

**This extract from the chapter below on the arts and craft of academic writing is from *Writing and Presenting Research* by Professor Angela Thody, London:Sage 2006.**

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## 5

# THE ARTS AND CRAFT OF WRITING

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**Note** -- To illustrate different styles, 5.1 and 5.2 are designed for a generalist magazine, 5.3 and 5.4 for a textbook. Paragraph numbering and academic referencing have been retained throughout for the book's consistency.

## 5.1 HOW EASY IS WRITING?

“Suddenly I was just writing...my writing took off...the words were flowing...it was wonderful”

“There was a moment when I knew I had it...the story was just coming...bubbling up...I was writing away” (Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski, 1996: 8--9).

And that’s how we all want to feel -- just like these USA school principals whose feelings when writing up stories about their personal experiences were recorded in the above quotations. But reaching this stage is enormously difficult (Darlington and Scott 2002: 167). It’s even harder if you’re beginning research writing, this ‘new, strange discourse’ (Holliday, 2002: 1).

Even experienced writers can’t always make the grade. The editor of *Educational Administration Quarterly* reported that after ‘slogging through 812 manuscripts that range the gamut from the pretty intriguing to the pretty awful, I have substantial evidence that writing does not come easily to most authors’ (Lindle, 2004: 1).

Fortunately, most agree that writing is enormously exhilarating and exciting. Each day’s writing brings nearer the day when your discoveries are unleashed on the world.

## **5.2 THE WRITING PROCESS**

### **5.2.1 *Telling the story***

‘Telling a story’ is what writing research is all about. You should produce a ‘vital text [which] invites readers to engage the author’s subject matter’ (Denzin, 1998: 321).

Follow the detective novel formula, outlined below, and you can’t go wrong.

The mystery your research is to solve is your purpose (Ch 4) -- *your research question, hypothesis or debate.*

How others tried to solve the same mystery is your *literature review.*

How you tried to solve it is your *methodology report.*

What you discovered from your investigations are your *findings.*

Your solution to the mystery is the *conclusions.*

How this improves on previous investigations and what mysteries it leaves to be solved is your final *discussion.*

The '*research participants and sources* may be seen as the characters in this story, and will need to be introduced and developed as they would in a novel' (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2001: 242). (my italics).

The 'story line' must sing clearly throughout every chapter or section, with each part uncovering part of the solution but not revealing the whole until the last chapter.

### **5.2.2 Getting Started**

The question most frequently asked by novice researchers is 'How do I get started?' on writing up the final version. Now you will have eased the challenge of this by following my advice in Chapter Two and you'll have been writing from the beginning of your research, following a template. But now, the final draft looms. You have to leave the cosy world of shouting 'Eureka' in your shower and go out, feeling naked, putting your

writing into the world of public debate with critical academic equals, examiners, publishers or buyers.

Experienced writers know there's no magic formula nor any choices about starting to write. Don't wait for inspiration, nor for an ideal time to write. Neither is frequent.

Reading just one more book, arranging for just one more interview, checking the statistical analysis just one more time, won't help you to write. Writing is work, just like any other and the only way to get started on writing up or preparing a presentation, is to write anything, from somewhere in the intended document, not necessarily at the beginning. Go look at Figure 5.1 to help you get started.

Comment [RT1]: INSERT  
HERE FIGURE 5.1

### **5.2.3 *Maintaining momentum***

Sure -- you have other activities in your life besides writing and presenting research.

You've got to fit in work, study, leisure, family and home. Tick the best option on the following list. Should you write:

- something every day, however little?
- a set number of words, or paragraphs, or a set time each day? That way ensures a satisfying growth rate from which you will not be distracted and you will have an agreed end to each day's work.
- daily at pre-determined times? That way, you can claim an undisturbed period as your writing time.

🕒 daily at every possible time, however short? It's amazing how much your document grows from writing in the five minutes between phone calls, the twenty minutes while waiting to pick up your child from swimming lessons, the massive thirty minutes in between putting loads into the washing machine or even a whole hour on the train en route to your mountaineering weekend. To use these interstices of time, it helps to have a lap top PC but it's not vital. Substitute real paper and pen.

📖 several projects at once? Avoid boredom by simultaneously planning one book, writing two journal articles, collecting new research data.

📅 in binges? Spend days doing nothing but writing, followed by about the same number of days on other activities. This way you remember the flow of your 'story' and you enjoy seeing large swaths of print emerge.

🏖️ in vacations? Write only in the week-or-longer breaks from other work; it ruins your vacation but can mean completing the whole at one time.

📖 ✍️ on sabbatical study breaks? A luxury for only a few but one that has its own disciplines. If you're not used to writing without distractions, it can be a mental and physical challenge to do a full day's writing.

📖📅🕒 in combinations of any of the above? Variety lends enchantment to the process.

