

## Understanding the Writing Process

There is no one way to produce a paper, and no perfect writing process. But most people conduct some planning, drafting, revising, proofreading, and reflection when they tackle a writing assignment.

### Key Points to Remember:

- ❖ Not all parts of the writing process happen while writing. Sometimes we plan our papers in our heads, working out our argument as we walk across campus or take a shower. Other times, we talk through parts of the process with friends, colleagues, professors, and tutors. Rereading source texts and conducting research also helps organize our thinking, preparing us to write. Ideas both great and small have sometimes even come in dreams.
- ❖ The writing process is usually not linear. Most people don't do all their planning, then sit down and write a draft, then revise that draft, then do a final proofread. Most people do some planning, write for a little while, re-think their ideas, plan some more, write some more, tinker with their sentences, move stuff around, take stuff out, add some new ideas, and write some more. In other words, the writing process is *recursive*. We revisit each part of the process (sometimes several times) during the act of writing a single paper.
- ❖ Writing rarely happens in isolation. The image of the solitary genius pounding out a perfect masterpiece all alone in a dark room is a myth. While writing does require concentration and much independent work, the best writers are also nourished by their communities. They discuss their ideas in order to strengthen them. They read others' writings in order to know what's being said. They seek feedback from a variety of readers and are open to suggestions throughout the writing process.

### What Does YOUR Writing Process Look Like?

What conditions are required for you to write well? Does your writing process vary depending on the kind of paper you are writing? How often are you able to work under "ideal" conditions? Try to describe your ideal process below.

#### **What does your planning process look like?**

Planning is before writing is begun or early in the process, before the writer has completed a draft. Planning may involve free-form prewriting, mental mapping, conducting preliminary research, rereading and annotating your text, having a conversation with a writing tutor, or simply letting your mind wander while eating dinner.

#### **What does your drafting process look like?**

At this stage, the writer is composing an early draft and has perhaps not yet analyzed the structure or argument closely. How do you prefer to write a first draft? On your laptop? At a desktop computer? By hand in a notebook? Where do you feel most focused, comfortable, and inspired when you write? Your desk? Your bed? A coffee shop? A campus computer lab? At what time is writing easiest for you? Weekend mornings? Late at night on Tuesdays

and Thursdays? Is there anything else, like music or some favorite sweatpants, that puts you in the mood to write?

**What does your revision process look like?**

Revision begins when the writer has finished one or more drafts and is now closely analyzing argument, structure, and evidence. How much time do you allow yourself to rest between drafting and revision? How do you put yourself in a fresh state of mind so you can view your draft from a different perspective? Who do you seek feedback from at this stage? Writing tutors? Your professor? A roommate or friend? A family member?

**What does your proofreading process look like?**

At this point, the writer sees the draft as complete except for proofreading. The task is to find surface errors. What skills and resources do you use to address problems with grammar, spelling, word choice, sentence structure, and formatting?

**What does your reflection process look like?**

At this point, the writer has completed the assignment and begins to consider what insights can be carried forward into future writing projects. When did you feel most productive and inspired, and how can you recreate those conditions in the future? What strategies most helped you to complete your assignment? What unanticipated obstacles did you encounter? What can you resolve to do better the next time, such as allowing more time for revision or discussing your initial ideas with a tutor or your professor?

How do you usually produce papers? What alternatives are possible?

How might you productively change your pattern of composing?