstorm for ideas and the lines provided to write the two drafts.

**Brainstorm:**

**First draft:**

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## **Second draft:**

not regular in shape. (7) They were not the same weight. (8) Today, coins are essential in our modern life. (8) Our society, with its vast numbers of coin-operated machines, could not function without this ancient invention.

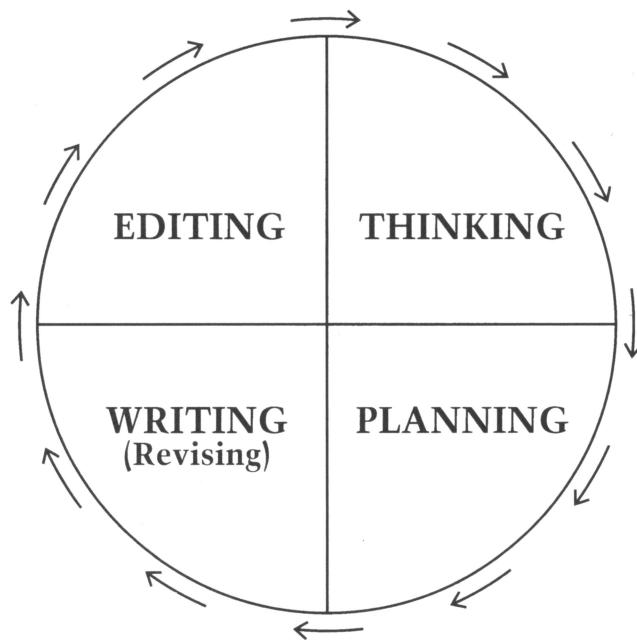
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## INTRODUCTION TO THE WRITING PROCESS

Few writers are able to write exactly what they want to say and how they want to say it the first time they sit down to write. In fact, other than writing personal letters to family and friends, most writers make many changes before they finish writing. People who write for business, authors of books and novels, lawyers, and anyone who has to produce writing of any kind all know that writing involves a number of steps before they achieve a finished product.

This writing process involves a series of tasks: thinking, planning, writing (rewriting), and editing. Writers go through this process in different ways. Some begin with thinking and planning before writing. Others start right out writing. Each writer has a preferred way of working through the process.

Look at the writing process as a large circle with four quadrants, each one part of the process.



Moving around the circle, we pass through the various steps. The circle has no end, however, and as we continue around the circle, we keep passing through the steps. We begin to understand that writing is a *recursive* activity. This means that we may not go through the steps only once. We often return to steps that we have gone through before.

**Thinking**

How does this work? Let's start with *thinking*. At the thinking stage, we use a variety of strategies for getting ideas. We might talk about a subject with our friends and classmates individually or in a group. This talking (or brainstorming) will help us generate more of our own ideas. We might take a blank piece of paper and randomly list ideas that come to us as we think about the topic. We might put our ideas on note cards, or we might even just keep them quietly in our heads.

**Planning**

Once we have our ideas, we may move on to the *planning* stage before beginning to write. Some of us may like to make a written sketch or outline of our ideas. We can put our ideas in order and arrange and rearrange them during this step. Then we have a plan to follow before beginning to write.

**Writing**

Others of us may prefer to skip the planning step at this point and move directly to *writing*. Once we have ideas, we are ready to put them all down on paper before any planning. Then we look at what we have written, evaluate how we have presented our ideas, and then make a plan for reordering them before writing again.

As a matter of fact, for many writers, the first step is writing, not thinking or planning. They use writing about ideas to help them generate new ideas. Their thinking takes place while they write. Planning comes later.

**Revising**

Part of the writing stage is *revising*, looking at the content of what we have written and asking several questions: Have I put my ideas down in an order that will be logical to the reader? Have I explained my ideas in enough detail to make them clear? Have I used connecting words and sentences to make my writing coherent?