Score yourself ten for whichever you selected. All of these work; I know, I've tried them all and seen colleagues adopt them all effectively. Your choice depends on those guiding principles in Chapters 2--4. For example: the practicalities of the completion

deadline may enforce vacation performance; your PhD thesis will benefit from a binge approach while the satirical column in a professional magazine can be done in a one-off set time. Your personality may dictate that you work best in uninterrupted blocks or that you find working in the little breaks dictated by other activities is the way to go for you; precedents in your organisation dictate whether study leave is likely or not.

Whichever way you chose to write, however, most people seem to find ways of delaying the actual starting moment as Figure 5.2 demonstrates. Used any of these yourself?

Comment [RT2]: INSERT HERE FIGURE 5.2. The empty text boxes in the margins are not supposed to be here. They are rogues to be removed.

Yes -- just a few types of procrastination symptoms common to experienced and neophyte writers alike, all 'extremely reluctant or fearful of committing their ideas to paper' (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2001: 227). Overcome your fear, confront it and WRITE.

SECTION OMMITTED

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Such easy revision is both an advantage and disadvantage of the PC age. It certainly adds to our personal workload but the screen view, which looks so perfect, is a definite morale booster for maintaining writing momentum and even the simplest graphical touches can help immensely in explaining your ideas. A document map (6.3.6) shows you how your work is growing and helps you keep track of what you have written.

The screen view, however, can be overly seductive. Bet you don't want to delete that impressive flow chart that took hours to devise, even though it doesn't help to prove your hypothesis. That PC screen is also only a limited view; you can't see how your whole page will appear in hard copy. So should you keep printing out your work at intervals as you progress? Let Figure 5.3 help you to make up your mind.

Comment [RT3]: INSERT  
HERE FIGURE 5.3

### **5.2.4 Reaching the end**

Revise and polish revise and polish revise and polish revise and polish revise... But what is meant by revision, what needs polishing and at what point should you stop doing either and decide that the work's finished?

#### **5.2.4.1 Revisions**

Here's a great summary of what revision means from a study of modifications made to the introductions to scientific papers though it's just as applicable in other disciplines.

Revision is:

- (a) the *deletion* of particular statements, either obvious arguments which essentially reinforced a certain point or assertions considered 'weak' or 'dangerous',
- (b) the *reshuffling* of original statements...and



(c) changes in the *modality* of certain assertions, from the necessary to the possible and generally from the strongly asserted to the more weakly asserted. (Knorr-Cetina, 1981, cited in Gosden, 1995: 42).

You need to make alterations like these throughout your finished document. Such redrafting is not a sign of your failure to write well, it's simply part of the incremental process that constitutes writing. Figure 5.4 explains more about the re-drafting process.

Comment [RT4]: INSERT  
HERE FIGURE 5.4

Keep making revisions like these until you feel strong enough to unleash a full first draft on colleagues or supervisors. You can let them have part, or the whole, of the intended document but whatever it is, it should be a complete text, all in paragraphs, properly linked and with any intended tables, diagrams and appearance details. Once you have comments back, then you commence re-writing. Whether or not you submit it to friendly fire again will depend usually on how much time you have left to completion and, more importantly, the willingness of friends to critique your work.

#### 5.2.4.2 *Proof reading*

Polishing is done after you've completed all your re-drafting and you're into your substantive final draft. Now polish it so your brilliance shines, by rigorous, and time consuming, proof reading. For this you need to check the items listed in Box 5.2.

Comment [RT5]: INSERT  
HERE BOX 5.2

By the time you reach the polishing stage, you are likely to be tired and bored. If you can set the work aside for a few days between final revisions and polishing, you're more likely to be alert to errors. Additionally, and ideally, find a colleague to review it and always adopt their suggestions for changes. If they can't understand it, then no-one else will.

Polishing applies even to those publishing books who will have editorial assistants to check their final texts. They will discover corrections needed that you have not spotted despite your own meticulous scrutiny. Nonetheless, you are responsible for the understanding that the book is meant to convey so don't just rely on the publisher's corrections. I found this out when the proofs of a book were returned to me with all our planned visual arrangements removed and all paragraphs lengthened to accord with 'correct' syntax. The original's short paragraphs and specific visuals were designed to meet the needs of the expected readership. Much re-polishing was needed yet again to reinstate all our formatting (Thody, Bowden and Grey, 2004).

#### *5.2.4.3 Deciding when to finish*

Closure to all this is usually dictated by practicalities (2.3.3) decided by others such as the submission date for conference papers, closing date for article receipt by journals, publishers' completion times or thesis oral examinations – the viva voce (1). You would go on forever making revisions in the hopes of perfection but external forces thankfully provide the deadlines when all the adjustments have to stop. If your final deadline cannot

be met, then be sure to negotiate an alternative well in advance so your recipients are inconvenienced as little as possible. Publishers will have reserved time slots for printers and editors, examiners will have arranged vivas, conference organizers will want to get proceedings printed or to find alternative speakers.

