Supplementary Materials on the Writing Process (Pedagogy and Technology)

THE WRITING PROCESS

Overview

The process approach to writing is based upon research that has identified the activities fluent writers use to produce effective written communication. Fluent writers take an organic approach to writing. That is, they begin with ideas that they explore, amplify, modify, and refine. They shape these ideas into a form appropriate for their readers, a form that includes both effective organization and standard use of paragraphs, words, phrases, sentences, punctuation, and so forth.

To produce these finished pieces of writing, fluent writers tend to engage in three dominant, recursive phases:

> ➢ Prewriting,
> ➢ Writing/drafting
> ➢ Rewriting/editing/revision

During the *prewriting* phase, fluent writers concentrate on identifying, discovering, inventing, and developing ideas—the raw material for their written communication.

During the *writing/drafting* phase, these writers begin to shape the ideas by adding, deleting, rearranging, and modifying the material. The main focus in this phase is on arranging, building, modifying, and creating sentence and larger units. Because the writing process is recursive, they may also discover new ideas—thus re-engaging in prewriting.

In the *rewriting/editing* phase, fluent writers are especially concerned with audience, with creating material that communicates effectively with the readers. Writers focus especially on effective sentence construction, word choices, and similar matters of effectiveness and correctness. Again, because of the recursive nature of the writing process, writers may discover new material and may become aware of the need to modify units at the sentence and larger levels.

Pre-Writing

Pedagogy

Pre-Writing Overview:

Your most productive way of beginning almost any writing task will be to collect your thoughts on paper without the pressure of structuring your expression into its final form.

—Robert Scholes and Nancy Comley
The Practice of Writing

Any project begins with early efforts. Accordingly, to write a composition, essay, report, or response requires preliminary words, thoughts, direction, and intent. The pre-writing phase of composing encourages the production of these early inklings, thoughts, and ideas. In order to compose words, sentences, and paragraphs that ring and resonate, some early efforts need to be in place. Pre-writing ideas can originate from brainstorming techniques, composing lists, scribbling clusters, outlining, reading pre-texts, or exploring related topics. In essence, pre-writing in an act of invention—of developing ideas—that works best when the student is not pressured by concerns such as form and correctness. The computer's versatility and speed make it a particularly apt tool for the pre-writing process.

Technology and Pre-Writing

1. **Listing, Brainstorming using bullets**

   One way to organize material, such as in the numbered list on this page, is by using a bulleted list. Bullets help to organize material visually so that when a student is brainstorming the material is easier to read and is more orderly. A bulleted list may be created by turning on the bullet toolbutton (pictured below). A new bullet will appear every time you press ENTER on your keyboard. To turn off the bullet function, press the bullet toolbutton again. For students who think very sequentially, a numbered (or alphabetized) list may be created by pressing the numbering toolbutton (pictured below).

Numbering, Listing Toolbutton

Bullet Toolbutton
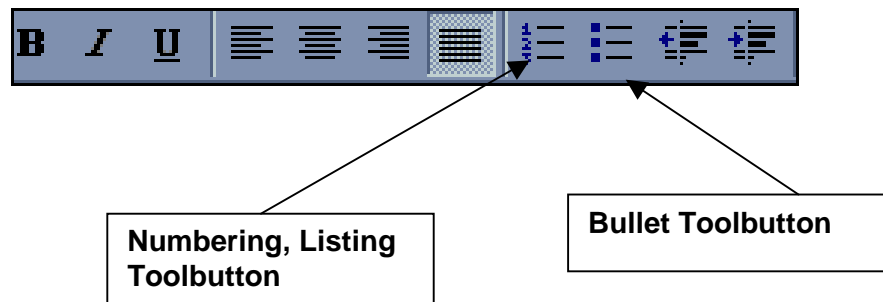
A sample bulleted list (e.g., for an impromptu essay on making a class in multiculturalism mandatory):

   ✱ will increase awareness
   ✱ will allow students of different cultures to understand one another better
   ✱ may decrease hate crimes
   ✱ would be interesting/informative
   ✱ would decrease ignorance

2. Using Prompts' sets and/or creating customized prompts

Prompts or questions that help the student start to write may be very general (so that they are applicable to any paper) or customized to fit the needs of a particular paper).   Either the student or the teacher may create prompts' questions.   The advantage of having prompts (beyond the obvious advantage of initiating ideas) is to avoid having a student face a blank screen. For many students, it is easier to get started if they begin writing and gathering information right away. Prompts' diskettes may be created for students to copy or The Write Environment at www.writeenvironment.com provides a free 60-day demo of a writing program that contains some useful tools and prompts.

