

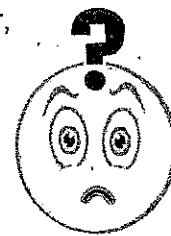
Preparing to Write: Organizing Your Information

Beginning the writing process can be very difficult because it is hard to know what information to include, and how to arrange it to tell your story. As a writer you will be acting as both a “scholar” and a “chef” to complete your project. Wearing your scholar hat will help you to decide what the most important information is to include. As a chef you must prepare your project in a way that works well for your particular topic. Below are some tips for how to navigate the writing process.



Top Tips on Writing for All Categories:

- **Break it down.** Instead of trying to write everything in one night, create an outline or guide that lets you write in smaller pieces. Using this as a guide for your project will also help viewers and judges more easily understand your project. Also, if you have divided the writing responsibilities up, make sure your writing style is cohesive in the end.
- **Use your thesis to guide you.** Everything included in your project should lead back to supporting your thesis. This should also help you divide information into smaller, more manageable pieces.
- **Seek advice.** Remember you want your project to be easily understood by anyone, so if your friends have that “huh?” look on their face, you may want to consider revising your work.
- **Keep it short and to the point.** Make sure you do the work for the viewer; no one goes to a museum to read a book. Before writing it is important to analyze your information so you know what to argue.
- **Once is not enough.** It is crucial to have at least one re-write of your information. Writing is a process, and the first draft will likely be inadequate for most projects.
- **Use an active voice.** Things rarely just “happen” in history, someone or something is usually propelling it. Instead of saying “the Berlin Wall *came* down in 1989,” try, “the Berlin Wall was *taken* down in 1989.”
- **Viewers can't read your mind.** You have been working on this topic for months, for some of the viewers and judges this may be the first time they encounter it. Don't assume they know anything about what you are presenting.



Strategies for the Writing Process

- **Start by identifying the most important quotes, excerpts, images, etc.** Write these on notecards that you can arrange on a table.
- **Write it out on paper first.** Writing key points on notecards and then moving them around into different configurations can help you segment your work. This can also be a good way to save drafts you may want to come back to later, rather than having just erased them on the computer.
- **The best place to start is to start.** Don't let your time go to waste because you are afraid of “getting something wrong” or not writing it perfectly the first time. Once you write something on paper it is much easier for others to advise you and help you work on your writing.

Organizing Your Information: Exhibits

There are 3 basic elements to consider when organizing an effective exhibit:

1. Orientation

- Make sure the title and subtitle of the exhibit are prominent features of the design
- Make the main idea or thesis clear to the viewer

2. Segmentation

- Organize the exhibit into subtopics
- Use *design elements* (color, background, font, etc.) to make subtopics clear to the viewer

3. Explanation

- Use clear, concise, captions and texts to:
 - Identify pictures, objects, or documents *and*
 - Interpret information for the viewer- don't pad your board with unnecessary pictures, charts, or other information that doesn't directly relate to your point

