

What about writing?

More writing will not result in better writing form: Writing form is the result of reading.

We write to communicate with others, but also: writing helps us solve problems and can make us smarter.

**“Meaning is what you end up with, not what you start out with.”
(Elbow)**

THE COMPOSING PROCESS

I. Revision :

Neil Simon: “mediocre writers write, good writers rewrite.”

Vonnegut: “..writing allows even a stupid person to seem halfway intelligent, if only that person will write the same thought over and over again, improving it just a little bit each time..a lot like inflating a blimp with a bicycle pump. Anybody can do it. All it takes is time.”

Hemingway: “The first draft of anything is shit.”

II. Flexible Planning:

Good writers plan, but not always formally, willing to change their plans

Over planning: rigid plan – new ideas are an annoyance

III. Rereading:

“I rise at first light and I start by rereading and editing everything I have written to the point I left off” (Hemingway, in Winokur, 1990, p. 247).

IV. Delay Editing: This draft may not be the final one! Put on your makeup after your shower. Disturbs the flow, coming up with ideas.

Additional elements of the composing process

INCUBATION:

**Problem-solving often requires “an interval free from conscious thought” to allow the free working of the subconscious mind
(Wallas, 1926)**

Tolle (1999): “All true artists, whether they know it or not, create from a place of no-mind, from inner stillness ... breakthroughs came at a time of mental quietude” (p. 20).

Poincare (1924) there must be a "preliminary period of conscious work which also precedes all fruitful unconscious labor."

DAILY REGULAR WRITING:

Irving Wallace: "vast majority of authors keep, some semblance of regular daily hours..."

WHEN is variable: Michael Chabon:10 pm-4 am, Maya Angelou 6:30 am- 12:30, 1:30.

Time keepers:

Irving Wallace (Wallace and Pear, 1971) (Flaubert, Conrad, Hemingway).

Page counters: (Updike, Bradbury); Word counters: (Haley, Wambaugh) (Murray, 1990)

SOURCE OF INSPIRATION IS WRITING

Stephen King: don't "wait for the Muse. Your job is to make sure the muse knows where you are going to be every day from nine 'till noon or seven 'till three"

Susan Sontag: "... you can't wait for inspiration." (Brodie, 1997, p. 38),

Madeleine L'Engle: "Inspiration usually comes during work, rather than before it."

Regular writing vs binging:

Boice (1982): junior faculty members who had a "regular, moderate habit of writing," compared to those who were "binge" writers.

If Charles Dickens missed a day of writing, "he needed a week of hard slog to get back into the flow" (Hughes, in Plimpton, 1999, p. 247).

Should we test writing at all?