An easy way to store prompts' questions on a particular computer is by creating an **AutoText** entry. In the description below, an AutoText entry is being created for a repetitive paragraph, but the same process would be used to create an AutoText entry of prompts' questions or any other material you would like your students to have readily available:

AutoText

Perhaps one of the most useful tools Word 97 offers is **AutoText**. **AutoText** is used to quickly insert repetitive sections of text into your current document.   Repetitive text might include long addresses, specification lists, closing paragraphs, or any text you find yourself typing over and over.

- To create an **AutoText** entry you must first select the text:

As always, we appreciate your patronage. Please contact us if you should require any further assistance. We will send you our update catalog as soon as it arrives.

Sincerely,

Mary Mason
Sales Manager

In the above example, the text selected for an **AutoText** entry is a repetitive closing paragraph along with the letter's closing material ("Sincerely . . .). Once the text has been selected, you would choose **Insert, AutoText, New** and type in a short title for your **AutoText** entry. The title has to be at least four characters long and should be a logical title (so that it's easy to remember).

1. To create your own **AutoText** entry, type the information from the example below:

> - **What angle can you take on this topic that makes it matter to you and/or makes it compelling to your audience?**
>
> - **Are you writing to inform? to persuade? to entertain?**
>
> - **For whom are you writing?**
>
> - **What do they already know about the topic?**
>
> - **What tone is appropriate for your audience? Serious? Humorous? Satirical?**

2. After you've typed the material in Step 1, **select** the entire text.

3. Select **Insert, AutoText, New** and give your selection the title "**prompts**" and click "**OK**."

Enter a logical title of at least 4 characters here
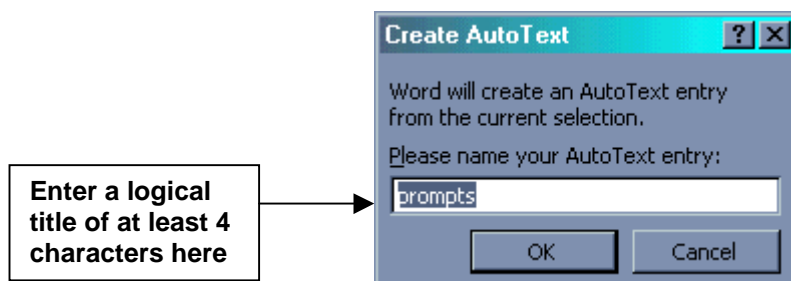
4. Close your document without saving the changes and open a new document. Type the word "prompts" slowly. As *soon* as you see a "floater" containing your text appear, immediately press **Enter** and the entire entry will be inserted.

5. An **AutoText** entry remains until you delete it from your **AutoText** box. If you forget the title of an entry, you can also insert it by selecting **Insert, AutoText, AutoText** and looking for the title in the entries given.

