The Writing Process

The Academic Support Centre //
September 2015
+ so that someone else can understand it!
Why write?
Why do academics (scientists) write?

I used to hate writing assignments, but now I enjoy them.

I realized that the purpose of writing is to inflate weak ideas, obscure poor reasoning, and inhibit clarity.

With a little practice, writing can be an intimidating and impenetrable fog! Want to see my book report?

"The dynamics of interbeing and monological imperatives in Dick and Jane: a study in psychic transrelational gender modes."

Academia, here I come!
The Academic Writing Process
Describe your writing process

• What do you need—mentally and physically—to start writing?
• What stages do you go through during the writing process?
• What is the hardest part?
• The easiest part?
Writing Processes

A. Brainstorm. Read. Write. Edit. Turn in.
B. Read. Read. Read. Read. Read. Read. Write at the last minute. Turn in.
D. Usually starts with brainstorming, reading and note-taking, which leads to drafting, which can lead back to research which generates new ideas which leads to more drafting which leads to revision which leads to new ideas which leads to more focused reading which leads to more revising, which eventually leads to editing and proofreading. Turn in.
The Writing Process

what people think it looks like

what it really looks like
http://app.griffith.edu.au/study-smart
An example writing process
Analyze assignment

Subject to topic to RQ

Organize thoughts

Focused reading & note-taking

Organize thoughts

Revise & draft 2

Feedback

Draft 1

Revise & draft 2

Feedback

Revise & draft 3

Edit & polish

Turn in!
Different texts at different times

• Process writing (focus on thinking & content)
• Product writing (focus on its form)

Different types of writing generate different types of text:
- raw text (for your eyes only)
- draft text (for feedback during the process)
- reader text (the end product)

All are necessary and have their place in the writing process
Analyze assignment

Subject to topic to RQ

Organize thoughts

Focused reading & note-taking

Revise & draft 2

Feedback

Draft 1

Outline 2

Feedback

Revise & draft 3

Edit & polish

Turn in!
Analyze assignment

Topic instructions

+ Action word
  
  (discuss, compare, evaluate, analyze, describe, review...)

+ Formalities
Analyze assignment
Subject to topic to RQ
Organize thoughts
Focused reading & note-taking

Revise & draft 2
Feedback
Draft 1
Outline 2

Feedback
Revise & draft 3
Edit & polish
Turn in!
Subject to topic to RQ

Tree diseases

(Subjects)

Topic

• Dutch Elm Disease treatment and prevention in Dalby Söderskog
“...beginner’s mistakes: start plowing through all the sources they can find on a topic, taking notes on everything they read.”

“...the best way to begin working on your specific topic is not to find all the data you can on your general topic, but to formulate questions that point you just those data that you need to answer them.”
Subject to topic to RQ

Types of questions to ask:

*Free write or list what you already know about your topic

Ask about the history:
  How does (topic) fit into a larger developmental context?
  What is (topic’s) internal history?

Ask about its structure and composition:
  How does (topic) fit into the context of a larger structure or function as part of a larger system?
  How do (topic’s) parts fit together as a system?
Types of questions to ask:

Ask how your topic is categorized?
  How can (topic) be grouped into kinds?
  How does (topic) compare to and contrast with others like it?

Turn positive questions into negative ones.
  What has not contributed to...?
  How does (topic) not differ from...?

Ask “what if?” and other speculative questions.
  How would things be different if (topic) didn’t happen/never existed?
Tree diseases

Subject to topic to RQ

- Dutch Elm Disease treatment and prevention in Dalby Söderskog

Question

- How is Dutch Elm Disease currently treated in Dalby Söderskog?
- What does the current condition of the elms in Dalby Söderskog suggest about their future?
Analyze assignment → Subject to topic to RQ → Organize thoughts

Focused reading & note-taking

Outline 2

Revise & draft 2 → Feedback

Draft 1 → Feedback

Outline 2

Feedback

Revise & draft 3 → Edit & polish

Turn in!
Organize thoughts

Variety of methods...

