Composing Tasks

Metro State Writing Center, Fall 2023

# **Identify the Assignment Requirements**

* Re-write the instructions in a way that makes sense to you
* Ask questions if you do not understand them completely
* Is the assignment to compare/contrast, analyze, research, reflect, etc.
* Format: citation style (MLA or APA), length, sources, due date, etc.

# **Identify a Topic**

* Define the area of knowledge being considered
* Specify and tailor the topic to fit the size of the assignment
* Write a topic statement:
  + I am working on the topic of \_\_\_.

# **Begin to Research**

* Develop a research question based on your topic statement:
  + I want to find out how/why \_\_\_.
* Search databases using key words related to the topic and these questions
* Cite each source in the required style (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.)

# **Use Working Questions**

* Ask interesting sub-questions that begin with “how” or “why”
* Tailor your questions to match the length of the assignment
* Design your questions so that their answers can be grounded in evidence

# **Explain Your Argument & Define Your Audience**

* Answers to research questions, solutions to problems, and reasoned positions on debatable claims:
  + Because I want others to understand \_\_\_, I will need to explain \_\_\_.
  + These others are \_\_\_.
  + They may use my work to \_\_\_.

# **Create a Working Outline**

* Use the requirements in the instructions to organize logical sections and/or headings
* Link each of your sources to at least one of these specific sections

# **Drafting**

**\*Pause\*** to get distance – take at least 5 minutes up to a few days between each stage.

**\*Share\*** your writing at each stage of revision to get another viewpoint from someone with a fresh or expert perspective.

## **First Draft**

* Focus on your ideas and opinions, not grammar and mechanics
* Get your thoughts down in roughly the format required

## **Middle Drafts**

* Organize the material fully into the required format
* Apply your research and sources to the argument
* Revise where you find errors or learn new things

## **Final Draft**

* Check your work against the original assignment instructions
* Read once for logic and clarity
* Read again for grammar, mechanics, and formatting errors

## **Final Copy Proofread**

* \*PROOFREAD SLOWLY, SENTENCE BY SENTENCE\*
  + Try reading your writing out loud or in reverse order
* Correct any errors you find
* Submit exactly as required

# **Polishing a Final Draft into a Final Copy**

* Go back to the instructions or the rubric and re-write them as a list of tasks. If you made a task list at the pre-writing stage, re-visit it.
* Check your final draft against this list.
* Finally, do two things:

1. Fill in any gaps in your logic and take out any unnecessary filler. Make sure arguments, evidence, and data are relevant to the paper.
2. Expand more if needed. Write one more sentence for each point by adding a new detail, more clarification, or explaining connections.