

Drafting overview

Professional writers redraft many times before they are happy: writing rarely flows out 'all at once' in its final version.

Writing is easier if the research, planning and organising have already been done and if you focus on different processes in each draft.

Draft 1: a quick draft to get ideas down

Use your plan. Don't worry about style or good English.

- Focus on the assignment question: write out your interpretation of the title.
- What is your core idea? Write out your central idea or the main line of your reasoning.
- Write headings and subheadings from your plan (the pyramid, or whatever), but leave these out of the final draft of an essay.
- Add in details below each heading. Link headings and points into sentences.
- Use your plan: keep looking back to it after writing each paragraph.

Draft 2: fine-tune the structure

Check that information is grouped and ordered – especially into paragraphs. If not, cut up your text with scissors and rearrange it, or colour-code and number paragraphs in the order in which you will rewrite them.

Check that the line of argument is clear from one paragraph to the next – if necessary, add in sentences to link ideas. You may need to do this more than once.

Draft 3: fine tune the style

Read what you have written aloud. How does it sound? Can you improve the flow or style? Add sentences or details where needed.

Draft 4: finishing touches

Aim to leave at least a day between drafts. Your mind will go on working on your ideas. After a break, you will find it easier to spot passages that need rephrasing.