

PROLOGUE

Planning Again

No formula can tell you when to start drafting. Many writers begin without a full plan, and as things become clearer, they have to discard good but irrelevant pages. Others can't get going without multiple outlines and summaries. And some of us compose drafts in our heads well before turning to a serious draft in writing. You have to find your own way to start a first draft, but you can prepare for that moment if you keep writing your way toward the paper from the start through summaries, analyses, and critiques.

Here's how you know when you're ready to plan a draft:

- You know who your readers are, what they know, and why they should care about your problem.
- You know the kind of ethos or character you want to project.
- You can sketch your question and its answer in two or three sentences.
- You can sketch the reasons and evidence supporting your claim.
- You know the questions, alternatives, and objections that your readers are likely to raise, and you can respond to them.
- You know when your readers may not see the relevance of a reason to a claim and can state the warrant that connects them.

Even when they have a plan and are ready to draft, though, experienced writers know that they won't march straight through to a finished product. They know they'll go down blind alleys, but also make new discoveries, maybe even rethink their whole project. They also know that a lot of their early drafting will not make

Sorting Out Terms: Hypothesis, Answer, Solution, Claim, Point

In part II we used the terms *answer*, *hypothesis*, and *solution* to name the sentence that resolved the central issue of your research. In part III we used the term *main claim* to refer to the answer, hypothesis, or solution that constitutes the key assertion that the rest of your argument supports. Here in part IV we use *point* to name the sentence that states the main claim in a paper (some use the term *thesis*). *Hypothesis*, *answer*, *solution*, *claim*, and *point*—all those terms refer to the same sentence. We use different terms because each defines the role of that sentence from a different angle.

it into their final draft, and so they start early enough to leave time for revision.

Part IV will lead you through the process of creating your final paper. In chapter 12 we walk through planning and drafting, then in chapter 13 organizing your argument. In chapter 14 we discuss the demanding task of incorporating and citing sources. In chapter 15 we discuss how to present quantitative data in visual form, and in chapter 16 how to write effective introductions and conclusions. Finally, in chapter 17 we deal with problems of writing in a clear and direct style.

12 Planning and Drafting

Once you've assembled your argument, you might be ready to draft it. But experienced writers know that time spent planning a first draft more than pays off when they start writing it. A plan helps you organize the elements of your argument into a form that will be both coherent and persuasive to your readers.

Some fields stipulate the plan of a research report. In the experimental sciences, for example, readers expect reports to follow a plan something like this:

Introduction – Methods and Materials – Results – Discussion –
Conclusion

If your field requires you to follow a conventional plan, ask your teacher for a model or find one in a secondary source. In most fields, however, you have to create a plan of your own, but that plan must still help readers find what they are looking for.

12.1 PLANNING YOUR PAPER

12.1.1 Sketch a Working Introduction

Writers are often advised to write their introductions last. A few writers can wait until they've written their last words before they write their first ones, but most of us need a working introduction to start us on the right track. Expect to write your introduction twice, a sketchy one for yourself right now, then later a final one for your readers. That final introduction will usually have three parts (see chapter 16), so you might as well sketch your working introduction to anticipate them.

1. At the top of the first page of your storyboard, sketch a *brief* summary of *only* the key points in *only* those sources most relevant to your argument. An account of marginally relevant

references has no place in your introduction. Summarize only the sources that you intend to challenge, modify, or expand on. Then order those sources in a way that is useful to your readers: chronologically, by quality, significance, point of view, and so on. Under *no* circumstances follow the order in which you happened to read them or record them in your notes. If you're sure what will go into this summary, just list the sources in a useful order.

2. After your summary of sources, rephrase your question as a statement about a flaw or gap that you see in them:

Why is the Alamo story so important in our national mythology?

→ Few of these historians, however, have explained why the Alamo story has become so important in our national mythology.

3. Sketch an answer to *So what if we don't find out?* You may be only guessing but try to find *some* answer.

If we understood how such stories become national legends, we would better understand our national values, perhaps even what makes us distinct.