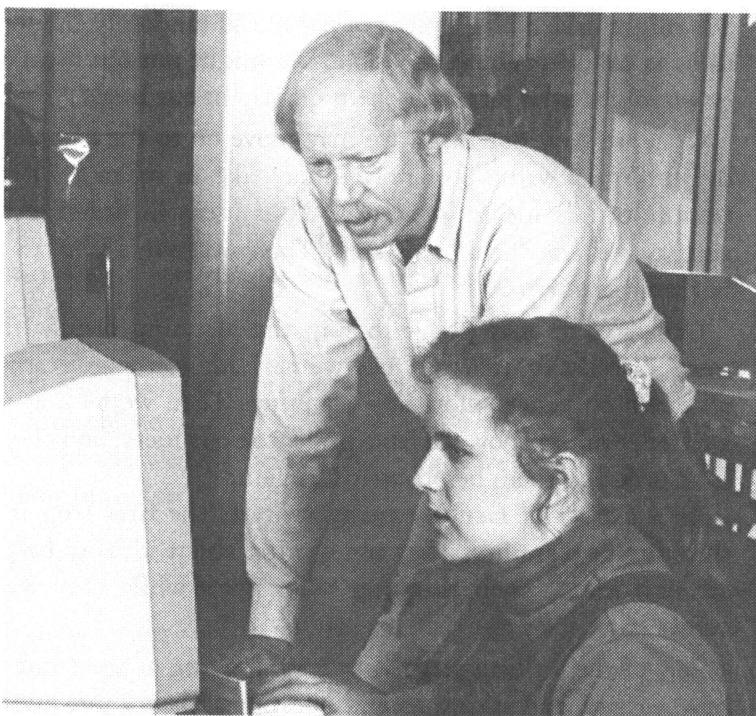
We may think that our writing is logical, clear, and coherent. However, our peers are usually able to read our writing more critically. Just as professional writers use editors to help revise their writing, we can use our classmates to give us useful feedback. These *peer editors* are a helpful part of the writing process.

**Editing**

What about final editing? Although we often think of editing (finding errors in spelling, punctuation, sentence sense, etc.) as the last step in the process, it is likely to go on all the time we are writing. Just as with revising, it is useful to have the help of a peer editor at this stage, but we must also learn to do *self-editing* before handing in our final drafts to the teacher.

Writing is a spiraling process that takes us through a series of activities. As we look again at the circle, we see that we may start with writing or thinking. We may plan before or while writing. We may move around the circle many times going back and forth through the steps, even changing our principal idea or thesis, until we write a final copy.

This process should be used as you do the writing activities in this text. In most writing assignments, suggestions are given to involve you and your classmates in the process as you learn to write together.

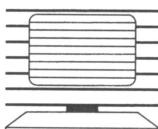


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## WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

### Writing a Paragraph Together



This first writing assignment requires that you write a paragraph with a classmate. Choose one of the topics (A, B, C, or D) and follow this writing process to produce your final draft together:

1. Brainstorm (talk together) for ideas. Jot down your ideas.
2. Discuss how you will order your ideas.
3. Write a first draft together.

4. Read over the draft to check for clarity of ideas and to make sure that you have the essential parts of a paragraph: a topic sentence with a controlling idea; main supporting ideas; enough details; logical connectors; a conclusion.
5. Write a second draft and repeat the review process together.
6. Edit your draft together for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, or sentence structure. Try to use structures of coordination where appropriate.

## TOPICS

### A. Description

With your partner, write a description of a person, object, or place you are both familiar with. Before you begin writing, visualize your topic and discuss with your classmate what you think should be included in the description. Take some notes. Then write a descriptive paragraph with your partner.

### B. Enumerating Ideas

With your partner, decide on three or four of the most important decisions that a person must be prepared to make in life. In preparation, think about some of the important choices that you have had to make. As you plan your paragraph, think about the order of your ideas. You might want to list them in order of importance. Write a paragraph with your partner.

### C. Facts or Statistics

(This topic is especially useful if you and your partner do not know each other very well.) You and your partner are to interview each other. Ask each other about background, home country, jobs, experiences, etc. Try to find out one or two unusual facts about each other. Then write a paragraph in which you relate some of the facts that you have learned about your partner. Exchange papers and read what your partner wrote about you. Is all the information correct? Work with your partner to produce final drafts of your papers.

### D. Examples

With your partner, define the ideal doctor, teacher, or other professional person. Think about someone you know or have personal knowledge about who exemplifies the qualities you believe this professional should possess. Make a list of the personal or physical qualities this ideal person should have. Write a paragraph with your partner that combines your ideas.