



**The Weissman Center for Leadership and the Liberal Arts
The Speaking, Arguing, and Writing Program
122 Porter Hall**

Writing Your Papers in Stages

Writing a great paper usually does not happen the first time around; just ask any great writer! Instead, papers become great papers through a series of improvements. Give yourself enough time to:

- I. Write a draft. You cannot improve upon a paper if you have not written anything down. Write the draft knowing that you will improve upon it later. You may reorganize, change the word choice, and revise your thesis statement (if you started with one) another time. The important thing is to get your ideas on paper!
- II. Revise your draft. Look for parts of your paper that need to be expanded upon and add the necessary information. Search for sections of your paper that are redundant or do not adhere to the topic of your paper and delete them. Check the organization of your paragraphs. If you feel the paper is not moving in the right direction, cut it up-literally! Rearrange parts that you cut until you have a cohesive draft.
- III. Put it away. The best strategy for improving a paper is to distance oneself from it. Even a few hours will help bring a new perspective. Whether hours or days, reread the paper out loud and go through the revising and editing process again if needed.
- IV. Edit your draft. Summarize or take the topic sentence from each paragraph and check to be sure that all information given within the paragraph supports the summary or topic sentence. If you find extraneous information within a paragraph that is still important information overall, create a new paragraph or move this extra but important information to another section in the paper. Check for clear transitions between paragraphs and for sentence clarity (see “Sentence Clarity” handout). Also edit for spelling, punctuation, and citations.
- V. Proofread your final paper. By now, you only need to read your paper for typing, formatting, and printing mistakes.