IMRaD outline
I. Introduction
   A. Context
   B. Problem (What we don’t know)
   C. Aim
   D. RQ

II. Methods
   A. Design
   B. Data collection

III. Results

IV. Discussion

V. Conclusion
Organize thoughts

Variety of methods...

IMRAD outline

Mind map
Health care finance convergence

- Historical development
- External causes
- Internal causes
- Effects of convergence

Mind map
Organize thoughts

Variety of methods...

IMRAD outline

Mind map

Free write
How to free write

1. Choose a starting sentence/theme and time frame
2. Write without stopping—no punctuation!
3. Continue to write without thinking about what you’re writing
4. Do not use the backspace or eraser
5. Continue to write even if you don’t have anything to write about

If you free write on the computer, turn off the monitor!
How to free write: sentences

It’s a problem that…(*starting point*)
It’s a problem especially for….This could be used by....to....(*whom does it concern?*)
The problem is caused by.... (*causes*)
I aim to understand/find out....(*your aim*)
I plan to study the problem by.... (*method*)
Some keywords and concepts are...
I will only deal with...because...(*delimitations*)
I treat this topic only from....perspective
For now, I’ll work as if this section will have the following structure...(*content & organization*)
From free write to draft

1. Find a starting point for a new free write
   – underline good ideas and formulations
   – write the best bits on a new page and free write from there
   – repeat until you have developed a working draft

2. Find a research problem
   – formulate the most important point in one sentence
   – use the formulation as a research problem

3. Find keywords and make a preliminary structure
   – note keywords and write them on a separate page
   – structure the keywords in a logical order→ paper structure?
   – write additional comments on each point
Organize thoughts

Variety of methods...

- IMRAD outline
- Mind map
- Free write
- Tell a friend
Tell a friend

...and get feedback

- What I remember the most was...
- I’d like to know more about...
- I didn’t quite understand...
Analyze assignment

Subject to topic to RQ

Organize thoughts

Focused reading & note-taking

Outline 2

Revise & draft 2

Feedback

Draft 1

Feedback

Revise & draft 3

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Turn in!
Active Reading

Big picture before details

Familiarity before understanding
Active Reading

**Before...**get an overview:

*What type of text is this?*

- Title, author information, synopsis on the back, table of contents, forward, abstract
- Headings, bold/italicized words, text boxes, figures, graphs...
Active Reading

Before...

“What do I want out of this reading?”
SKIM: overview of content and main points. To find parts you want to read more carefully.

NORMAL: the overall message, thinking, argumentation, problem formulation, and results.

INTENSIVE: detailed knowledge, precise information, to learn the material deeply and be able to reproduce and analyze the nuances of the text.

SELECTIVE: the texts relevance from a specific point of view. To use the text in a specific context.
Notes that rework the source → better essay

**NOTES**
- Main claim and evidence
- Keywords
- Examples
- Models
- Quotes
- Page numbers and reference info

**REFLECTIONS**
- Questions
- Associations, reactions, ideas, concretizations
- Visualizations
### Synthesis matrix for an overview of the literature

