

# 1

## PART



**CHAPTER 1**  
An Introduction  
to Writing

**CHAPTER 2**  
The Writing Process

# Writing: Skills and Process

# A Writer's Showcase

from "A Love Affair with Books" by Bernadete Piassa

When I was young, I thought that reading was like a drug which I was allowed to take only a teaspoon at a time, but which, nevertheless, had the effect of carrying me away to an enchanted world where I experienced strange and forbidden emotions. As time went by and I took that drug again and again, I became addicted to it. I could no longer live without reading. Books became an intrinsic part of my life. They became my friends, my guides, my lovers—my most faithful lovers.

For more of this essay, turn to page 549.

## EXPLORE WRITING FURTHER

1. When writing about books, Piassa draws upon language typically used to describe romance. Find examples of places in the paragraph where Piassa uses "romantic" words. What does she achieve by using this language?
2. Writers' most common purposes are to inform, to entertain, and to persuade. Which purpose—or purposes—do you think Piassa has in mind?

## TOPICS FOR WRITING

1. Do you share Piassa's love of reading? Why or why not?
2. Write about a hobby or interest you have that has become a special part of your life.
3. What do you notice about the student pictured below and on the previous page? Although surrounded by books, he seems to need only his computer. Will computers and the Internet ever replace the need for printed books? Think about this question and write about your response.



# 1

## CHAPTER

# An Introduction to Writing

## Chapter Preview

### Point and Support

- An Important Difference between Writing and Talking
- Point and Support in a Paragraph

### Knowing Your Purpose and Audience

### Benefits of Paragraph Writing

### Writing as a Skill

### Writing as a Process of Discovery

### Keeping a Journal

### Tips on Using a Computer

### Ways to Use a Computer at Each Stage of the Writing Process

### Review Activities



*College offers many different challenges for students. In order to be a successful student, you should know your individual strengths and weaknesses. Take some time to think about your strengths and weaknesses as a student. Later in this chapter you will be asked to write a paragraph on this topic.*

The experience I had writing my first college essay helped shape this book. I received a C- for the essay. Scrawled beside the grade was the comment "Not badly written, but ill-conceived." I remember going to the instructor after class, asking about his comment as well as the word *Log* that he had added in the margin at various spots. "What are all these logs you put in my paper?" I asked, trying to make a joke of it. He looked at me a little wonderingly. "Logic, Mr. Langan," he answered, "logic." He went on to explain that I had not thought out my paper clearly. There were actually two ideas rather than one in my thesis, one supporting paragraph had nothing to do with either idea, another paragraph lacked a topic sentence, and so on. I've never forgotten his last words: "If you don't think clearly," he said, "you won't write clearly."

I was speechless, and I felt confused and angry. I didn't like being told that I didn't know how to think. I went back to my room and read over my paper several times. Eventually, I decided that my instructor was right. "No more logs," I said to myself. "I'm going to get these logs out of my papers."

My instructor's advice was invaluable. I learned that clear, disciplined thinking is the key to effective writing. *Exploring Writing: Paragraphs and Essays* develops this idea by breaking down the writing process into a series of four logical, easily followed steps. These steps, combined with practical advice about prewriting and revision, will help you write strong papers.

Here are the four steps in a nutshell:

1. Discover a clearly stated point.
2. Provide logical, detailed support for your point.
3. Organize and connect your supporting material.
4. Revise and edit so that your sentences are effective and error-free.

Part 2 of this book explains each of these steps in detail and provides many practice materials to help you master them.

## Point and Support

### An Important Difference between Writing and Talking

In everyday conversation, you make all kinds of points or assertions. You say, for example, "My boss is a hard person to work for"; "It's not safe to walk in our neighborhood after dark"; or "Poor study habits keep getting me into trouble." Your points concern personal matters as well as, at times, outside issues: "That trade will be a disaster for the team"; "Lots of TV commercials are degrading to women"; "Students are better off working for a year before attending college."

