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Introduction to the Writing Process



Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will understand some basic concepts about the writing process.

- Rule vs. strategy-based writing
- The uniqueness of your writing process
- The writing process as iterative and chaotic
- The importance of efficiency when writing
- A key difference between expert and novice writers
- Experiment with caution



Rules vs. Strategies

Rules often begin with words like “always” or “never.”

- Never end a sentence with a preposition.
- Never start a sentence with *because*.
- Never use sentence fragments.
- Never split an infinitive.
- Never use the passive voice.
- Etc.

Strategies often begin with words like “depending upon my audience” or “given the context of Engineering”.



The Case of Prepositional Endings

- Never end a sentence with a preposition?

“That is the sort of errant effrontery up with which I shall not put.”

versus

*“That is the sort of errant effrontery which I shall not put **up with.**”*

-- Reputedly said by Winston Churchill



The Case of *Because*

- **Teacher's Question:** Why did Spot chase Fluff in the story?
- **Student's Answer:** Because Fluff is a cat and Spot is a dog. (A sentence fragment)
- **Teacher's Preferred Answer:** Spot chased Fluff because Fluff is a cat and Spot is a dog. (A complete sentence)
- The student learns that starting sentences with ***because*** is bad, and **NOT** that sentence fragments are the problem. When we grow older, we learn to use alternatives for ***because*** (***as*** or ***since***). That's a problem.



The Problem with *As* or *Since*

As the truck was in gear, the load of bricks slid off the tailgate.

could mean:

While the truck was in gear, the load of bricks slid off the tailgate. (Temporal implication)

or

Because the truck was in gear, the load of bricks slid off the tailgate. (Causal implication)



Choices

- In other words, many of the usage rules we learn about written English are not entirely accurate.
- **You have a choice!**
- Rule-based approach to writing → experience of failure
→ writer's block or dislike of writing ❌
- Strategy-based approach to writing → experience of success → break the so-called “rules” to achieve the goals required by a document ✓



Unique Writing Processes

Each of us have unique writing processes, so we need to learn how to deal with our idiosyncrasies

Four key factors to consider:

- Our usual practices (habits, preferences)
- Our environs (noise, light, comfort)
- Our attitudes (like or dislike)
- Our audiences (usual or novel)