**Topic:** ________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source #1</th>
<th>Source #2</th>
<th>Source #3</th>
<th>Source #4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Idea A</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Idea B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Idea and example from:
https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/resources/synthesis-matrix-2.pdf
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alteration of women’s roles because of WWII</th>
<th>Cornelsen</th>
<th>Stewart</th>
<th>Bruley</th>
<th>Scott</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Women accredited the WASP program for opening new doors, challenging stereotypes, and proving that women were as capable as men (p. 113)</td>
<td>- WAAC (Women’s Army Auxiliary Corp) was 1st chance for women to serve in army, given full army status in 1943 as WAC (p. 28)</td>
<td>- Women given equal opportunities (p. 223)</td>
<td>- Women born in the 1920’s found new doors open to them where they once would have encountered brick walls (p. 526)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Women could compete with men as equals in the sky because of their exemplary performance (p. 116)</td>
<td>- Needs of the war were so great that women’s traditional social roles were ignored (p. 30)</td>
<td>- Women joined workforce as a break from the ordinary to help the war (p. 220)</td>
<td>- Even women not directly involved in the war were changing mentally by being challenged to expand their horizons because of the changing world around them (p. 562)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- WASP created opportunities for women that had never previously existed (p. 112)</td>
<td>- Military women paid well for the time period and given benefits if they became pregnant (p. 32)</td>
<td>- Unconscious decision to cross into male-dominated roles (p. 221)</td>
<td>- War also brought intellectual expansion to many people (p. 557)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Women’s success at flying aircrafts “marked a pivotal step towards breaking the existing gender barrier” (p. 112)</td>
<td>- The 1940’s brought more opportunities to women than ever before (p. 26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Hardships and oppositions women faced</th>
<th>Cornelsen</th>
<th>Stewart</th>
<th>Bruley</th>
<th>Scott</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- “From the outset male pilots resented women’s presence in a traditionally male military setting” (p. 1113-4)</td>
<td>- Women in the military given extensive physical and mental tests, but still discriminated against, ridiculed, and considered inferior to men (p. 29)</td>
<td>- Women given unskilled labor positions by government because only seen as temporary workers, therefore no reason to train them (p. 221-2)</td>
<td>- Women given less significant work and viewed as less intelligent and physically able (p. 224)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The WASP were routinely assigned inferior planes that were later found to have been improperly maintained” (p. 114)</td>
<td>- discrimination against WASP at every level of military service, women were only paid 2/3 of what men were for doing identical tasks (p. 114)</td>
<td>- Women given less significant work and viewed as less intelligent and physically able (p. 224)</td>
<td>- “The Church-Bliss diary reveals how dilution arrangements...ensured that women working in male preserves were prevented</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Idea and example from: https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/resources/synthesis-matrix-2.pdf
Ask:

• Are there differences in the scope of these texts’ main claims?
• Any degree of disagreements between them?
• Do they use similar methods to tackle similar problems?
• Do they engage with each other? How?
• Do they cover different aspects of my subject? How many different aspects? Any left out?
• How detailed/deep is each analysis?
• Any ideas in one text that you could reasonably expect to see in another, but don’t?
1. Analyze assignment
2. Subject to topic to RQ
3. Organize thoughts
4. Focused reading & note-taking
5. Revise & draft 2
6. Feedback
7. Draft 1
8. Organize 2
9. Feedback
10. Revise & draft 3
11. Edit & polish
12. Turn in!
In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the background to my topic. With that background in place, I will turn to an evaluation of the relevant literature on this topic. The next step will be a re-interpretation of my problem in light of this literature. I will conclude by considering the implication of my topic for the broader field.
Can start as process text for the writer and become product text for the reader. Forces the writer to think about the relationship between parts.

In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the background to [my topic]. With that background in place, I will turn to an evaluation of the relevant literature on [my topic]. The next step will be a re-interpretation of [my topic] in light of this literature. I will conclude by considering the implications of [my topic] for [my field].
Version 3

The first step in discussing [something] must be a consideration of [some sort of background issue]. To get a better feel for [this issue], we will need to look at [a particular aspect of the literature]. The dynamic that we see between [these two strains of thought we’ve identified in the literature] will provide a new way to understand the [current topic]. It is only when we see [this topic] in this new way that we can grasp its implications for the broader project of understanding [some issue facing the field as a whole].
Analyze assignment
Subject to topic to RQ
Organize thoughts
Focused reading & note-taking

Outline 2

Feedback
Revise & draft 2
Revise & draft 3
Edit & polish

Turn in!

Draft 1
If writing for an extending amount of time is painful...
Pomodoro Technique

1. Choose a task
2. Work with intense focus for 25 minutes
3. When distracted, quickly note them on paper
4. After 25 minutes, note what you have done
5. Take a break for 3-5 minutes
6. Work for another 25 minutes
7. After 4 pomodori, take a longer break (30 min)
”The risk of being changed is one of the most frightening prospects most of us can face.”