The people you are talking with do not always challenge you to give reasons for your statements. They may know why you feel as you do, or they may already agree with you, or they simply may not want to put you on the spot; and so they do not always ask "Why?" But the people who read what you write may not know you, agree with you, or feel in any way obliged to you. If you want to communicate effectively with readers, you must provide solid evidence for any point you make. An important difference, then, between writing and talking is this: *In writing, any idea that you advance must be supported with specific reasons or details.*

Think of your readers as reasonable people. They will not take your views on faith, but they are willing to consider what you say as long as you support it. Therefore, remember to support with specific evidence any point that you make.

### Point and Support in a Paragraph

In conversation, you might say to a friend who has suggested a movie, "No, thanks. Going to the movies is just too much of a hassle. Parking, people, everything." From shared past experiences, your friend may know what



you are talking about so that you will not have to explain your statement. But in writing, your point would have to be backed up with specific reasons and details.

Below is a paragraph, written by a student named Diane Woods, on why moviegoing is a nuisance. A *paragraph* is a short paper of 150 to 200 words. It usually consists of an opening point called a *topic sentence* followed by a series of sentences that support that point.

### The Hazards of Moviegoing

Although I love movies, I've found that there are drawbacks to moviegoing. One problem is just the inconvenience of it all. To get to the theater, I have to drive for at least fifteen minutes, or more if traffic is bad. It can take forever to find a parking spot, and then I have to walk across a huge parking lot to the theater. There I encounter long lines, sold-out shows, and ever-increasing prices. And I hate sitting with my feet sticking to the floor because of other people's spilled snacks. Another problem is my lack of self-control at the theater. I often stuff myself with unhealthy calorie-laden snacks. My choices might include a bucket of popcorn dripping with butter, a box of Milk Duds, a large coke, or all three. Finally, the worst problem is some of the other moviegoers. As kids run up and down the aisle, teenagers laugh and shout at the screen. People of all ages drop soda cups and popcorn tubs, cough and burp, and talk to one another. All in all, I would rather stay home and wait to see the latest movies on cable TV in the comfort of my own living room.

Notice what the supporting evidence does here. It provides you, the reader, with a basis for understanding *why* the writer makes the point that is made. Through this specific evidence, the writer has explained and successfully communicated the idea that moviegoing can be a nuisance.

The evidence that supports the point in a paragraph often consists of a series of reasons followed by examples and details that support the reasons. That is true of the paragraph above: three reasons are provided, with examples and details that back up those reasons. Supporting evidence in a paper can also consist of anecdotes, personal experiences, facts, studies, statistics, and the opinions of experts.

## ACTIVITY 1

The paragraph on moviegoing, like almost any piece of effective writing, has two essential parts: (1) a point is advanced, and (2) that point is then supported. Taking a minute to outline the paragraph will help you understand these basic parts clearly. Add the words needed to complete the outline of the paragraph.

**Point:** There are drawbacks to moviegoing.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Fifteen-minute drive to theater
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Long lines, sold-out shows, and increasing prices
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Lack of self-control
  - a. Often stuff myself with unhealthy snacks
  - b. Might have popcorn, candy, soda, or all three
3. \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. People of all ages make noise.

## ACTIVITY 2

An excellent way to get a feel for the paragraph is to write one. Your instructor may ask you to do that now. The only guidelines you need to follow are the ones described here. There is an advantage to writing a paragraph right away, at a point where you have had almost no instruction. This first paragraph will give a quick sense of your needs as a writer and will provide a baseline—a standard of comparison that you and your instructor can use to measure your writing progress during the semester.

Here, then, is your topic: The opening photo of this chapter asked you to think about your strengths and weaknesses as a student. Select one of your strengths or weaknesses and write a paragraph on why you believe it to be a strength or weakness. Provide three reasons why you consider it a strength or weakness, and give plenty of details to develop each of your three reasons.