*Chapter 5 now changes from populist magazine style to textbook style*

### **5.3 STYLE AND TONE**

Style is the way writers/speakers put words together in units of thought (sentences) and then blend them together in the larger units of paragraphs

Tone is a writer's attitude toward the material and the readers. You convey tone through style.

#### **5.3.1 Conventional and alternative views**

An extreme conventionalist's view could be that the style and tone of academic writing and presenting does not require creativity but discipline, organisation and conformity to scientific precedents (Berry, 1994, 2--3). This is viewed as the antithesis of creative writing and has such rules as avoiding chatty anecdotes, pomposity and blandness (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2001: 228). The style is used for both qualitative and quantitative research in order to reinforce research findings as authoritative, objective reality. It is the language of management control.

The extreme alternativist might look only for the creativity such as might be found in an article composed entirely of photographs, with minimal text, in which the reader is left almost alone to form her/his own impressions of the data (Staub, 2002; Soth, 2005). This emerges from the ideas of research as an internal voyage of discovery that is a continuum from the researched, the researcher and the readers. Its language is ‘vibrant, suggestive, engaged and passionate’ (Harper, 1998: 144). It is the language of emotional control.

### **5.3.2 Omitted**

### **5.3.3 Style choices**

#### *5.3.3.1 Cautious language*

One of the hallmarks of the academic is deemed to be caution. Our lexicon includes the verbs, *suggest, appear, indicate, intimate, imply, hint*. Prudent phrases are used, such as: *‘It could be said that...’; ‘The data indicates the possibility that...’; ‘On the one hand, there is majority agreement that...but there is a strong minority view that...’; ‘One might think that...but it is necessary to be aware of a probable alternative’; ‘1000 of the 1300 sample of those using product X, all contracted virus Y which strongly indicates a causal connection. Further research is needed to see if this finding can be replicated in larger populations’.*

Such phrases symbolize academic humility. Sources, data collection and conclusions can never be one hundred per cent complete. Limitations to research must be openly admitted

and generalisations without qualifications must be avoided. Such caution is appropriately termed 'hedging' (Holliday, 2002: 179) and it is particularly necessary in all qualitative and literary research which relies on interpretations. I think it is similarly vital in scientific researches; in medical research, for example, findings often have to be based on small samples. The mass media may jump to the conclusions that dietary studies on forty people can be generalized to whole populations but you, the academic researcher, will not do so.

An excellent example of hedging is in Middleton's article on feminist educational theory in the refereed journal *Gender and Education*, (1995). She sets out the article in two columns with the conventional format on the left and an alternative format on the right. The researcher includes a justification for thus breaking the mould. The conventional left column formally introduces the topic and discusses the argument in the impersonal and often passive tone. The right column contains a description of the researcher's office, written in the first person active so making the reader aware of the character of the researcher. She introduces the debates on feminist theory in a personal way by writing about her 'daughter's generation's attitudes' in contrast to 'post modernists [who] have rejected the monolithic categories upon which previous feminist research has rested' (Middleton, 1995: 89, cited in Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2001: 241).

Caution must be abandoned for audiences from outside academia (3.5) when, for example, being interviewed by radio, TV or newspaper reporters, advising on broadcasts or writing in professional and general magazines. Such audiences want answers not

endless qualified responses. When tackling these, therefore, researchers need to select what can be stated unequivocally but truthfully. If the findings need qualifying, then the reservations must be clearly stated and repeated assertively.

The example below demonstrates how definition gives way to caution. It's from a newspaper article about research on the respective characteristics of fans of Leicester Tigers rugby and of Leicester City football. Professor John Williams of Leicester University, was reported in the *Leicester Mercury* as having found that:

Tigers' season ticket holders are noticeably older -- 55 per cent of them are over 50, compared to 24 per cent at City..."Perhaps" he suggests, "older male City fans attend matches to escape from home, while Tigers couples retire together to the rugby. (Wakerlin, 2004: 10).

#### 5.3.3.2 *Appropriate language*

Writing style should be direct, clear, organized, cohesive, strong and convincing. Oh how simple it sounds! All one has to do is consider how each of the elements of that quotation can be achieved:

- Directness is achieved by avoiding jargon, pomposity and verbosity, 'Linate words... orotund phrases' (Knight, 2002: 199).
- Clarity comes from a clear, interesting and readable style which avoids complex sentences but varies sentence length and structure (Griffith, 1994: 236). It comes

from a time when writing for research was assumed to be for information not for enticement nor entertainment (Charles, 1988) and therefore needed plain language. By the 1990s, the meaning of 'plain' was generating debate and many were the ways suggested of writing in plain English (Zeller and Farmer, 1999). Some equated it with neutral language and held that such was impossible in the human sciences (1999: 15). In natural and applied science writing, plain language is still the required norm, its meaning being to get to the point unemotionally and simply. Emotional language is however almost a *sine qua non* of qualitative and narrative research. Brevity is valued for all disciplines and by science researchers trying to place articles in journals that charge for publication. An analogous style is suggested by Knight (2002: 199) who proposes English broadsheet newspaper language as the most fitting for academic writing since these newspapers are in the business of communicating with those who are most likely to read academic publications (2).

