

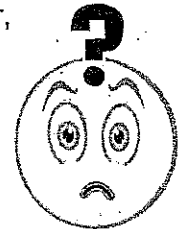
Preparing to Write: Organizing Your Information

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.

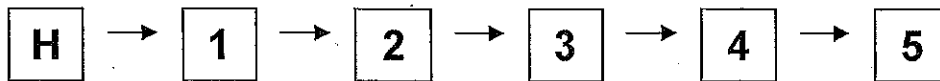
Organizing Your Information: Website

Websites can be organized in many ways, use your judgment to decide how this will work best for your particular topic.

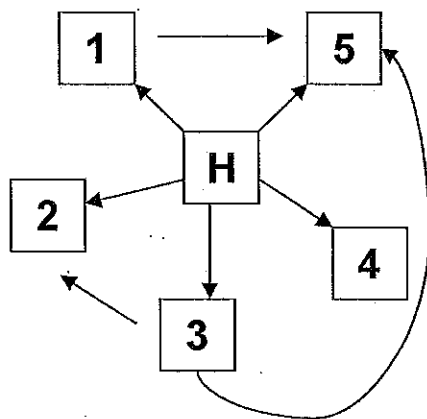
- **Segment your information in a logical way.** This can be done in multiple ways, for example: chronologically, topically, by location, etc. You may use any or all of these to divide your information into different pages.
- **Homepage:** Include all of the most important information here- your argument, title, names, and introduction. All pages must link to this page.
- **Unify your pages.** Use a common text, color, template/ layout, font, etc. to establish a flow that makes it easy for the viewer to understand your information.
- **Avoid visual clutter.** Don't include all the funky widgets you can find, this will overwhelm your viewer. Viewers will quickly see through the glitz if there is little substance.
- **Pay attention to structure.** Use the diagrams below to help you think about how your information is best presented.
- **Know the rules.** The website category has changed a bit this year. Don't make a "live website," (a www website), use a program that will let you save your work to a CD such as iWeb or Dreamweaver and check it on multiple browsers. New this year, all websites must list an annotated bibliography as one of the pages.

These diagrams offer some ideas about how to structure your web site.

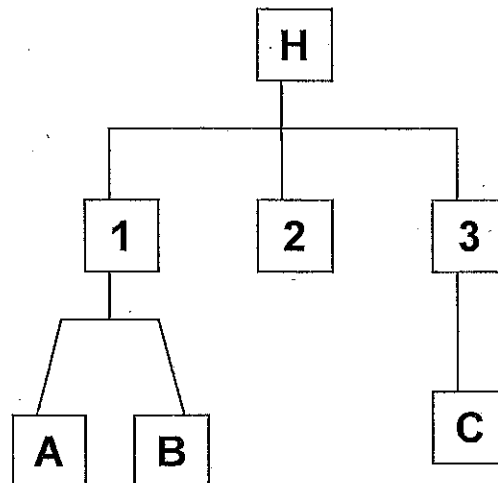
Linear Organization: This allows you to sequence the exact order your viewer goes from page to page.



Spider Web: This organization allows the viewer to explore the website in any way they choose. Viewers will assume that all of the information is equally important because it is only one step away from the homepage. Not all pages must link together.



Hierarchical Organization: Viewer may look at this type of website in multiple ways. By layering the information you show the viewer that some is more important than the rest. The closer the page is to the homepage, the more essential the information will be assumed to be.



This information is taken from the National History Day website, for more info and tips please visit www.nationalhistoryday.org.