Notice that the sample paragraph, “The Hazards of Moviegoing,” has the same format your paragraph should have. You should do what this writer has done:

- State a point in the first sentence.
- Give three reasons to support the point.
- Introduce each reason clearly with signal words (such as *First of all*, *Second*, and *Finally*).
- Provide details that develop each of the three reasons.

Write your paragraph on a separate sheet of paper. After completing the paragraph, hand it in to your instructor.

## Knowing Your Purpose and Audience

The three most common purposes of writing are to inform, to persuade, and to entertain. Each is described briefly below.

- To **inform**—to give information about a subject. Authors who are writing to inform want to provide facts that will explain or teach something to readers. For example, an informative paragraph about sandwiches might begin, “Eating food between two slices of bread—a sandwich—is a practice that has its origins in eighteenth-century England.”
- To **persuade**—to convince the reader to agree with the author’s point of view on a subject. Authors who are writing to persuade may give facts, but their main goal is to argue or prove a point to readers. A persuasive paragraph about sandwiches might begin, “There are good reasons why every sandwich should be made with whole grain bread.”
- To **entertain**—to amuse and delight; to appeal to the reader’s senses and imagination. Authors write to entertain in various ways, through fiction and nonfiction. An entertaining paragraph about sandwiches might begin, “What I wanted was a midnight snack, but what I got was better—the biggest, most magical sandwich in the entire world.”

Much of the writing assigned in this book will involve some form of argumentation or persuasion. You will advance a point or thesis and then support it in a variety of ways. To some extent, also, you will write papers to inform—to provide readers with information about a particular subject. And since, in practice, writing often combines purposes, you might find yourself at times providing vivid or humorous details in order to entertain your readers as well.

Your audience will be primarily your instructor and sometimes other students. Your instructor is really a symbol of the larger audience you should see yourself writing for—an audience of educated adults who expect you to present your ideas in a clear, direct, organized way. If you can learn to write to persuade or inform such a general audience, you will have accomplished a great deal.

## Benefits of Paragraph Writing

Paragraph writing offers at least three benefits. First of all, mastering the structure of the paragraph will help make you a better writer. For other courses, you’ll often do writing that will be variations on the paragraph form—for example, exam answers, summaries, response papers, and brief reports. In addition, paragraphs serve as the basic building blocks of essays, the most common form of writing in college. The basic structure of the traditional paragraph, with its emphasis on a clear point and well-organized, logical support, will help you write effective essays and almost every kind of paper that you will have to do.

Second, the discipline of writing a paragraph will strengthen your skills as a reader and listener. You'll become more critically aware of other writers' and speakers' ideas and the evidence they provide—or fail to provide—to support those ideas.

Most important, paragraph writing will make you a stronger thinker. Writing a solidly reasoned paragraph requires mental discipline and close attention to a set of logical rules. Creating a paragraph in which there is an overall topic sentence supported by well-reasoned, convincing evidence is more challenging than writing a free-form or expressive paper. Such a paragraph obliges you to carefully sort out, think through, and organize your ideas. You'll learn to discover and express just what your ideas are and to develop those ideas in a sound and logical way. Traditional paragraph writing, in short, will train your mind to think clearly, and that ability will prove to be of value in every phase of your life.

## Writing as a Skill

A sure way to ruin your chances of learning how to write competently is to believe that writing is a “natural gift” rather than a learned skill. People with such an attitude think that they are the only ones for whom writing is unbearably difficult. They feel that everyone else finds writing easy or at least tolerable. Such people typically say, “I’m not any good at writing” or “English was not one of my good subjects.” They imply that they simply do not have a talent for writing, while others do. The result of this attitude is that people try to avoid writing, and when they do write, they don’t try their best. Their attitude becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: Their writing fails chiefly because they have brainwashed themselves into thinking that they don’t have the “natural talent” needed to write. Unless their attitude changes, they probably will not learn how to write effectively.

A realistic attitude about writing must build on the idea that *writing is a skill*. It is a skill like driving, typing, or cooking, and like any skill, it can be learned. If you have the determination to learn, this book will give you the extensive practice needed to develop your writing skills.