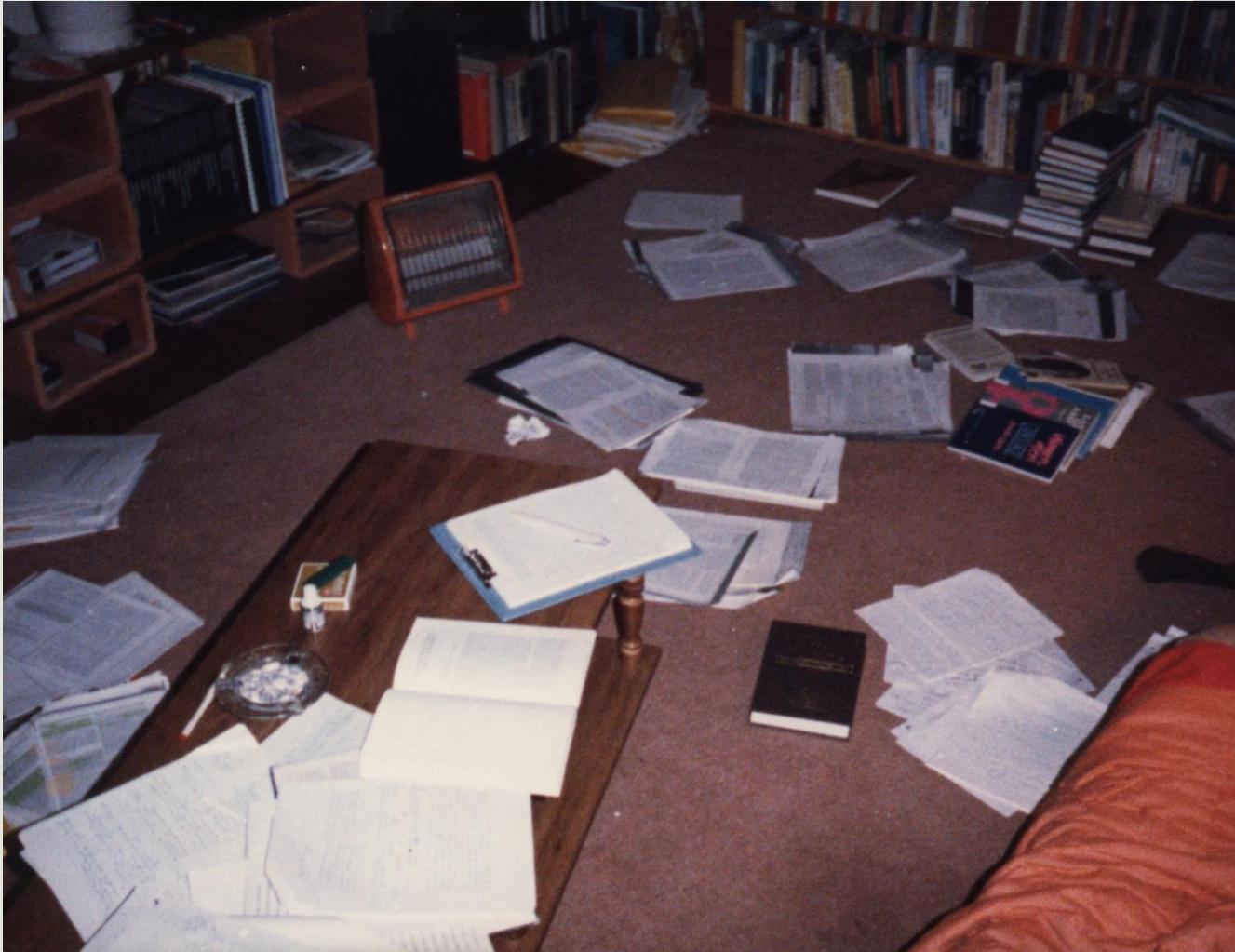


My Writing Practices

Composition



For Example (circa 1988)





For Example (2018)





Writing Viewed as a Linear Process



Need to unpack these terms!



