

# Drafting Strategy: Grab, Couch, Organize, Build

This exercise is just one possible way to move from notes to a first draft. Feel free to play with these ideas in a way that is helpful to you.

## Grab

- Collect the material you're going to use to build your draft. This could include your notes, observations, evidence, or any supplementary material. For example, you could start by listing important details from your sources. Let's pretend we are going to write an essay about "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," written by Robert L. May. Notice how in the Grab stage, we collect not only the information, but details about the source so I won't accidentally plagiarize the source in the draft. I'm also using quotation marks to identify direct quotations from the source, so that I can keep track of who says what.

Example notes for the Grab stage:

- Jerks . . . the other reindeer are very group-oriented: they focus on Rudolph because they perceive him as different (May 1)
- What's Rudolph look like? He "had a very shiny nose" (May 1)
- Relationship between deeds/duties/acts and a sense of belonging? (May 1)

## Couch

- Once you've identified the material you want to work with, you can prepare it for drafting by "couching" it in your own writing. In the couch stage, integrate the material into complete, cited sentences.

Example sentences for the Couch stage:

- The other reindeer in this song seem to be group-oriented: they focus on Rudolph because they perceive him as different (May 1).
- Rudolph, the main character, "had a very shiny nose" (May 1).
- The story suggests a relationship between performing good deeds and finding a sense of belonging (May 1).

## Organize

- In the organize stage, zoom out and search your material for anything that could give your first draft some logical organization: are there any patterns or bigger categories you can spot? Is there a clear order of importance, where you can tell which details a reader will need to know first? Are there chronological events in your material that you should discuss in the order in which they happened?

### Example reordering for the Organize stage:

- Maybe background description should go first?
  - Rudolph, the main character, "had a very shiny nose" (May 1).
- Then I can add my interpretation of the story . . .
  - The other reindeer in this song seem to be group-oriented: they focus on Rudolph because they perceive him as different (May 1).
  - The story suggests a relationship between performing good deeds and finding a sense of belonging (May 1).

## Build

- In the final drafting stage, Build your organized material into cohesive paragraphs. You will need to decide where to break the material into paragraphs. Then, think of your material like building blocks: in this final drafting stage, you may need to add some "glue" to hold the blocks together in paragraphs. Your glue may be topic sentences for your paragraphs, transition sentences to lead from one paragraph to the next, or an introduction or conclusion paragraph.

### Example paragraph for the Build stage:

The message of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" hinges on one detail: Rudolph, the main character, "had a very shiny nose" (May 1). Meanwhile, the other reindeer in this song seem to be group-oriented. They focus on Rudolph because they perceive him as different (May 1). Once Rudolph helps Santa and saves Christmas, however, the other reindeer change their perception of Rudolph. Because of this ending, the story suggests a relationship between performing good deeds and finding a sense of belonging (May 1).