Many people find it difficult to do the intense, active thinking that clear writing demands. (Perhaps television has made us all so passive that the active thinking necessary in both writing and reading now seems harder than ever.) It is frightening to sit down before a blank sheet of paper or a computer screen and know that, an hour later, nothing on it may be worth keeping. It is frustrating to discover how much of a challenge it is to transfer thoughts and feelings from one’s head into words. It is upsetting to find that an apparently simple writing subject often turns out to be complicated. But writing is not an automatic process: we will not get something for nothing—and we should not expect to. For almost everyone, competent writing comes from plain hard work—from determination, sweat, and head-on battle. The good news is that the skill of writing can be mastered, and if you are ready to work, you will learn what you need to know.

## ACTIVITY 3

To get a sense of just how you regard writing, read the following statements. Put a check (✓) beside those statements with which you agree. This activity is not a test, so try to be as honest as possible.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. A good writer should be able to sit down and write a paper straight through without stopping.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Writing is a skill that anyone can learn with practice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I'll never be good at writing because I make too many mistakes in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Because I dislike writing, I always start a paper at the last possible minute.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I've always done poorly in English, and I don't expect that to change.

Now read the following comments about the five statements. The comments will help you see if your attitude is hurting or helping your efforts to become a better writer.

### Comments

- Statement 1: *"A good writer should be able to sit down and write a paper straight through without stopping."*

Statement 1 is not true. Writing is, in fact, a process. It is done not in one easy step but in a series of steps, and seldom at one sitting. If you cannot do a paper all at once, that simply means you are like most of the other people on the planet. It is harmful to carry around the false idea that writing should be easy.

- Statement 2: *"Writing is a skill that anyone can learn with practice."*

Statement 2 is absolutely true. Writing is a skill, like driving or word processing, that you can master with hard work. If you want to learn to write, you can. It is as simple as that. If you believe this, you are ready to learn how to become a competent writer.

Some people hold the false belief that writing is a natural gift, which some have and others do not. Because of this belief, they never make a truly honest effort to learn to write—and so they never learn.

- Statement 3: *"I'll never be good at writing because I make too many mistakes in spelling, grammar, and punctuation."*

The first concern in good writing should be content—what you have to say. Your ideas and feelings are what matter most. You should not worry about spelling, grammar, or punctuation while working on content.

Unfortunately, some people are so self-conscious about making mistakes that they do not focus on what they want to say. They need to realize that a paper is best done in stages, and that applying the rules can and should wait until a later stage in the

writing process. Through review and practice, you will eventually learn how to follow the rules with confidence.

- Statement 4: “Because I dislike writing, I always start a paper at the last possible minute.”

This habit is all too common. You feel you are going to do poorly, and then behave in a way that ensures you *will* do poorly! Your attitude is so negative that you defeat yourself—not even allowing enough time to really try.

Again, what you need to realize is that writing is a process. Because it is done in steps, you don’t have to get it right all at once. If you allow yourself enough time, you’ll find a way to make a paper come together.

- Statement 5: “I’ve always done poorly in English, and I don’t expect that to change.”

How you may have performed in the *past* does not control how you can perform in the *present*. Even if you did poorly in English in high school, it is in your power to make English one of your best subjects in college. If you believe writing can be learned and then work hard at it, you *will* become a better writer.

In conclusion, your attitude is crucial. If you believe you are a poor writer and always will be, chances are you will not improve. If you realize you can become a better writer, chances are you *will* improve. Depending on how you allow yourself to think, you can be your own best friend or your own worst enemy.

