

Technical Communication



6. DRAFTING, WORD PROCESSING

Lecture Announcement

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- Machine Learning for Image Search and Beyond
- Dr. Rouhollah Rahmani
- Wednesday, 1-3pm

Writing a First Draft

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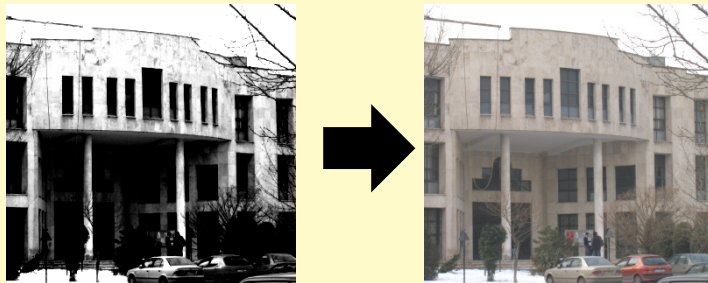
How to Begin.. Methods to overcome writer's block

1. Write an outline
 - Top-Down
 - Bottom-Up
2. “Focused free writing”
 - Write whatever comes to mind on the topic
3. “Invisible writing”
4. Write a version of what you want to say. Throw it away. Repeat.
5. Talk about you topic with a colleague – write a draft of your conversation.
6. Explain to a colleague what you are doing and why it is important.

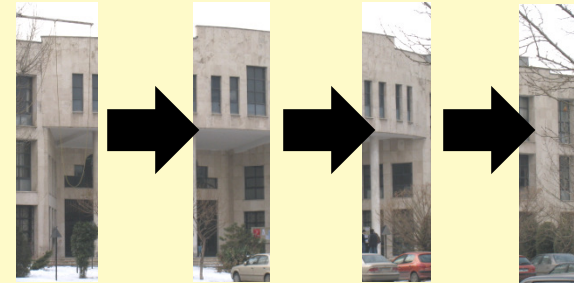
Do **NOT** Produce a “Perfect” First Draft

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- Often there is a psychological need to create a perfect first draft.
 - Causes “freezing”
 - If you focus on creating a perfect first draft, you will waste time and energy.
- Remember –
 - You’re first draft will be thrown away.
 - The best papers have gone through many, many drafts.
- Develop your paper like a photograph: all parts develop gradually together.
- Do ***not*** develop linearly: each part is perfect before you move on.



Photograph



Linear

Problems when writing on Computers

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1. The blank screen “pressures” people to write before they are ready.
2. Screen limits the amount of text you can see simultaneously
3. Ease of making small edits biases the writer towards stylistic editing rather than organizational changes.

How do we overcome these problems?



Plan before Writing

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- Do **explicit** planning before writing
 - Identify problem
 - Your audiences
 - Your purposes
 - Your main points
 - Your arguments.
- Helps you organize your thoughts.
- Helps ensure you do not miss a critical element in your final document.

Plan during Organizing and Writing

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- Use outlining program.
- A Good outline program allows you to
 1. Create and view an outline of a document.
 2. Write text under each entry in the outline.
 3. Use the headings and subheadings of your outline in your document
 4. Re-organize your topics.

Plan throughout the Writing Process

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- **Make print outs**
 - Eliminates viewing limitations.
 - Will help you view the entire document at once.
- **Re-evaluate the document after any changes.**
- **When moving paragraphs**
 - “conceptual holes” – gaps where the paragraph came from.
 - Lack of integration – discontinuity where the paragraph is placed.
- **Be ready to make major organizational changes.**
 - Your document may change 50% or more before it is finished.

Publishing Software for Engineers

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- Microsoft Word
 - WYSWIG
 - Common
 - Excellent for editing.
 - Formatting can be tedious, distracting.
- LaTeX ←
 - Powerful writing system.
 - ✦ Separates the formatting from the content.
 - Some conferences, journals require LaTeX.
 - Great for writing... hard to use for revisions.