Carl R. Rogers
“Students taught to give peer feedback improve in their own writing abilities more than students taught to use peer feedback.”

Feedback

- Reader-based feedback = to give information about a specific communication situation, not a grade/judgment
- Criteria-based feedback (aka “assessment”) = to determine quality according to a certain system
Reader-based feedback

- Doesn’t talk about how the text is, but about how you, the reader, understood it

- Uses “I messages”
  (I reacted to.../I like how.../I associated...with...)

- Meets the writer where he/she is in the process

- Is concrete and usable (“looks forward”)
Criteria-based feedback

- Talks about the text in relation to a set of expected characteristics
- Those characteristics could be grade-based, genre-based, something else...
- Usually assumes the text is “finished”
- Is concrete, but doesn’t have to look forward
- Ex: professional peer review process in academia
Bothers readers more

Context: purpose, audience, etc.

Content knowledge and processes

Discourse knowledge and processes

Structure and organization (incl. section and paragraph coherence)

Sentence structure and coherence

Word choice

Grammar, Punctuation, Reference formalities, etc.

Bothers readers less

Documents
- Peer review guidelines
- Feedback request

Adapted from Hoel (2001) and Hillocks (1987).
Receiving feedback

• Stay in the situation and listen actively
• Accept feedback as information about this specific communication situation, not about you as a person or an absolute truth about your text
• Consider how the feedback can help you develop as a writer and not only this specific text.
• Ask if you don’t understand, but don’t react defensively.
Analyze assignment

Subject to topic to RQ

Organize thoughts

Focused reading & note-taking

Outline 2

Feedback

Draft 1

Revise & draft 2

Feedback

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Edit & polish

Turn in!
Revision

– To change a few words or phrases
– To check for missing commas and misspelled words
– To rethink and rework the paper’s structure, delete large sections of text if necessary, and consider weaknesses in the paper’s argument
– To confirm what you’ve written is good
– To consider how a reader/audience will experience the text and adjust accordingly
Revision

– To change a few words or phrases
– To check for missing commas and misspelled words
– To rethink and rework the paper’s structure, delete large sections of text if necessary, and consider weaknesses in the paper’s argument
– To confirm what you’ve written is good
– To consider how a reader/audience will experience the text and adjust accordingly
Ask yourself:

• Is my question answered/my problem solved?

• Which sections are still unclear to me? (Which were difficult to write?)

• Do I jump from topic to topic in one paragraph?

• Did I mean to say this?

• Is this necessary to say?

• Will a reader understand this?

Requires some distance from your text
You might find that....

• Your question/problem is poorly worded or unanswerable based on the collected data

• Your introduction does not appropriately set up the reader for the rest of your text

• Your method section is too long or too short

• Your literature review is rambling and unfocused

• Your analysis is hard to follow or too superficial
Revision strategy: see big picture
Revision strategy: reverse outline

1. Number your paragraphs.
2. Identify the topic of each paragraph. At this point, you can also make note of the following:
   a. Is there a recognizable topic sentence?
   b. How long is the paragraph?
      i. Does the topic seem sufficiently developed?
      ii. Is there more than one topic in the paragraph?
3. Arrange these topics in an outline.
4. Analyze this outline, assessing the logic (where elements have been placed in relation to one another) and the proportion (how much space is being devoted to each element).
5. Use this analysis to create a revised outline.
6. Use this revised outline to reorganize your text.
7. Go back to your answers in 2a and 2b to help you create topic sentences and cohesion in your paragraphs.

From Explorationsofstyle.com
**Editing**

Mostly concerned with sentence-level grammar* and word-choice issues

Keep a personal log of your top grammar errors or use Grammar Girl’s [checklist](#)

Don’t try to edit for everything at once

Do choose 1 error and focus edit for it

If goal is to cut words: go through paragraph by paragraph and cut 5 words each.

* If grammar errors impede meaning, it’s a revision concern
Describe how you will change your writing process after today.
Academic Support Centre

Academic writing
Presenting
Study skills

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www.lunduniversity.lu.se/academic-support