## Writing as a Process of Discovery

In addition to believing that writing is a natural gift, many people believe, mistakenly, that writing should flow in a simple, straight line from the writer’s head onto the written page. But writing is seldom an easy, one-step journey in which a finished paper comes out in a first draft. The truth is that *writing is a process of discovery* involving a series of steps, and those steps are very often a zigzag journey. Look at the following illustrations of the writing process:

### Seldom the Case

Starting point —————→ Finished paper

### Usually the Case

Starting point ————→ Finished paper



Very often, writers do not discover just what they want to write about until they explore their thoughts in writing. For example, Diane Woods, the author of the paragraph on moviegoing, had been assigned to write about some annoyance in everyday life. She did not know what annoyance she would choose; instead, she just began writing about annoyances in general, in order to discover a topic. One of those annoyances was traffic, which

**in a writer's words**

“*I fill notebooks with ideas, and I may take six to eight months writing about a situation that interests me. My ideas get better as time goes on.*”  
—Ross Macdonald

seemed promising, so she began putting down ideas and details that came to her about traffic. One detail was the traffic she had to deal with in going to the movies. That made her think of the traffic in the parking lot at the theater complex. At that point, she realized that moviegoing itself was an annoyance. She switched direction in midstream and began writing down ideas and details about moviegoing.

As Diane wrote, she realized how much other moviegoers annoyed her, and she began thinking that other movie patrons might be her main idea in a paper. But when she was writing about patrons who loudly drop popcorn tubs onto the floor, she realized how much all the snacks at the concession stand tempted her. She changed direction again, thinking now that maybe she could talk about patrons and tempting snacks. She kept writing, just putting down more and more details about her movie experiences, still not having figured out exactly how she would fit both patrons and snacks into the paragraph. Even though her paragraph had not quite jelled, she was not worried, because she knew that if she kept writing, it would eventually come together.

The point is that writing is often a process of continuing discovery; as you write, you may suddenly switch direction or double back. You may be working on a topic sentence and realize suddenly that it could be your concluding thought. Or you may be developing a supporting idea and then decide that it should be the main point of your paper. Chapter 2 will treat the writing process more directly. What is important to remember here is that writers frequently do not know their exact destination as they begin to write. Very often they discover the direction and shape of a paper during the process of writing.

## Keeping a Journal

Because writing is a skill, it makes sense that the more you practice writing, the better you will write. One excellent way to get practice in writing, even before you begin composing formal paragraphs, is to keep a daily or almost daily journal. Writing a journal will help you develop the habit of thinking on paper and will show you how ideas can be discovered in the process of writing. A journal can make writing a familiar part of your life and can serve as a continuing source of ideas for papers.

At some point during the day—perhaps during a study period after your last class of the day, or right before dinner, or right before going to bed—spend fifteen minutes or so writing in your journal. Keep in mind that you do not have to plan what to write about, or be in the mood to write, or worry about making mistakes as you write; just write down whatever words come out. You should write at least one page in each session.

You may want to use a notebook that you can easily carry with you for on-the-spot writing. You can also use the journal provided in Appendix B of this book. Or you may decide to write on loose-leaf paper that can be transferred later to a journal folder on your desk. Many students elect to keep their journals on their home computer or laptop. No matter how you proceed, be sure to date all entries.

Your instructor may ask you to make journal entries a specific number of times a week, for a specific number of weeks. He or she may have you

turn in your journal every so often for review and feedback. If you are keeping the journal on your own, try to make entries three to five times a week every week of the semester. Your journal can serve as a sourcebook of ideas for possible papers. More important, keeping a journal will help you develop the habit of thinking on paper, and it can help you make writing a familiar part of your life.

## Tips on Using a Computer

- If you are using your school's computer center, allow yourself plenty of time. You may have to wait for a computer or printer to be free. In addition, you may need several sessions at the computer and printer to complete your paper.
- Every word-processing program allows you to “save” your writing by hitting one or more keys. Save your work frequently as you work on a draft. Work that is saved is preserved by the computer. Work that is not saved is lost when the file you are working on is closed, when the computer is turned off—or if there's a power or system failure.
- Keep your work in two places—the hard drive or CD you are working on and a backup CD. At the end of each session with the computer, copy your work onto the backup CD. Then if the hard drive or working disk becomes damaged, you'll have the backup copy.
- Print out your work at least at the end of every session. Then you'll not only have your most recent draft to work on away from the computer; you'll also have a copy in case something should happen to your CDs.
- Work in single spacing so you can see as much of your writing on the screen at one time as possible. Just before you print out your work, change to double spacing.
- Before making major changes in a paper, create a copy of your file. For example, if your file is titled “Movies,” create a file called “Movies 2.” Then make all your changes in that file. If the changes don't work out, you can always go back to the original file.