- Organization and coherence arise from planning (2.2).
- Strength and conviction emerge from plain language; this is best defined as the language which your primary audience is most likely to understand and which accomplishes the purpose of the research (Chs 2--4).

Within these parameters, add to the interest of your style with differing sentence and paragraph lengths, and varying vocabulary. The latter can be easily achieved with the help of your PC's thesaurus tool or, even better, an old fashioned book thesaurus which carries an even wider range of word options.

### 5.3.3.3 *Colloquialisms*

These informal or conversational idioms are generally considered insufficiently precise for written academic language. It is even advisable to avoid them in spoken presentations unless you can be sure that all the audience has the same linguistic understandings as your own. Where used in academic publications, normally put them in single, inverted commas. Even here, however, they can be useful as chatty ‘hooks’ in an introduction, as in this example. This helps to make readers feel comfortable and inclined to read on: ‘As a nineteenth-century colonial power, the Netherlands put up quite a performance’ (my underlining) (Bossenbroek, 1995: 26).

#### ***REFLECTIONS***

*Decide what you think is meant by the following quotation which uses two colloquialisms.*

*‘Nearly eighty per cent of heads of independent schools in the central states are fired.*

*Board chairs are voluntary, thus perhaps firing them is a moot point’ (ISACS www, 2003).*

*‘Fired’ is a colloquialism that has gained general acceptance as a replacement for dismissal from a job. It could be used in academic English unless the document is intended for an international audience.*



*A 'moot point' suggests a doubtful or unsettled question but did the author mean 'It is doubtful if the concept of dismissal can be applied to voluntary jobs' or 'The numbers of chairs who are dismissed is an unsettled question'?*

SECTION OMITTED

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#### 5.3.3.4 Tenses

The vanguards of the conventional and alternative armies meet on the battleground of verb tenses. The big guns fire off passively and abstractly, the snipers nip about actively and concretely. The computer grammar checkers, which now control the weaponry, will refuse to allow the passive voice. Hence, *'the charge was led by Thody'* will be put in the firing line and be re-born as *'Thody led the charge'*. Heat-seeking missiles will target all but the present tense. The rules of engagement will show that:

- 1) the past tense is required because the research happened in the past; the passive voice and abstract verbs lend distance from the personal and seriousness to the account
- 2) the present tense is required because the research is being reported now and its outcomes will, hopefully, be applied in the future; it lends currency, immediacy and involvement to the account.

By this point in this book, you will know that the choice you make will depend on those guiding principles of:

- precedent -- *I have yet to read a PhD thesis written in the present tense;*
- audience -- *Those from outside academia would expect the past tense for the research that justifies your recommendations but they will want present or future tenses for guidance on which actions to take;*
- purpose -- *This book, for example, has to combine textbook style guidance with more abstract discussion of the reasons for the guidance and tenses can vary accordingly;*
- your personality -- *With which tenses are you most comfortable?;*
- practicalities -- *The present, active tense uses fewer words than the past, passive. If quoting interview or focus group data verbatim, use the tenses of the original speakers but report speeches in past tenses (Darlington and Scott, 2002: 163).*

### **REFLECTION**

*A noteworthy example of the 'tense' dilemma came in a series of articles that filled a special edition of the International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (2002, 15 [1]). The articles were written by university students after a term's full participative, reflexive, ethnographic research with inhabitants of the US/Mexico borders, an intensely emotional experience for the students. They wrote the articles at the poignant time of leaving the worlds in which they had spent the term, to return home. They received no instructions on what tense to utilize; all chose to write in the present tense. The editor -- the students' professor -- reflected that perhaps 'this choice was each student's response to the urge within that the experience... not be relegated to the past, but carried forth*

*always. Perhaps it was each student's insistence and vow that learning continue'*  
*(Swanger, 2002: 9). Nonetheless, the professor-editor 'made the decision to change most*  
*of their language into the past tense; after all, they were describing a specific moment in*  
*time, one that had definitely passed' (2002: 9).*

*Was the editor's decision right?*

### **5.3.3.5** *Personal or impersonal?*

If tenses are one of the battlegrounds, the real heat of war focuses on that issue of whether one should or should not employ the personal, first person voice (I, we, you, mine, our, yours) or the impersonal third person voice (it, one).

We, the troops who want you to adopt the impersonal conventions, advise that you will thereby avoid the impression that you are 'subjective and egotistical' (Griffith, 1994: 237). If you are an ethnographer, you will be aware that researchers introduced the impersonal to distinguish your rigorous studies from those of merely observant missionaries and travellers (Richardson, 1998: 353), a distinction you will be happy to continue. You will not want readers to think that any evidence presented is just from your solo, and invalid, personal experiences. In the personal formats, our writing can sound like an elementary school text book. The impersonal voice was given us by the non-human sciences; transferring it in other disciplines will give our findings strength and certainty.