If you can't think of any answer to *So what?*, skip it; we'll return to it in chapter 13.

4. State the answer to your question as your point, or promise an answer in a launching point. You have two choices here:

- State the point of your paper at the end of your introduction to frame what follows and again near the beginning of your conclusion.
- State it only in your conclusion, as a climax to your reasoning.

This is a crucial choice, because it creates your social contract with your readers. If you state your main point toward the end of your introduction, you put your readers in charge: *Reader, you control how to read this paper. You know my problem and its solution, my point. You can decide how—even whether—to read on. No surprises.* On the other hand, if you wait until your conclusion to state your

main claim; you create a more controlling relationship: *Reader, you must follow me though every twist and turn until we reach the end, where I will finally reveal my point.* Most readers prefer to see your main point at the end of your introduction, because that lets them read what follows faster, understand its relevance better, and remember it all longer. Stating your claim early also helps keep you on track.

Some new researchers fear that if they reveal their main point too early, readers will be “bored” and stop reading. Others worry about repeating themselves. Both fears are baseless. If you ask an interesting question, readers will want to see how well you can answer it.

If you decide to announce your claim only in your conclusion, you still need a sentence at the end of your introduction that launches your reader into the body of your paper. That sentence should include terms that name the key concepts that will run through your paper (see 6.6.1, 8.2.1, 12.1.2). You'll be better prepared to write that launching sentence after you draft your final introduction. So for purposes of planning, put your main claim at the bottom of your storyboard's introduction page; you can move it later.

Some writers add a “road map” at the end their introduction:

In part 1, I discuss the issue of . . . Part 2 addresses . . . Part 3 examines . . .

Road maps are common in the social sciences, but many in the humanities find them clumsy. You can add a road map to your storyboard to guide your drafting, then cut it from your final draft. If you keep it, make it short.

Here is how the first page of your storyboard might now look:

Research has shown that female athletes under eighteen have almost twice the risk of sustaining concussions as male athletes of the same age who play the same sports._{context} [Summary of key sources follows.]

But that research reveals little about the causes of this discrepancy._{question rephrased as gap in research}

Until we understand why female athletes suffer proportionally more concussions than their male counterparts, we can't know the most effective ways to protect them. *consequences of question*

The discrepancy appears to be due in part to differences in the protective equipment worn by male and female athletes as well as to different standards of monitoring, reporting, and care when injuries occur. *your tentative main point*

Sketchy as it is, this introduction is enough to start you on track. In your final draft, you'll revise it to state your problem more completely (see chapter 16).

12.1.2 Identify Key Concepts That Will Run Through Your Whole Paper

For your paper to seem coherent, readers must see a few key concepts running through all of its parts. You might find them among the terms you used to categorize your notes, but they must include keywords from the sentences stating your problem and main point. On the introduction page, circle four or five words that express those concepts. Ignore words that name your general topic; focus on those relevant to your specific question:

employment, job satisfaction, recent SE Asian immigrants, cross-cultural, length of residence, prior economic level

If you find few key terms, your topic and point may be too general (review 8.2.1). List those key terms at the top of each storyboard page, and keep them in mind as you draft.

12.1.3 Plan the Body of Your Paper

1. **Sketch background and define terms.** After the introduction page of your storyboard, add a page on which you outline necessary background. You may have to define terms, spell out your problem or review research in more detail, set limits on your project, locate your problem in a larger historical or social context, and so on. Keep it short.
2. **Create a page for each major section of your paper.** At the top of each of these pages, write the point that the rest of that section

supports, develops, or explains. Usually, this will be a reason supporting your main claim.

3. **Find a suitable order.** When you assembled your argument (see 9.1), you ordered its parts in a way that may have been clear to you. But when you plan a draft, you must order them in a way that meets the needs of your readers. When you're not sure what that order should be, consider these options. The first two are based on your topic:
 - **Part-by-part.** If you can break your topic into its parts, you can deal with each in turn, but you must still order those parts in a way that helps readers understand them—by their functional relationships, hierarchy, and so on.
 - **Chronological.** This is the simplest: earlier to later or cause to effect.

