



writing a crappy first draft



Your ideas are going to feel confused, messy, difficult, and maybe even wrong while you write a first draft. Write anyway. That's how you find out if they're worth anything at all (hint: they always are).

WRITING IS THINKING

The good news? While you've been brainstorming, talking to classmates, researching, note-taking...you've been writing! Your first draft may exist in pieces on paper, in your head, and somewhere between your fingers and the keyboard. You know more than you think you know! Now it's time to pull it all together.

If messy paragraphs make you panic but formulas help you think...[try outlining](#).

If you need to see your messy thoughts on paper before you can organize them, [try freewriting](#).

If talking through your ideas helps you think better, [try voice-to-text dictation](#).

OUTLINING

Traditional outlines put ideas into an order that helps you write a crappy first draft. They usually look something like this.

A. Introduction

1. Hook or attention-grabbing opening statement
2. Background information on the topic
3. Thesis statement or main argument

B. Body Paragraphs (repeat as many times as necessary)

1. Main Topic
 - a. Subtopic
 - i. Supporting detail 1

ii. Supporting detail 2

- Subtopic
 - Supporting detail 1
 - Supporting detail 2

C. Conclusion

- Restate or reflect the thesis statement
- Summarize the main points
- Closing thoughts or final remarks

FINAL STEP: Reflection. Note where there are gaps, but don't panic! Remove the outlining format and see how your paragraphs flow. To help get the juices flowing, try freewriting, rereading your resources (or reading new ones), or coming up with a list of questions you need to answer to fill out your ideas.

FREEWRTING

Freewriting can be done at any point of the writing process (brainstorming, revising, when you feel writer's block, etc). Whether you've already done this for brainstorming, it is very helpful for starting your crappy first draft.

Step 1: Read your assignment prompt. Then set a timer for 15 minutes and start writing. The key: do it quickly, without thought for grammar, structure, quality, or clarity. It doesn't have to make a lot of sense.

Step 2: Take a break. Scroll for a few minutes. Touch grass or something.

Step 3: Come back to your workspace. Read your assignment over again. Now read your freewritten work.

Step 4: Use a highlighter to mark your strongest ideas, with special attention for the central idea you're getting at. What could be your main idea here?

Step 5: Reflection. Take the sentences you highlighted and put them in your own document. From here, you have several options.

- Option 1: Try putting them into an outline. Is there one idea that seems to be the main claim? What other ideas support it?
- Option 2: Try grouping the sentences by topic. Is there one group that seems stronger, more detailed, or more convincing?
- Option 3: Try making a paragraph out of these sentences. Which ones have to go? Which ones make sense together? Once you read the paragraph out loud, where could this go i