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## Ways to Use a Computer at Each Stage of the Writing Process

Following are some ways to make computer use a part of your writing. Note that the sections that follow correspond to the stages of the writing process described in Chapter 2, pages 16–45.

### *Prewriting*

If you're a fast typist, many kinds of prewriting will go well on the computer. With freewriting in particular, you can get ideas onto the screen almost as quickly as they occur to you. A passing thought that could be productive is

not likely to get lost. You may even find it helpful, when freewriting, to dim the screen of your monitor so that you can't see what you're typing. If you temporarily can't see the screen, you won't have to worry about grammar or spelling or typing errors (none of which matter in prewriting); instead, you can concentrate on getting down as many ideas and details as possible about your subject.

After any initial freewriting, questioning, and list-making on a computer, it's often very helpful to print out a hard copy of what you've done. With a clean printout in front of you, you'll be able to see everything at once and revise and expand your work with handwritten comments in the margins of the paper.

If you have prepared a list of items, you may be able to turn that list into an outline right on the screen. Delete the ideas you feel should not be in your paper (move them to the bottom of your document in case you change your mind), and add any new ideas that occur to you. Then use the cut and paste functions to shuffle the supporting ideas around until you find the best order for your paper.

Word processing also makes it easy for you to experiment with the wording of the point of your paper. You can try a number of versions in a short time. After you have decided on the version that works best, you can easily delete the other versions—or simply move them to a temporary “leftover” section at the end of the paper.

### *Writing Your First Draft*

Some people like to write out a first draft by hand and then type it into the computer for revision. If you do this, you may find yourself making some changes and improvements as you type your handwritten draft. And once you have a draft on the screen, or printed out, you will find it much easier to revise than a handwritten draft.

If you feel comfortable composing directly on the screen, you can benefit from the computer's special features. For example, if you have written an anecdote in your freewriting that you plan to use in your paper, simply copy the story from your freewriting file and insert it where it fits in your paper. You can refine it then or later. Or if you discover while typing that a sentence is out of place, cut it out from where it is and paste it wherever you wish. And if while writing you realize that an earlier sentence can be expanded, just move your cursor back to that point and type in the added material.

### *Revising*

It is during revision that the virtues of word processing really shine. All substituting, adding, deleting, and rearranging can be done easily within an existing file. All changes instantly take their proper places within the paper, not scribbled above the line or squeezed into the margin. You can concentrate on each change you want to make, because you never have to type from scratch or work on a messy draft. You can carefully go through your paper to check that all your supporting evidence is relevant and to add new support here and there where needed. Anything you decide to eliminate can be deleted in a keystroke. Anything you add can be inserted precisely where you choose. If you change your mind, all you have to do is

delete or cut and paste. Then you can sweep through the paper focusing on other changes: improving word choice, increasing sentence variety, eliminating wordiness, and so on.

You will find it convenient to print out a hard copy of your file at various points throughout the revision. You can then revise in longhand—adding, crossing out, and indicating changes—and later quickly make those changes in the document.

### *Editing and Proofreading*

Editing and proofreading also benefit richly from word processing. Instead of crossing out or whiting out mistakes, or rewriting an entire paper to correct numerous errors, you can make all necessary changes within the most recent draft. If you find editing or proofreading on the screen hard on your eyes, print out a copy. Mark any corrections on that copy, and then transfer them to the final draft.