These next six are based on your readers' knowledge and understanding.

- **Short to long, simple to complex.** Most readers prefer to deal with simple issues before they work through more complex ones.
- **More familiar to less familiar.** Most readers prefer to read about more familiar issues before they read about new ones.
- **Less contestable to more contestable.** Most readers move more easily from what they agree with to what they don't.
- **More important to less important (or vice versa).** Readers prefer to read more important reasons first (but those reasons may have more impact if they come last).
- **Earlier understanding to prepare for later understanding.** Readers may have to understand some events, principles, definitions, and so on before they understand something else.
- **General analysis followed by specific applications.** Readers may have to understand the outlines of your overall position before they can follow how you apply it to specific texts, events, situations, and so on.

Often these principles cooperate: what readers agree with and easily understand might also be short and familiar. But these principles may also conflict: readers might reject most quickly reasons

that are most important. Whatever your order, it must reflect *your readers'* needs, not the order that the material seems to impose on itself (as in an obvious compare-contrast organization), least of all the order in which those reasons occurred to you.

Finally, make the principle of order you choose clear by sketching at the top of each page words that show it: *First . . . , second . . . ; Later . . . , finally . . . ; More important . . . ; A more complex issue is . . . ; As a result . . .* Don't worry if these terms feel awkward. At this point, they're for your benefit, not your readers'. You can revise or even delete them from your final draft.

12.1.4 Plan Each Section and Subsection

1. **Highlight the key terms in each section and subsection.** Just as your paper needs an introduction, so does each of its sections. Earlier we told you to state the point of each section at the top of its storyboard page. Now, just as you picked out key terms to run through your whole paper, circle the ones that uniquely distinguish this section from all the others; they should be in the sentence that states the point of that section. If you cannot find terms to distinguish a section, look closely at how it contributes to the whole. It may offer little or nothing.
2. **Indicate where to put evidence, acknowledgments, warrants, and summaries.** Add these parts to the storyboard page for each section. They may, in turn, need to be supported by their own arguments.
 - **Evidence.** Most sections consist of evidence supporting a reason. If you have different kinds of evidence supporting the same reason, group and order them in a way that makes sense to readers. Note where you may have to explain your evidence—where it came from, why it's reliable, exactly how it supports a reason.
 - **Acknowledgments and responses.** Imagine what readers might object to, then outline a response. Responses may be sub-arguments with a claim, reasons, evidence, and even another response to an imagined response to your response.
 - **Warrants.** Generally speaking, if you need a warrant, state it before you offer its claim and supporting reason. This following

argument, for example, needs a warrant if it's intended for non-experts in Elizabethan social history:

Since most students at Oxford University in 1580 signed documents with only their first and last names,*reason* most of them must have been commoners.*claim*

That argument is clearer to everyone (even experts) when introduced by a warrant:

In late sixteenth-century England, when someone was not a gentleman but a commoner, he did not add "Mr." or "Esq." to his signature.*warrant* Most students at Oxford University in 1580 signed documents with only their first and last names,*reason* so most of them must have been commoners.*claim*

If you think readers might question your warrant, make an argument supporting it.

If your paper is long and "fact-heavy" with dates, names, events, or numbers, you might end each major section by briefly summarizing the progress of your argument. What have you established in that section? How does your argument shape up so far? If in your final draft those summaries seem clumsy, cut them.

12.1.5 Sketch a Working Conclusion

State your point again at the top of a conclusion page of your storyboard. After it, if you can, sketch its significance (another answer to *So what?*).

In doing all this, you may discover that you can't use all the notes you collected. That doesn't mean you wasted time. Research is like gold mining: dig up a lot, pick out a little, toss the rest. Ernest Hemingway said that you know you're writing well when you discard stuff you know is good—but not as good as what you keep.

