MAKING A WRITING SCHEDULE

Writing involves a series of steps—from discovering what you want to say to proofreading. Often the beginning writer seems to forget that writing is a sequence of events, and thus s/he tries to compose an essay from start to finish all in one evening (usually the night before that paper is due). Then when this Night Before Special receives a poor grade, the student feels even worse about writing and procrastinates even longer on the next essay, gets another bad grade, and so on.

Don't let this nasty spiral happen to you! Remember that essay writing is much less anxiety producing if you complete one step at a time. While the sequence involved will change somewhat from assignment to assignment, the basic steps you should follow for all essays are outlined below:

**PREWRITING:**
Making a writing schedule, reading the assignment sheet, discovering what topic you are interested in, jotting down ideas about this topic, narrowing down the topic to fit the paper, formulating a thesis statement.

**OUTLINING:**
Determining how to structure the essay. Your outline need not be formal, but it should be detailed enough to really help you write your essay.

**1st DRAFT:**
Loosen up—don't be too concerned about grammar and spelling at this stage.

**2nd and maybe 3rd DRAFT:**
Revise your first draft carefully. Get your handbook and dictionary out at this stage, and correct any grammatical and spelling errors. Check the assignment sheet to see if your essay really fits the terms of the assignment.

**TYPING:**

**PROOFREADING:**
Drag out the dictionary again.

**NOTE:** Research papers will, of course, require library work during the Prewriting Step (to find general background material for your topic), and during the Outline Step (to acquire specific information for your now-restricted topic).

Remember that it is necessary to keep jotting down all your ideas—even during the prewriting stage—so that when you begin the next step on the following day you have something to work with.

Here is an example of a schedule built around a typical short essay assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUN</th>
<th>MON</th>
<th>TUE</th>
<th>WED</th>
<th>THUR</th>
<th>FRI</th>
<th>SAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Week</td>
<td>Essay assigned</td>
<td>Pre-writing *</td>
<td>Pre-writing *</td>
<td>Pre-writing *</td>
<td>Outlining *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Week</td>
<td>First Draft</td>
<td>First Draft</td>
<td>First Draft</td>
<td>(Let your first draft sit for a few days.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Week</td>
<td>Second Draft</td>
<td>Second Draft</td>
<td>Typing</td>
<td>Proofreading</td>
<td>Essay due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Library work, if necessary

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