

WRITING: THE BASICS.

It's all about the reader. If you know what you are saying but the reader doesn't, then the writing doesn't work.

There are no rules that override precision and clarity.

Having a peer read your draft and to check whether or not he understands is useful, as is brainstorming with a peer to get started. Actually saves time. And brainstorming often produces not only the concepts but the key language you can use in the essay.

STRUCTURE.

Tell the reader where you are going. Bring her there with you. Tell him where you've been. While this approach is simple, it is not simplistic. Following the approach provides coherency and structure. Headings at the beginnings of sections can be helpful.

The essay should have some sort of thesis, even though the assignment may be multifaceted. The thesis may need to be fairly general:

Better allocation of healthcare resources can result in better health outcomes for the United States without requiring increased healthcare spending and in spite of inequitable distribution of wealth in the nation.

I think many writers would benefit from a fairly detailed outline before beginning the draft.

Usually, writing the introduction after you have finished the body of the essay makes the introduction more effective.

I have observed that students who keep **paragraphs** relatively short write better essays, because every sentence in the paragraph is related to the paragraph's main idea. In addition, the relatively short paragraphs keep the argument organized, as short paragraphs are easier to keep a handle on as units of the argument, so the big picture does not get lost. Short paragraphs are easy to move around, especially if they are tightly constructed units.

Spell check is not equal to proofreading which is not equal to editing which is not equal to revising. Reading the essay out loud to yourself helps you catch problems.

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