12.2 AVOIDING THREE COMMON BUT FLAWED PLANS

Not all plans are equally good. Our first efforts often track our thinking or activities as researchers but not the experiences of readers.

1. Do not organize your paper as a narrative of your thinking.

Few readers want to know what you found first, followed by the dead ends you hit, then the problems you overcame. They become especially annoyed when they have to slog through the history of your project to get to a main point you've saved for the end.

To test your draft for this problem, look for sentences that refer not to the results of your research but to how you did it or to what you were thinking. You see signs of this in language like *The first issue was . . . ; Then I compared . . . ; Finally, I conclude.* If you discover more than a few such sentences, you may not be supporting a claim but rather telling the story of how you found it. If so, reorganize your paper around the core elements of your argument—your claim and the reasons supporting it.

2. Do not assemble your paper as a patchwork of your sources.

Readers want *your* analysis, not a summary of your sources. Beginning researchers go wrong when they string together quotations, summaries, and loose paraphrases of sources into a patchwork that reflects little of their own thinking. Such “patch writing” invites the charge *This is all summary, no analysis.* It is a particular risk if you do most of your research online, because it is so easy to cut-and-paste from your sources. Experienced readers recognize patch writing, and you risk a charge of plagiarism (see 14.6).

Advanced researchers rarely offer patchwork summaries, but they can follow sources too closely in another way: they map their paper on to the organization of a major source rather than create a new one that serves their argument better. If the key terms that run through your paper are the same as those in one or more sources, consider whether you are making your own argument or mimicking theirs.

3. Do not map your paper directly on to the language of your assignment.

If you echo the language of your assignment in your first paragraph, your teacher may think that you've contributed no ideas of your own, as in this example:

ASSIGNMENT: Different theories of perception give different weight to cognitive mediation in processing sensory input. Some claim that input reaches the brain unmediated; others that receptive organs are subject to cognitive influence. Compare two theories of visual, aural, or tactile perception that take different positions on this matter.

PAPER'S OPENING PARAGRAPH: Different theorists of visual perception give different weight to the role of cognitive mediation in processing sensory input. In this paper I will compare two theories of visual perception, one of which . . .

If your assignment lists a series of issues to cover, avoid addressing them in the order given. If, for example, you were asked to “compare and contrast Freud and Jung on the imagination and unconscious,” you would not have to organize your paper into two parts, the first on Freud and the second on Jung. That kind of organization too often results in a pair of unrelated summaries. Instead, try breaking the topics into their conceptual parts, such as elements of the unconscious and the imagination, their definitions, and so on; then order those parts in a way useful to your readers.

12.3 TURNING YOUR PLAN INTO A DRAFT

Some writers think that once they have an outline or a storyboard, they can just grind out sentences. Experienced writers know better. They know that drafting can be an act of discovery that planning can never replace, because it is then that we often experience one of research's most exciting moments: we discover ideas that we didn't have until we expressed them. But like other steps in the process, even surprises happen better with a plan.

12.3.1 Draft in a Way That Feels Comfortable

Many experienced writers begin to write long before they fill up their storyboard. They create a rough plan, use early drafts to explore what they think, then create a final plan based on what they discover. They know that much of that early writing will not

Start Drafting as Soon as You Can

Deadlines come too soon: we long for another month, a week, just one more day. (We fought deadlines for every edition of this book.) In fact, some researchers seem never able to finish, thinking they have to keep working until their paper, dissertation, or book is perfect. That perfect paper has never been written and never will be. All you can do is to make yours as good as you can in the time available. When you've done that, you can say to yourself: *Reader, after my best efforts, here's what I believe—not the whole or final truth, but a truth important to me and I hope to you. I have tested and supported that truth as fully as time and my abilities allow, so that you might find my argument strong enough to consider, perhaps to accept, maybe even to change what you believe.*

survive, so they start early. Exploratory drafting can help you discover ideas you never imagined, but it works only if you have a distant deadline. If you are new to your topic or have a short deadline, draft when you have a clearer plan.