The AutoText Dialog Box

If one of the entries were selected, its contents would appear in the Preview window
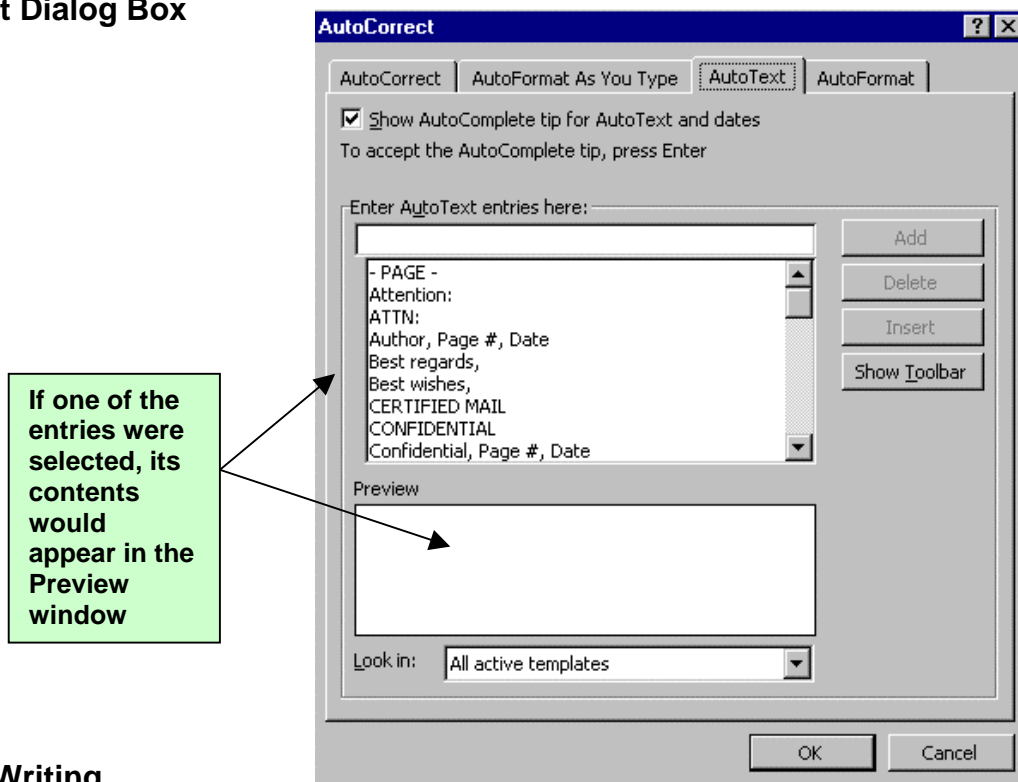
3. Invisible Writing

As demonstrated during the workshop, invisible writing helps keep the writing process going because the students will not see their errors and stop to fix them. One way to accomplish "invisible writing" is by turning the monitor off (or down) so that students cannot see what they are typing.

4. Turning off Spell and Grammar Check

Although the red (for spelling errors) and green (for grammar errors) wavy lines are useful tools, they can hamper the writing process by encouraging a student to focus too heavily on errors during the pre-writing process. To turn off the spelling and grammar check function, click on **Tools** on the command bar and then select **Options** from the drop-down menu that will appear. After selecting **Options**, the following dialog box should be displayed:

Select the **Spelling & Grammar** tab and then de-select the following options:

Select the Spelling & Grammar Tab from the menu options.

