Writing:
Three Steps to Better Writing
Academic Success Center
Iowa State University

1. Prewrite for ideas (70% of time spent)
(This includes preparing to write by reading assigned work and doing other research)
   - Freewriting is a good starting point and one way to deal with writer's block. Don’t worry about spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Write for at least five to seven minutes.
   - Create clusters (see: “How to Start a Paper” handout)
   - Find a topic.
     o Is it appropriate? Too narrow? Too broad? Test your topic by completing the following sentence: “The purpose of this paper is to convince my instructor that...” If the completed sentence is clear and the task is doable, the topic is probably right.
   - This is a time to compare ideas and question things that seem illogical.

2. Writing for organization (20% of time spent)
   - Write in larger chunks, building your paper around your topic, and putting things in a suitable order.
   - Pay attention to the flow of ideas from one sentence to another and from one paragraph to the next
   - Put your first draft away for a couple of days and then read it. Does it say what you want it to say? Are the ideas organized? What changes do you need to make?

3. Rewriting for polish (10% of time spent)
   - Read again and correct: replace past tense verbs with strong active verbs
     o Or at least, be consistent in your verb tense
   - Add smoother transitions: use words and phrases to show relationships between sentences
   - Delete wordy sentences or paragraphs that add nothing
   - Vary the structure and length of your sentences
   - Double-check spelling and grammar
   - Continue to revise until you’re satisfied
   - Have a second reader take a look and give suggestions