**Planning?
Researching?
Creating?**



**Dictating?
Typing?
Writing?**

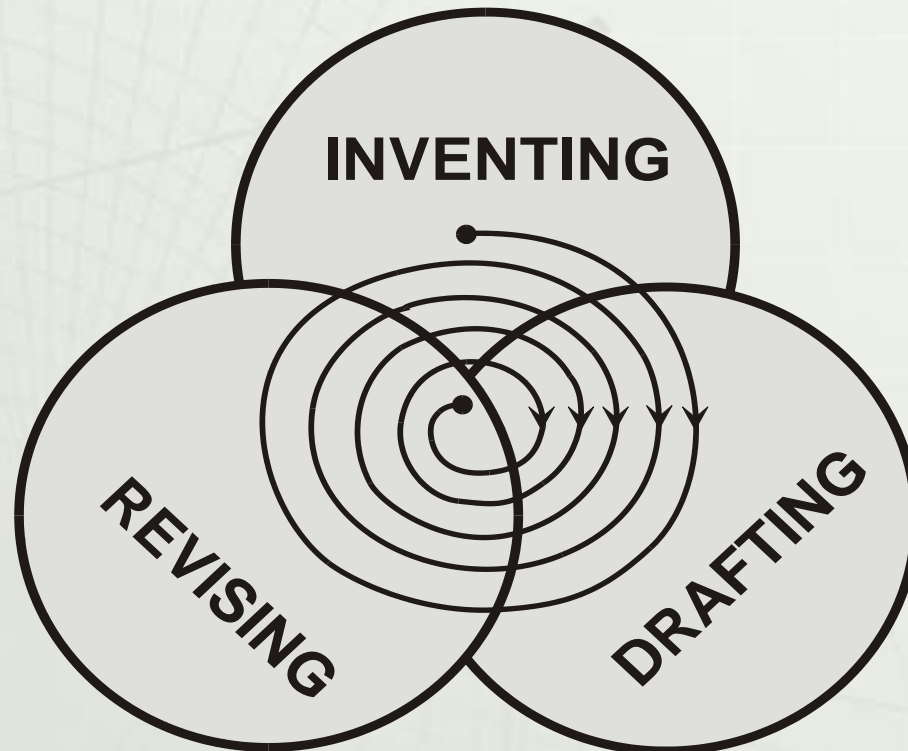


**Revising?
Editing?
Visualizing?**

- ✓ **Note that all are noun/verb forms**
- ✓ **All are active processes**

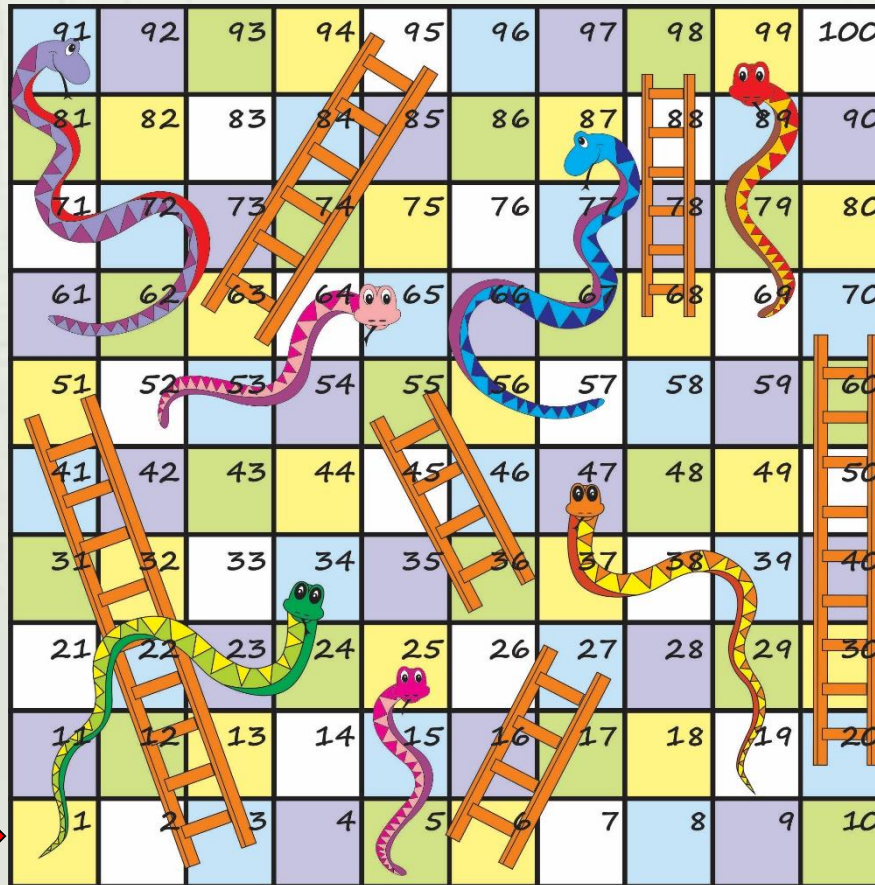


Writing as an Iterative Process





Snakes and Ladders Process?



➔ Paper!

Idea? ➔

- Writing can also be thought of as chaotic: an irregular, non-linear, and unpredictable creative process. Image Source: Chainimage



Increasing Efficiency When Writing

The Case of Creo Electronics Corporation

- Estimates of time required to produce engineering documentation for prototype optical tape recorder:
 - 11 percent of total time devoted to documentation equals 3.3 person years
 - equals \$120,000 (**1988 dollars**)
- A 10% increase in efficiency equals \$12,000 saving
- A 25% increase in efficiency equals \$30,000 saving

- **Quadruple the costs to account for inflation!**



Strategies to Increase Efficiency

- Improvements to writing environment:
 - ✓ Provide a quiet interruption-free environment
 - ✓ Organize the writing environment
 - ✓ Improve the lighting and physical comfort

- Improvements to computer skills:
 - ✓ Master using the word processor
 - ✓ Learn to touch-type or dictate



How Efficient/Effective Are You?

➤ Approximately what percentage of your total time writing do you spend:

❖ Inventing/Planning/Researching (IPR)?	X%
❖ Correcting/Drafting/Writing (CDW)?	X%
❖ Visualizing/Revising/Editing (VRE)?	<u>X%</u>
	100%

➤ Write these figures down on the reverse of your file card.



Writing Like an Expert

	Inventing	Drafting	Revising
Inexperienced Writer (1st year student)	50%	45%	05%
Experienced Writer (Professor/Lecturer)	25%	35%	40%

***Source of study is unknown**



A Rule that Matters?

- Experiment with your writing process – try new approaches

but . . .

If it ain't broke, don't fix it.



Conclusion

- **Reflections:** How much time do you actually spend revising your work?
- **Reading:** Extended Abstract, *Strategies* pp. 1-40