

Writing process

The writing process remains one of the best ways to use technology. The power of technology in the writing process is both as a tool to **model** the activities while you are teaching the ideas and skills of using the writing process and as a tool your students can use to **accomplish** the tasks necessary so that your students can improve their writing by applying the writing process. You too will find that as you use technology while you are writing, you will begin to write, rewrite, edit, revise, and publish, in an iterative process.

OK, so what IS the writing process?

There are different models of the writing process that have small differences, but at the core, all are very similar. You will see different numbers of steps. Depending on what step of the process you are working on, the steps can open up and get more detailed. ***It doesn't matter if you think 4, 5, 6+1, or 27 steps...make up your own number!*** The important part of looking at the writing process is – looking at writing **AS a process**.

Most people (from young to old) tend to like to write once. They think, they may study a little. Then they write. Then it is finished, they turn it in. A good writer, one supposes, sits down and writes wonderful prose first time through.

That is NOT how good writing happens. It's the re-writing that makes a good writer – whether a novelist or a memo. When we write, we are actually doing a lot of things at the same time. We are gathering information and deciding what order to put it in and how to talk about it and are thinking about what we are writing is working with the other things we have written. We are also thinking about spelling and grammar and word choice.

It is too much to do all those things well, so we do most of them poorly.

It is very hard to get this idea across to students of any age, because what we see is the final project, not all the hours and brainstorms and drafts and rewrites that came before.

So, by deconstructing the process and modeling using a projection device (either overhead or a scanner with TV), students can see the pieces that go into creating writing and then they can do it themselves – re-writing without the pain of actually physically having to recopy an entire page.

I usually use the following steps for fiction writing with a few changes for research (which we will deal with later):

- **Brainstorm** Get as many ideas as you can. No editing. Free flow
- **Focus** Decide- roughly – on the direction and the main pieces you will pursue...trimming back the huge flood of ideas from the brainstorm
- **Concept map** What ideas relate to each other? Not as linear and restrictive as an outline, a concept map looks at relationships. This usually

creates more ideas – THIS IS ABSOLUTELY ALLOWED!!! The entire process keeps circling back onto itself!!

- **Draft** Start to put the ideas into words. Don't worry about grammar. Try to get the ideas to flow. This point may also feed new ideas or call for revisions of the concept map. Use the map as a prop and guide, not as a straight jacket.
- **Peer Review** Not for grading, but to see if the picture in your head is getting into someone else's head or if it just doesn't make sense. Get feedback – questions, comments, problems.
- **Rewrite** Now really start to tighten the prose. Make changes based on feedback.
- **Edit** Look at all the conventions – grammar, spelling, punctuation. These are tools to make sure that you say what you mean to say. This is the time and place to really make sure all is right.
- **Publish** Print it in some way to share the ideas. Writing is a communication. Post it on a wall or the web or send it to a friend. An unread book is a block of paper. Writing is written to be read. If it is not read, where is the motivation to write well?

The process continues to feed back onto and into itself until you call “time”.