The alternative army insist that the personal is vital where individual judgement is being expressed or where personal participation in any research is being described, discussed or reported. The revelation of self within the data recognizes that the researcher makes data as well as collecting and selecting it and that the views and experiences of the researcher are as important as the views collected from others. Hence 'the use of the first person has for some time been acceptable and is becoming more so' (Holliday, 2002: 129). The inclusive 'we', 'you' and 'our' acknowledges that the readers' perceptions are an integral part of the sense-making from research outcomes and makes them complicit and supportive of the conclusions.

To negotiate your own peace between the two camps, reflect on the two preceding paragraphs. Did you prefer the one advocating the impersonal (but written in the personal) or the one supporting the personal (but written in the impersonal)?

If you are still uncertain, then combine both -- the impersonal for generally agreed facts and the personal where you are expressing opinions. In the 2000s, it is sensibly accepted that the two can even appear in the same paragraph as these two extracts demonstrate:

Thus, the research proposal is a document which is a product – the end result of a process of planning and designing. As I will stress throughout

this book, it is also an argument which needs to have a coherent line of reasoning and internal consistency. (Punch, 2000: 11).

Museums are important venues in which a society can define itself and present itself publicly. Museums *solidify* culture...The stories I will be telling are stories about power...I will not attempt to force these examples into a single theoretical box. (Dubin, 1999: 3,4).

Another way to solve the dilemma is to relate voice to research methodology. In action research, for example,

There is no consensus...A useful guideline in our experience is that if the report contains extensive reflection on the personal learning of the author researcher as agent of the action in the story..., then the first-person narrative adds a considerable strength to the published report. Third-person narrative gives a sense of objectivity (Coghlan and Brannick, 2001: 115).

### ***REFLECTION***

*Compare the two following examples, both from academic journals .Do they support Coghlan's and Brannick's views above? Are the voices appropriate for the type of research reported?*

**The impersonal:** ‘Genetic tools are available for only a few organisms. Double-stranded RNA could conceivably mediate interference more generally in other nemotodes...several studies have suggested that inverted repeat structures...are involved in dependent co-suppression in plants’. (Fire, Xu, Montgomery, Kostas, Driver and Mello, 1998: 810).

**The personal** ‘At the conference of the Auto/Biography Study Group...Andrew Sparkes presented a paper...Whilst I was thoroughly persuaded by Andrew’s argument that autoethnography... is... legitimate... and important...[it] set me thinking...as I was in the early stages to trying to formulate...criteria for assessing autobiographically based creative writing’. (Hunt, 2001: 89).

The choice between the first or third person in the above examples was dependent upon the discipline, politics, purpose and audience for the articles. Of these I rate the audience as the most significant since, ‘if yours will be academics who think not wearing a skirt or tie a lesser sin than using ‘I’, then act accordingly’ (Knight, 2002: 194). If there is a political audience, then an ‘I’, would prevent any policy influence hopes the researcher might have. If the audience is for a two minute report on local radio, then ‘I’ is appropriate.

Even this advice is inconclusive since there is always scope to break with precedent. In the highly respected, refereed, academic *Australian Journal of Philosophy* (in which one

might expect the conventional, impersonal, third person voice) one article goes way beyond just the personal of the pronouns and subsumes the tone of the language too. A research article on the elusive knowledge of things, uses 'we' to refer both to the author and the expert about whom he is writing and, in some places, to the author and the readers as well, so they will identify with him. Then at various points, conversationally personal phrases are used, such as,

Hold on, though. If it is our predicament, then you, gentle reader, have no knowledge of things in themselves...This might just help save your knowledge...The good news for my reader is...The ungracious reader may complain that...Perhaps you had knowledge of things in themselves at the outset. Lucky you. (Langton, 2004: 130, 131, 135).

I personally found myself, a disinterested outsider to philosophy, carried along by these devices and feeling very lucky indeed by the end of the article to have had such an apparently sympathetic guide.

#### **5.4 REVIEW**

Writing up research is hard but enjoyable work. Regard it as story telling and don't delay getting started. Maintain momentum by writing something every day, however, little. Polish repeatedly as you near the end. Select your conventional or alternative styles and tone, in language, tenses and voices according to the precedents, practicalities, people, purposes for whom you are writing, your personality and your research methodology.

