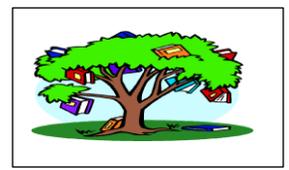


# Toward Better Literacy: Reference Outlines



## The Writing Process

When a task is overwhelming, it helps to take things one step at a time.

### Prepare:

- Choose a **topic** that is not too broad. Try to focus on a single question that needs answering.
- Do your **research**. Read and gather information around your chosen topic.
- Engage in **brainstorming**, free writing, and peer discussion to get your ideas flowing.
  - Ask *who, what, when, where, why, and how*.
  - **Cluster diagrams** can be useful to show relationships between ideas. Start with a bubble for your main idea, branch out with your supporting points, and branch out from each of them with examples and evidence.

### Structure:

- Form a **central thesis**, which states a position, makes a claim, or gives an interpretation.
  - A thesis statement often provides a **map** of the paper's organization.
- Consider the purpose of your paper and create an **outline**.
  - Make sure your supporting ideas do not overlap. This way, you will be able to focus on writing one paragraph at a time without repeating yourself.

### Draft:

- The thesis unifies the paper. Introduce it near the beginning and restate it near the end.
- Each paragraph should form a single main idea, usually expressed in a **topic sentence**.
  - Use **transitions** to connect each paragraph to the next.
- Once everything else has been written, come up with a **title**.

### Revise:

- Make sure your paper stays **focused** on the thesis. Cut out unnecessary words and ideas.
- **Clarify** any confusing or murky statements.
- For a college-level paper, be sure to maintain an **academic voice** at all times.

### Edit:

- Fix any errors in **grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization**.
  - Your computer's spelling and grammar tools can be useful, but they are not perfect. Remember that *you* are the boss.

### Polish:

Make sure that all the formatting meets your instructor's guidelines