Once they have a plan, many writers draft quickly: they let the words flow, omitting quotations and data that they can plug in later, skipping ahead when they get stuck. If they don't remember a detail, they insert a "[?]" and keep writing until they run out of gas, then go back to look it up. But quick drafters need time to revise, so if you draft quickly, start early.

Other writers can work only slowly and carefully: they have to get every sentence right before they start the next one. To do that, they need a meticulous plan. So if you draft slowly, create a detailed outline or storyboard.

Most writers work best when they draft quickly, revise carefully, and toss what's irrelevant. But draft in any way that works for you.

12.3.2 Use Keywords to Keep Yourself on Track

One problem with drafting is staying on track. A storyboard helps, but you might also keep your key concepts in front of you and, from time to time, check how often you use them, especially those

that distinguish each section. But don't let your storyboard or key terms stifle fresh thinking. If you find yourself wandering, follow the trail until you see where it takes you. You may be on the track of an interesting idea.

Even if papers in your field don't use headings and subheadings, we suggest that you do when you draft. Create each heading out of the words that are unique to the section or subsection it heads:

Sam Houston as a Hero in Newspapers Outside of Texas

These headings also show the structure of your paper at a glance (numbered headings are common in some social sciences, rare in the humanities). If your field doesn't use heads, delete them from your final draft.

QUICK TIP**Work Through Procrastination and Writer's Block**

If you can't start writing or you struggle to draft even a few words, you may have writer's block. Some cases arise from anxieties about school and its pressures; if that might be you, see a counselor. But most cases have causes you can address:

- You feel so intimidated by the task that you don't know where to begin. If so, divide the process into small tasks; then focus on one step at a time.
- You have set no goals or goals that are too high. If so, create a routine that sets goals you can meet, then use devices such as a progress chart or regular meetings with a writing partner.
- You feel you must make every sentence or paragraph perfect before you move to the next one. You can avoid some obsession with perfection if you write informally along the way, telling yourself you are writing only to help you think on paper. In any event, know that every researcher compromises on perfection to get the job done.

If you have problems like these, go to the student learning center. Advisers there have worked with every kind of procrastinator and blocked writer and can give you advice tailored to your problem.

On the other hand, some cases of writer's block may really be opportunities to let your ideas simmer in your subconscious while they combine and recombine into something new and surprising. If you're stuck but have time (another reason to start early), let your unconscious work on the problem while you do something else for a day or two. Then return to the task to see if you can get back on track.

13 Organizing Your Argument

This chapter presents a procedure for organizing and revising your drafts so that your argument is as clear to your readers as it is to you. At first this procedure may seem a bit mechanical, but that's its virtue. If you follow it one step at a time, you can analyze and improve the organization of your draft efficiently and reliably.

Some new researchers think that once they've churned out a draft, they're done. The best writers know better. They write a first draft not to show to readers, but to discover what case they can actually make for their point and whether it stands up to their own scrutiny. Then they revise and revise until they think their readers will agree with their argument too. Revising for readers is hard, though, because we all know our own work too well to read it as others will. You must first know what readers look for, then determine whether your draft helps them find it. To do that, you have to analyze your draft objectively; otherwise, you'll just read into it what you want your readers to get out of it.

Some writers resist *any* revising for readers, fearing that if they accommodate their readers, they compromise their integrity. They think that the truth of their discovery should speak for itself, and if readers have a hard time understanding it, well, they just have to work harder. But revising for readers doesn't mean pandering to them. In fact, you only improve your ideas when you imagine drawing readers into an amiable conversation in which they engage your beliefs as you engage theirs.

In this chapter, we show you how to diagnose and revise your organization and argument so that readers get out of it what you think you put into it.

13.1 THINKING LIKE A READER

Readers do not read word by word, sentence by sentence, as if they were adding up beads on a string. They want to begin with a sense