## NOTES

(1) Doctoral regulations in the United Kingdom require a candidate first to present a written thesis which will be assessed by two examiners and secondly, to defend this thesis in an oral test, known as a viva (colloquial for viva voce, Latin). In the viva, the candidate has to defend his/her thesis against stringent questioning from the two examiners. One of the examiners will be an academic from another university who is a specialist in the candidate's field and one will be from the candidate's own university but neither will have been part of a candidate's supervising team. A senior academic will chair the viva but will not take part in the questioning. The candidate's thesis supervisor can be present at the viva but is not allowed to speak. The viva is an extremely demanding, final test. Doctoral vivas are also used in other countries where some universities have followed UK systems, such as Australia, New Zealand and India. In USA based systems, the oral discussion of an almost finalised thesis, between the candidate and supervisory team is developmental rather than an assessment. Oral 'examinations' are common everywhere in the early stages of doctoral work, where a candidate is called on to defend her/his proposed thesis.

(2) UK broadsheets are The Times, Telegraph, Independent and Guardian. Although The Times and Independent became tabloid in 2004 and The Guardian moved to Berliner size in 2005, their style remains unchanged. Equivalents include The New York Times and The Washington Post (USA), Globe and Mail (Canada), The Age (Australia), The Times of India.



(3) Admit it -- for how many of these did you have to consult a dictionary?

**Figure 5.1 Starting writing**

Your options are:

- 1) If panic prevents even the simplest sentences emerging, do other writing tasks as 'warming up exercises'. Rigorously check the bibliography, design the title, do a spell check on a section or set up the format templates for sub-headings and footnotes.
- 2) Take the first topic that emerges in your notes, whether or not you are sure that it will eventually be the first topic in a chapter. Use your PC's find command to locate material that deals with the same topic. Once grouped, turn that material into paragraphs. Repeat the process as you come to the next topic in your notes. When all is in paragraphs, put them into the order you want and finally produce the links between the paragraphs and sections.
- 3) Read through all the notes you have for a chapter or section, plan the outline, then go back and gather all the material to match that outline. When you have it all in its intended order, then commence writing the joined up paragraphs.
- 4) Don't expect that what you write initially will remain unchanged. When you read it later, you may want to revise or even abandon it so don't waste time agonising over creating unchangeable perfection. Expect to relinquish anything up to two thirds of a first draft. My most challenging reduction was to create a 5000 word article from a 14000 word research report, all of which seemed vital to me. I did the deed, however, and reading that article now, I see that the article is not missing anything (Thody, 1989).

