Writing Process & Writing Styles

Nature Labs

The Writing Process

The writing process varies from person-to-person, and the right way is the way that works best for you. In general, or when you get stuck, use these steps to help you throughout the writing process.

- Pre-write
  - Read through your assignment or brainstorm your idea
  - Decide on the specific topic or theme you want to write about
  - Think about who you want your audience to be and how to engage them
  - Conceptualize how you want to organize your thoughts
  - Analyze different writing styles to find the right fit for you.
  - Take notes, draw or audio record your ideas as they surface
  - Talk to others about your idea and listen to any feedback or tips they give you

- Research
  - Work to find reputable sources of information
  - Ensure each source you use is relevant
  - Take notes as you conduct your research
  - Create an annotated bibliography to record how and why you've used your sources
  - Organize your notes into a logical order to help with your writing
  - Check that your research efforts have successfully bridged your gaps in knowledge.

The Writing Process

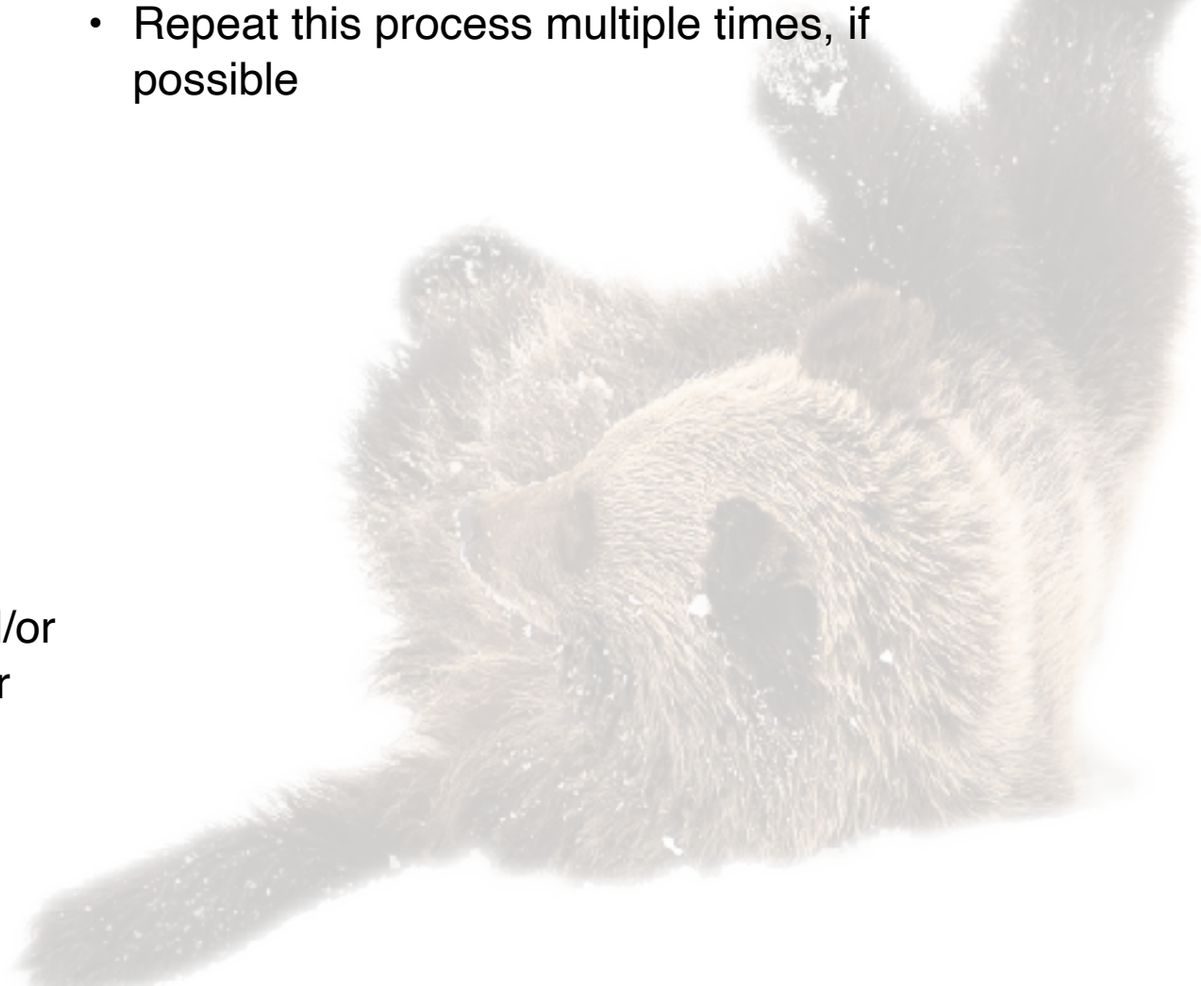
- Write
  - To focus your writing, create a guiding question that your work will seek to answer
  - Figure out what helps you start writing and do that! (Do you start with the introduction or a body paragraph? Do you use bullet points to structure your writing or do you prefer to let your writing guide you?)
  - Reflect on your research and how you chose to organize it
  - Don't fixate on making your writing perfect; focus on the organization of your ideas within your story
  - Make sure your ideas connect and flow in a way that is logical and easy-to-read
  - Keep track of the resources you're using and make sure you aren't plagiarizing

