
Individual Writing Strategies



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The following statements describe different ways of writing a scientific text. Which apply to you?

I usually...

- just go ahead and write, and I develop my topic while I'm writing about it. [1]
- write my text after I have found my topic. I begin by writing down everything I know about my topic. [2]
- prefer to write a new version of my text rather than revise the old version. [3]
- write and revise at the same time. [4]
- work on the parts of the text that seem most appropriate at the time. The outline is one of the last writing tasks I do. [9]
- start out by creating a detailed outline of my text. [5]
- start out by writing. I feel better when I know that I have already written something down. [2]
- don't start writing until I have created it in my mind first. [6]
- write in different ways, depending on my mood – sometimes I just go ahead and write something and other times I outline my text first or even write a few versions of the same paragraph or chapter. [8]
- start writing the next paragraph only when the previous one is perfect. [4]
- write in an associative manner. This way of creative thinking helps me come up with new ideas. [1]
- write several versions of my text. [3]
- work on different paragraphs separately and put them together in a logical order at the end. [10]
- work on the chapter I feel I know the most about. [9]
- write my text in the order it will be read – except for the introduction, which I tend to write at the very end. [7]
- start by formulating the sentences in my mind before I write them down. [6]
- plan the structure and order of all the pieces of information and data in a great detail. [5]
- start by reading, then I write my text and I revise afterward. I do not skip or repeat these steps but follow them exactly. [7]
- work on every writing assignment differently. It works regardless of my chosen strategy. [8]
- need a lot of time to put what I have written into a logical outline. [10]

Now count the number of statements that apply to different strategies (symbolized by the number in parantheses) and read about the strategy that corresponds the most closely matches your writing style:

[1] Writing the whole text in one go

This associative way of writing is especially helpful at the very beginning of your writing project, as it can bring your implicit knowledge and ideas to the surface. Furthermore, perfectionists may profit from this strategy as they say goodbye to the pressure of their own expectations of a perfect text.

[2] Writing a text about an idea

Using this strategy means that you write a short unstructured text about an idea or a topic on which you have (some) expertise, before you map out your text. This strategy is particularly suitable for writers who have (or gain) expertise in the early stages of their writing process and prefer to start writing straight away.

[3] Writing multiple versions of text about one idea

This strategy works best for writers who find it easier to write a new text than to edit what they have previously written. They develop their ideas by crafting new versions of their writing. In this way, they usually avoid writing obstacles such as procrastination or writer's block.

[4] Writing a text by editing

Writers who use this strategy put a lot of effort into editing their text. They improve their text as they write down thoughts, thus always working with the final version of their text. This type of writing can avoid extensive editing work at the end of the writing process, but it is also very demanding.

[5] Planning-as-writing

If you use this strategy, you usually start your writing process by mapping out the structure of your text, e.g. by creating an outline, creating a list of key ideas or writing a project proposal. This extensive planning means that you will usually begin writing in the later stages of your writing process.

[6] "Writing" in Your Head First

This writing strategy also involves comprehensive planning. However, most of the planning is done in the writer's head. The actual writing begins only after they have achieved sufficient clarity of thought, so their texts tend to be logically structured from the very beginning.

[7] Writing step by step

Step-by-step writers work on their text in a linear process consisting of several separate stages. Completing each stage before starting the next one makes time management easier, since each step has its own time and place.

[8] Syncretic Writing

Syncretic means to mix, and that is exactly what this writing strategy is: A writer uses a combination of different writing strategies as they see fit. The choice of strategy depends not only on the text, but also on the stage of writing, the circumstances, and even the writer's mood.

[9] Writing Text Parts

Instead of writing your text in the order given in your outline, you start with a section of the text that you know the most about. This strategy is especially helpful if you are an expert in some of the subtopics of your text and if you need to see progress to keep writing.

[10] Puzzle-Writing

Using this strategy means writing text passages and paragraphs in what appears to be an unstructured way, producing a large amount of text without knowing its structure yet. You then combine the different puzzle pieces and add transitions between them.