Figure 5.2 *How to procrastinate*

**Comment [RT6]:** Leave some blank space on the sofa

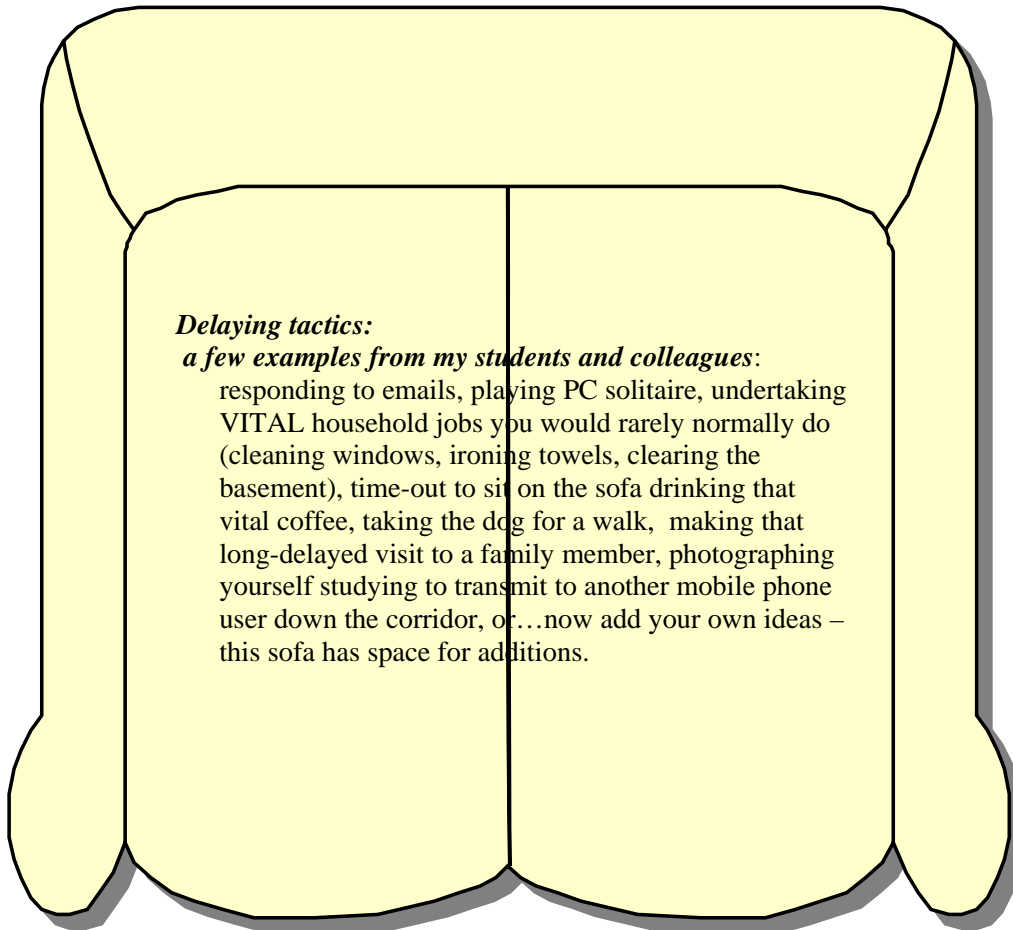




Figure 5.3 *Do you need print versions of work-in-progress?*

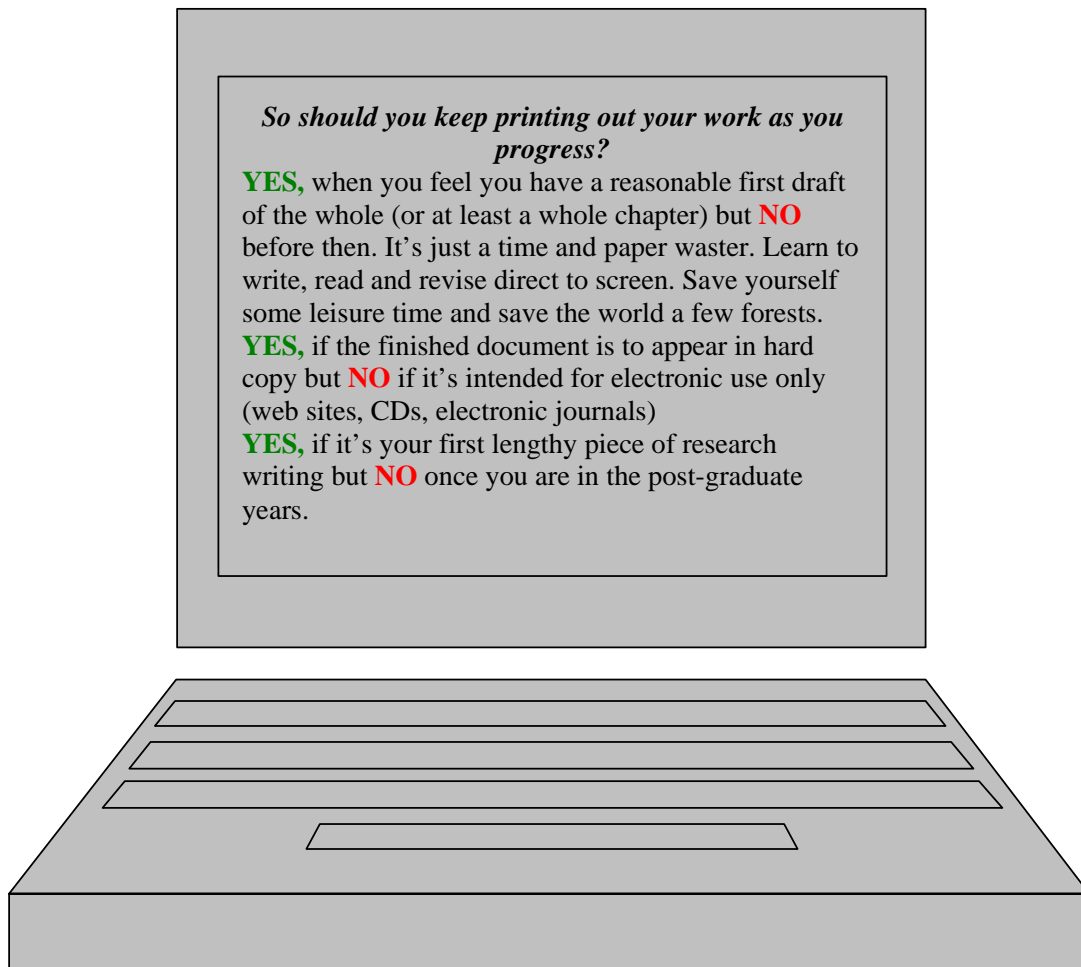
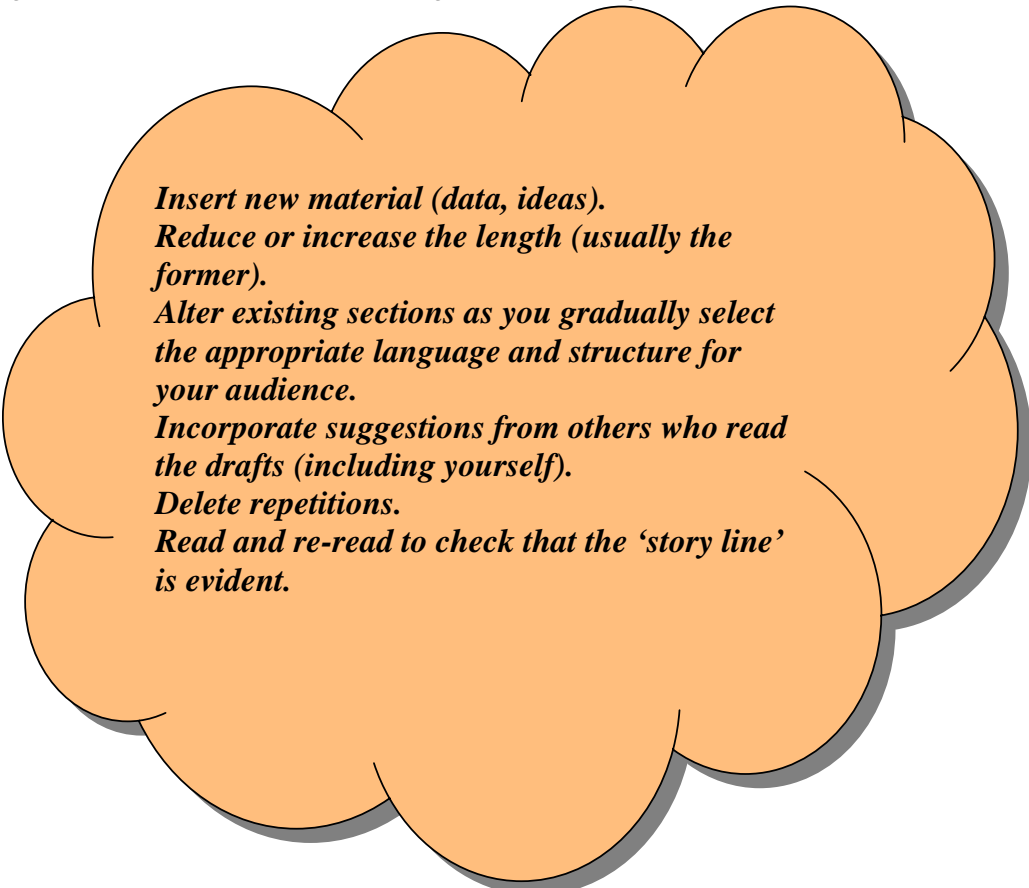