- Revize
  - Read what you have written and ask yourself if it answers your guiding question, reflects your research and is appropriate for audience you wish to reach
  - Rearrange and expand on ideas where appropriate
  - Don't be afraid to add to or delete your writing, but keep several versions of your work in case you change your mind
  - Do more research if you think something is missing or needs enhancing
  - Check the flow, especially transition sentences between ideas, to make sure it's clear and smooth
  - Make sure you have defined any terms or ideas that people might be unfamiliar with
  - Start checking your spelling and grammar

The Writing Process

- Edit/Proofread
  - Triple check your spelling and grammar
  - Read your writing out loud to make sure it doesn't sound awkward or stunted
  - Make sure your research has been properly referenced when using the ideas of others
- Peer Review for the Win
  - Find a peer to read and review your writing
  - Go over the feedback and recommendations, taking advantage of any ideas that you think have merit
  - Repeat this process multiple times, if possible

- If you get stuck during the writing process, go back and read what you have written so far. Think about your guiding question and the audience for whom you're writing. Consult your research. Ask for feedback or advice. Rid yourself of distractions and/or change locations to somewhere that inspires you or helps you focus.



Types of Writing

A writing style is the method you choose to use to convey your message or idea effectively. Different writing styles work for different ideas or audiences, and the best style really depends on your strengths and the impact you're hoping to achieve.

- Narrative
  - Using plot, characters, setting, conflict and emotions to share a story or teach a lesson
  - There is a clear introduction, body and conclusion or resolution at the end
  - A style of writing commonly used in fiction and creative writing
  - Examples: Little Red Riding Hood, Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien

- Persuasive
  - Sharing your opinion on a topic in order to convince others that your idea is correct
  - Used to inspire or motivate people to engage in an idea or issue
  - Includes doing a lot of research to ensure facts and data are included and the evidence supports your idea
  - A style of writing commonly used in opinion editorials, speeches, essays and marketing
  - Examples: Speech to the jury by Louis Riel in 1885, Dairy Farmers of Canada commercials

Types of Writing

- Creative
  - Using unique or unusual methods of writing to intrigue and surprise an audience
  - The writing style challenges the rules and conventions of traditional writing, and isn't afraid to do something completely out of the box
  - A style of writing used most often in poetry, short stories and non-fiction
  - Examples: The Year in New Yorker Interactive Storytelling, Twenty Questions with a Philosopher Iguana by Qiang Meng

- Expository
  - Explains or informs an audience about a topic in order to teach
  - Adapts the who/what/where/when/why/how formula to instruct others
  - Uses simple and clear explanations to help the audience understand the topic without using opinions or feelings
  - A style of writing used often in non-fiction, academic journals, textbooks, recipes and training manuals
  - Examples: your school textbook, how-to videos on YouTube

- Descriptive
  - Describes as much detail about a person, place or idea as possible to allow the reader to visualize the story
  - Uses comprehensive and meticulous descriptions (sight, smell, touch, taste, sound) to attempt to 'paint a picture' for the reader to allow them to feel like they are there
  - Evokes strong emotions in the reader
  - A style of writing used often in creative writing, poetry, fiction and marketing
  - Examples: The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe, Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling

Writing Tips

Depending on what writing style you choose to use for your story, these tips might help strengthen your final product:

- Sentence and paragraph structure: Arrange your sentences and paragraphs to help underscore the importance of an idea or message. Try not to be wordy.
- Word choice: Choose words that evoke emotion or clearly illustrate the idea you want to communicate. Where possible, avoid acronyms and jargon that will limit your audience.
- Tone and mood: Consider your audience when determining your tone and mood. Will your story be first person or third person? Will your story be positive or negative? What would the audience prefer?
- Accessible: Making your story personal can help the audience relate to (and empathize with) you and the message you're trying to convey.
- Authenticity: Never, never, NEVER try to be something you're not. Though it's a cliché, it's true - always aim to be the best version of yourself.

Dealing with Writer’s Block

- Take a break: Step away from your writing for a few minutes or even a few hours. Do something else to clear your mind and come back to your writing with a fresh perspective.

- Free-write: Free-writing involves writing without stopping for a set amount of time, usually 10-15 minutes. The goal is to write down whatever comes to mind, without worrying about grammar, spelling or punctuation. This practice can help you generate new ideas and break through your writer's block.

- Change your setting: Try changing your writing environment by moving to a different room, or by going to a local park or coffee shop. Sometimes a change of scenery can help you get unstuck.

- Talk it out: Speak your ideas into a recording device or have a conversation with a peer. It can help you clarify your thoughts and find the right words to express them.

- Chunk it: Try breaking your writing down into smaller, more manageable parts. Set a goal to write for 10-15 minutes at a time, and gradually work your way up to longer writing sessions.