



## Office of Learning Resources

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### Pressure vs. Process: The process of writing

Many students feel they write their best papers the night before (or even a few hours before) a paper is due. While this practice may sometimes produce satisfactory results, the quality of your writing usually suffers. Developing a process for writing papers can have a major impact upon not only the overall writing quality, but your stress level and grade as well.

#### Scheduling

It is important to schedule the writing of your papers with plenty of time before the deadline to allow for sharing with others and revising. Scheduling the writing of your paper from the due date backwards will help you to plan the steps of your paper. For example, if your paper is due November 1<sup>st</sup>, use the last week of October to work on the final draft, use the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of October for working on and sharing drafts, write the first rough draft a week before that, and so on. You will find that you need to start working in small increments right away. This will give you plenty of time to collect reference materials and the effort will be less taxing both emotionally and physically in those last few days before the due date.

#### Pre-Writing

Most of us use pre-writing strategies without even knowing it. Any thinking, brainstorming, note-taking or discussing of a paper we are planning to write is pre-writing. Many students think about and plan a paper weeks before they begin writing. Writing down or recording your thoughts, mapping your research or your plan for the paper, or even recording your conversations about a paper will make your first draft easier to write.

#### The First Draft

This is where many students find themselves procrastinating. Students who write their papers at the last minute probably have trouble getting the first words of their first draft on paper until the stress of a deadline forces them to start. Try not to procrastinate here; rush through the first draft as soon as you can. Write anything and everything you want

and as you write, jot down notes on thoughts that are coming to you faster than you can type. You will definitely write too much, but this is helpful; cutting and moving text is much easier than trying to pad text in order to reach a page minimum.

## Revision

Your first draft may be messy, but you've done the bulk of writing. Print out your paper and carry it around with you for a day or two. Pull it out when you have free time and read through your paper a few times. Sit down again and revise; cut and paste; use an extra page at the end of your paper to hold onto large sections of text you are unsure about, and rewrite sentences and paragraphs that do not make sense.

Now is good time to ask someone to read your paper and give you feedback. This reader does not have to have any prior knowledge of your topic, but he or she should be able to provide constructive comments that guide your revisions.

## Final Draft

After printing out your final draft, read the text out loud to yourself, reading carefully for grammatical or mechanical errors and listening for flow. Make sure to run spell-check. Double check your formatting, citations, bibliography, etc.