Figure 5.4 *Techniques for drafting and re-drafting*













*Insert new material (data, ideas).*  
*Reduce or increase the length (usually the former).*  
*Alter existing sections as you gradually select the appropriate language and structure for your audience.*  
*Incorporate suggestions from others who read the drafts (including yourself).*  
*Delete repetitions.*  
*Read and re-read to check that the 'story line' is evident.*

Box 5.1 *How to stop writers' block.*

- 1 Don't panic more than once weekly.
- 2 Reward yourself for completing your daily writing goals. Just small rewards will do. True, they mainly involve non PC drink, chocolate or rubbish TV viewing but remember - you're burning calories even as you write.
- 3 Change to another of your writing projects if one is proving intractable.
- 4 Set a time limit for relaxation activities, just as you do for writing.
- 5 Don't expect perfection -- give in occasionally.
- 6 Reflect on your writing while taking breaks.
- 7 When you stop writing -- make notes of your plans for the next sentences; re-commencing is then less daunting.

**Box 5.2**     *Proof reading***CHECK            CHECK            and CHECK AGAIN**

-  Text references are fully cited, either in the text, footnotes or bibliography according to the precedents for the type of document you are producing (Ch. 12).
-  Spelling is consistent and correct.
-  Grammar and language is appropriate to the audience and purposes of the document (Chs 3 and 4).
-  Requirements for format have been obeyed (2.3.1).
-  The visual appearance of the text enhances the likelihood of readers' understanding.
-  Sentences, paragraphs and chapters flow out of their predecessors and lead into their successors.
-  Figures, tables, graphs and appendices are referred to in the text and it is clear where they should be placed.
-  Any sub-headings used in the text match those in the contents listings.
-  Headings and sub-headings are in the same style throughout the document..
-  Ethical considerations have been met: your subjects are anonymised, if this has been requested, their locations are not easily recognisable; your references to them are tactful.



**Box 5.3**     *Using jargon*

1. The default position is adopting the simplest word possible from everyday English.

This applies to all research writing and especially if, for example, you are writing an article for a popular magazine such as *Reader's Digest* or for a newspaper.

2. Popular journals, such as *National Geographic* will err on the side of simplicity but will also include the required vocabulary, sometimes with a glossary.

3. Academic journals and books will mainly apply the exact wording associated with their disciplines. One assumes that the audience for these will either know the correct terminology or will want to learn it. A glossary can be provided for frequently used technical terms in the text. Replacing precise language with lay English also has the disadvantage of adding to already restrictive word counts.

4. Theses should have only the precise words required by the discipline.

5. Particular types of methodology will lend themselves to particular vocabularies.

Participant research can present very localized jargon, emerging from the actual situations studied. Its reproduction may be important to the understanding of the respondents' views. Non-participant research establishes distance by applying abstract words.