Click on the following boxes to de-select (or turn off) their functions:
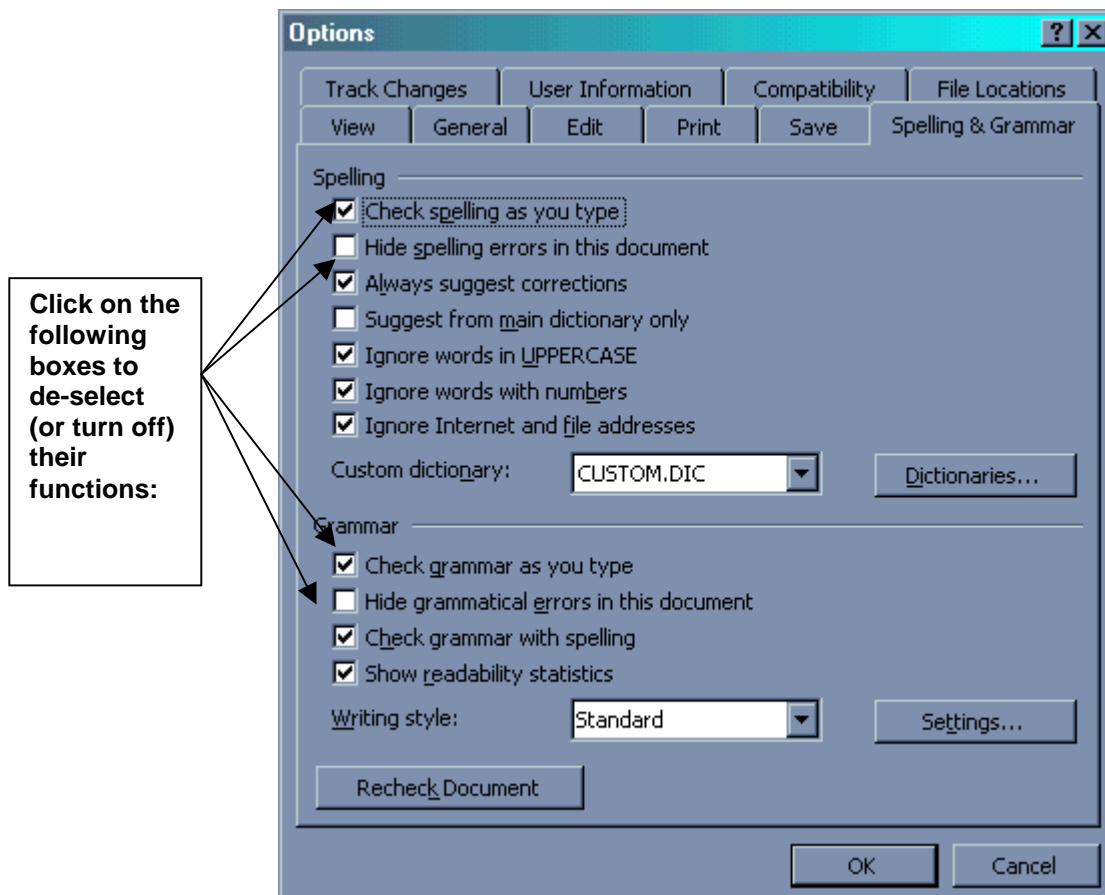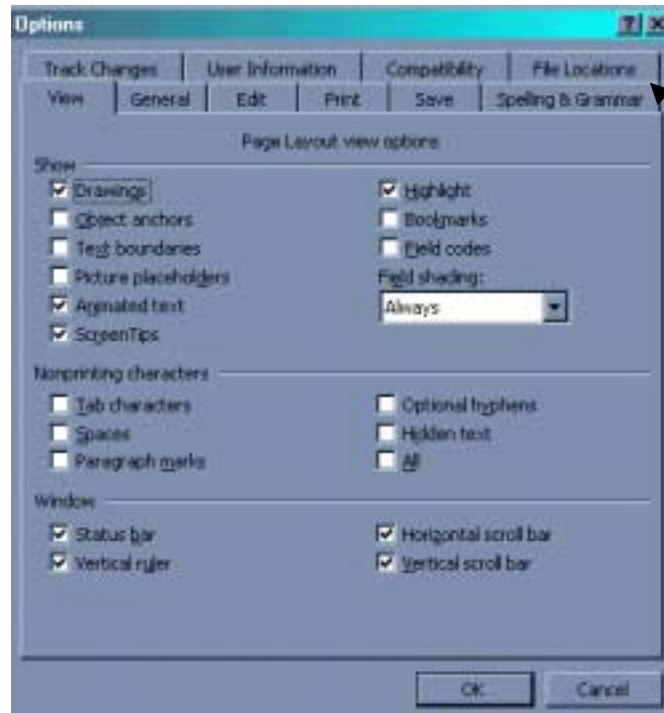
- When the pre-writing process is over, be sure to remember to re-select these by going back to **Tools, Options** and selecting the **Spelling & Grammar** tab.

5. Using Nicenet for topic-building

One way to generate ideas and have students work collaboratively is to use "topic-building." In topic-building, each student announces the topic he/she is considering and then the class provides feedback on how the topic might be refined or developed. Nicenet, the Internet Classroom Assistant, may be used to have students do "topic-building" outside of class. Nicenet is a free service offered on the Internet that allows teachers to set up private classrooms where students may send messages to each other, respond to posted topics, get assignment materials and so forth. The handout on Nicenet is included in your packet of materials.

