The Writing Process

When a task is overwhelming, it helps to take things one step at a time.

Prepare:
- Choose a topic that is not too broad. Try to focus on a single question that needs answering.
- Do your research. Read and gather information around your chosen topic.
- Engage in brainstorming, free writing, and peer discussion to get your ideas flowing.
  - Ask who, what, when, where, why, and how.
  - Cluster diagrams can be useful to show relationships between ideas. Start with a bubble for your main idea, branch out with your supporting points, and branch out from each of them with examples and evidence.

Structure:
- Form a central thesis, which states a position, makes a claim, or gives an interpretation.
  - A thesis statement often provides a map of the paper’s organization.
- Consider the purpose of your paper, and create an outline.
  - Make sure your supporting ideas do not overlap. This way, you will be able to focus on writing one paragraph at a time without repeating yourself.

Draft:
- The thesis unifies the paper. Introduce it near the beginning, and restate it near the end.
- Each paragraph should form a single main idea, usually expressed in a topic sentence.
  - Use transitions to connect each paragraph to the next.
- Once everything else has been written, come up with a title.

Revise:
- Make sure your paper stays focused on the thesis. Cut out unnecessary words and ideas.
- Clarify any confusing or murky statements.
- For a college-level paper, be sure to maintain an academic voice at all times.

Edit:
- Fix any errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.
  - Your computer’s spelling and grammar tools can be useful, but they are not perfect. Remember that you are the boss.

Polish:
Make sure that all the formatting meets your instructor’s guidelines.