If the word-processing program you're using includes spelling and grammar checks, by all means use them. The spell-check function tells you when a word is not in the computer's dictionary. Keep in mind, however, that the spell-check cannot tell you how to spell a name correctly or when you have mistakenly used, for example, *their* instead of *there*. To a spell-check, *Thank ewe four the complement* is as correct as *Thank you for the compliment*. Also use the grammar check with caution, as it may mark things wrong that are OK. In addition, any errors it doesn't uncover are still your responsibility.

A word-processed paper, with its clean appearance and attractive formatting, looks so good that you may think it is in better shape than it really is. Do not be fooled by your paper's appearance. Take sufficient time to review your grammar, punctuation, and spelling carefully.

Even after you hand in your paper, save the computer file. Your teacher may ask you to do some revising, and then the file will save you from having to type the paper from scratch.

## Review Activities

### REVIEW ACTIVITY 1

Answering the following questions will help you evaluate your attitude about writing.

- How much practice were you given writing compositions in high school?  
 Much       Some       Little
- How much feedback (positive or negative comments) from teachers were you given on your compositions?  
 Much       Some       Little
- How did your teachers seem to regard your writing?  
 Good       Fair       Poor

4. Do you feel that some people simply have a gift for writing and others do not?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

5. When do you start writing a paper?

\_\_\_\_\_ Several days before it is due

\_\_\_\_\_ About a day before it is due

\_\_\_\_\_ At the last possible minute

Many people who answer *Little* to questions 1 and 2 often answer *Poor*, *Yes*, and *At the last possible minute* to questions 3, 4, and 5. On the other hand, people who answer *Much* or *Some* to questions 1 and 2 also tend to have more favorable responses to the other questions. The point is that people with little practice in the skill of writing often have understandably negative feelings about their writing ability. They need not have such feelings, however, because writing is a skill that they can learn with practice.

6. Did you learn to write traditional paragraphs in high school?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

7. If so, did your teacher explain to you the benefits of writing such essays?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, very clearly

\_\_\_\_\_ Maybe, but not that I remember

\_\_\_\_\_ No

If you answered *Maybe* or *No* to question 7, you may not be looking forward to taking the course in which you are using this book. It will be worth your while to read and consider again (on pages 6–7) the enormous benefits that can come from practice in writing traditional paragraphs.

8. In your own words, explain what it means to say that writing is often a zigzag journey rather than a straight-line journey.

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## REVIEW ACTIVITY 2

Following is an excerpt from one student's journal. As you read, look for a general point and supporting material that could be the basis for an interesting paper.

September 6

*My first sociology class was tonight. The parking lot was jammed when I got there. I thought I was going to be late for class. A guard had us park on a field next to the regular lot. When I got to the room, it had the usual painted construction. Every school I have ever been in since first grade seems to be made of cinder block. The students all sat there without saying anything, waiting for the instructor to arrive. I think they were all a bit nervous like me. I hoped there wasn't going to be a ton of work in the course. I think I was also afraid of looking foolish somehow. This goes back to grade school, when I wasn't a very good student and teachers sometimes embarrassed me in class. I didn't like grade school, and I hated high school. Now here I am six years later—in college, of all places. Who would have thought I would end up here? The instructor appeared—a woman who I think was a bit nervous herself. I think I like her. Her name is Barbara Hanlin. She says we should call her Barbara. We got right into it, but it was interesting stuff. I like the fact that she asks questions but then she lets you volunteer. I always hated it when teachers would call on you whether you wanted to answer or not. I also like the fact that she answers the questions and doesn't just leave you hanging. She takes the time to write important ideas on the board. I also like the way she laughs. This class may be OK.*

1. If the writer of the journal entry above was looking for ideas for a paragraph, he could probably find several in this single entry. For example, he might write a story about the roundabout way he apparently wound up in college. See if you can find in the entry an idea that might be the basis for an interesting paragraph, and write your point in the space below.

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2. Take fifteen minutes now to write a journal entry on this day in your life. Turn to the journal provided in Appendix B and just start writing about anything that you have seen, said, heard, thought, or felt today, and let your thoughts take you wherever they may.