

Understanding the Writing Process

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

Key Points to Remember:

- Not all parts of the writing process happen in 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.
- 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.

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.

What does your drafting process look like?

At this stage, the writer has finished an early draft, but has not yet analyzed the structure or argument closely.

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.

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.

Reflecting on the Writing Process

How do you usually produce papers? What alternatives are possible?
How might you productively change your pattern of composing?