6. Clustering
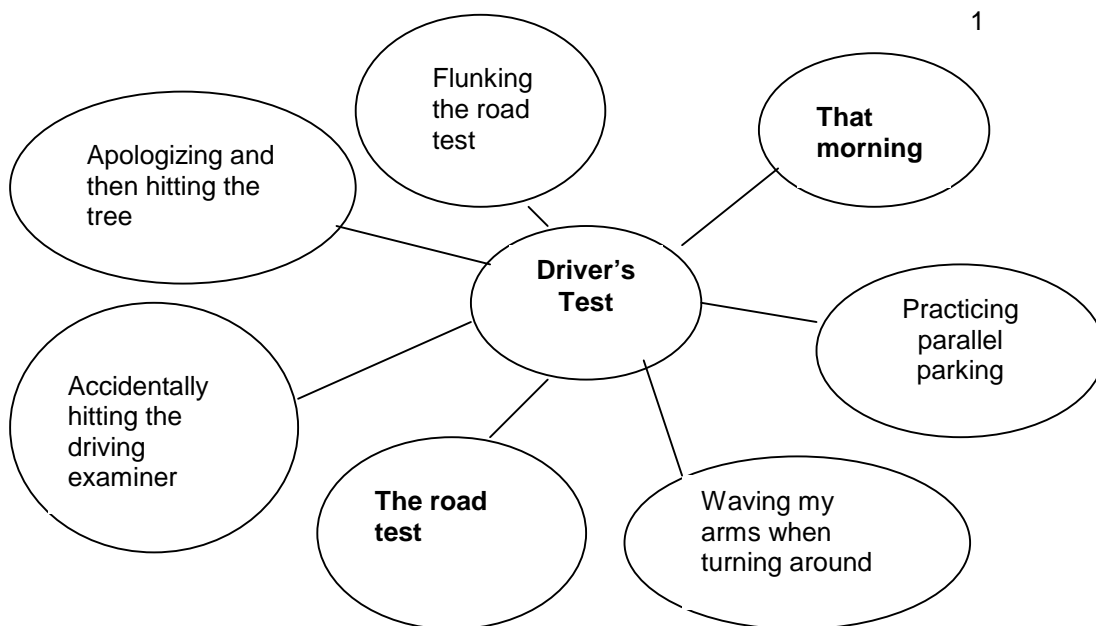
Clustering, or grouping ideas—as in the example above—is a good method for writers who think *spatially*. However, because there is no particularly easy way to "cluster" using a computer, it is faster and more practical to do clustering on paper.

7. Cut, Copy, Paste

As opposed to the days when every editing change meant retyping an entire document, using the computer to cut, copy, and paste allows students to re-arrange text rapidly. Cut and paste and copy and paste techniques are described below:

Cut and Paste – Copy and Paste

♦ One of the most timesaving techniques you can use when editing is **Copy** and **Paste** or **Cut** and **Paste**.

♦ To **Cut** an item means to *remove* it from your text and **Paste** (insert) it to another location.

♦ To **Copy** an item means that you keep the original text in its location but create a copy that you can **Paste** elsewhere.

♦ When you **Cut** or **Copy** an item it goes in to the **Clipboard** program built into Windows 95. Whatever you cut or copy will *stay* in the **Clipboard** until you cut or copy something else or until you turn off your computer.

Cut/Copy and Paste:

Using the toolbar:

There are a number of different techniques that you can use to cut/copy and paste text. **Note:** No matter what technique you use your **first** step is to select the text you want to move (cut) or copy. These are the icons you'd select if you use the toolbar:

Cut   **Copy**   **Paste**

Using your mouse:

Most people use the mouse to cut and copy text when they're moving the text a short distance. Otherwise, it's too easy to lose the text or drop it in the wrong spot. When you use the mouse, *the text does not get stored in the **Clipboard**.* The technique of cutting or copying with the mouse is called "**Drag and Drop**."

Steps to Drag & Drop Text:

> **Move or copy text and graphics a short distance within a window**
>
> **1** Select the text or graphics you want to move or copy.
>
> **2** To move the selection, drag the selection where you want to paste it.
>
> To copy the selection, hold down CTRL as you drag the selection where you want to paste it.
>
> **Note** If you drag the selection beyond the visible window, your document will scroll in the same direction.
>
> **Tip** You can also move or copy text and graphics by using the right mouse button to drag the selection. When you release the mouse button, a menu shows the available options for moving and copying.

To **drag** the text, position your pointer at the edge of the selected text and hold down your left mouse button until you see a small box appears under your pointer.

When you hold down the **Ctrl** as you drag & drop, the box that appears below your pointer, will contain a plus (+) sign.

**This is the drag & drop method we recommend, since it prevents you from moving when you meant to copy or vice-versa.

Keyboard shortcuts to cut and paste:

- **To cut select text, press CRTL + X (cut)**
- **To paste, press CRTL + V**
- **To copy, press CRTL + C (copy)**
- **To paste, press CRTL + V**

Tip: Even if you don't intend to use the keyboard shortcuts to cut, copy, and paste, it's a good idea to memorize these shortcuts. Sometimes you'll want to paste text into a spot where there is no way to use the toolbar or mouse (e.g., you might want to paste a long e-mail or Internet address). If you remember that **Ctrl + V** operates the same way as **Paste**, you can save yourself some time.

Right Click!

You can also copy or cut text by selecting it and then right-clicking on the selection. The menu that appears will include the option to **cut** or **copy**. You can then position your insertion point to where you want the text moved, right click, and select **paste**.