

The Writing Center @ KUMC

The Writing Process

Many writers do not follow a writing process—or they follow a nonproductive one. Many writers don't know they have a process and would benefit by knowing consciously how they work.

Let's start with some negatives, just to get them out of the way, important though they are.

- Don't expect to write a perfect draft or near-perfect draft that you tweak.
- Don't draft and edit at the same time.
- Don't start out obsessing about your audience, especially if it's your prof.
- Don't wait until the last minute.
- Don't do it all alone.

These negatives do not ignore the fact that every writer and his/her process is different. Rather, they are meant to reject a fixed approach and to encourage a nonlinear or recursive approach that fits with reality. "Writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 366). *Processes* is right! Writers move forward and backward from one step/stage to another. So how do they get anything done? It happens that the steps are always creative and empowering, not limiting or useless, even if the goal is hard to see. Time, discovery, and planning are key.

Research has taught us much about this mysterious but significant process. For example, inexperienced writers do not see revision holistically; they make small or surface changes. Experienced writers make major changes; they are open to rethinking many things and to critical feedback above all.

Take time to think about your process and to consider these steps:

- Understand the task/assignment
- Gather info/generate ideas (reading, note-taking, talking, prewriting)
- Organize the info (reasonably, simply)
- Draft
- Incubate
- Get feedback
- Revise
- Edit the surface and proofread
- Reflect on the process and product