

# Models of writing



Writing can be an intimidating task. Many people of all ages will admit to avoiding and even fearing the writing process. For some reason, the task seems daunting, so methods have been adapted to help ease the process for those that struggle.

The five step writing process is typically composed of some derivation of the following steps: prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and proofreading. These steps are widely taught in classrooms from the elementary school level through post graduate work. The depth of each level is the thing that differs as writers grow and mature.

The prewriting phase involves the production of ideas and even strategies for later writing of the essay. This can include using one of many types of graphic organizers such as bubble charts or outlining techniques. It can also be less organized like brainstorming lists or even random thoughts. The prewriting phase is a time to explore all facets of an idea without judging or commitment. During this phase, the writer will find a topic and create his questions for research. In conducting his research, whether it be formal or informal, he will discover the answers to his questions.

Thus the next sequential stage of writing is the planning stage. Here the writer accumulates all of the information necessary and begins to sort it into categories. This coincides with the text's second step of finding and evaluating information from various sources. Here the writer is still gather information without being certain exactly which he will use.

These first two steps correlate with McQuinn and Roach's first step in their writing process which is the idea step. According to their website, " ideas

are the heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, together with the details (documented support, elaboration, anecdotes, images) that enrich and develop that theme by building understanding or holding a reader's attention.” Here the writer comes up with the central focus of his work and gather information to support it. This information may be anecdotal, research-oriented, observed or simply created. The ideas are important to the process because they allow for wide-ranging creativity from the writer.

The third step in the general writing process is drafting. The text suggests taking notes from the sources and making a formal outline. It is at this point that the final decisions are made as to what information should be included. It is important to note that a draft is not a final copy. Many students of writing make that mistake. The drafts are sometimes a type of trial and error routine. Several drafts may be necessary before the writer becomes satisfied with the content of the essay.

This stage correlates with the organization stage of McQuinn and Roach. They note that organization is the “ internal structure” of a piece which includes is central message and the flow of ideas seamlessly from one to another. This particular process offers that a well-organized piece of writing will begin with a strong opening and conclude with a powerful conclusion, with many developed and stimulating ideas in between. Of course the writer will have had to already choose his content in order to accomplish this type of structure in his writing.

After the drafting stage, the writer must undertake the process of revising. The revision stage is one that involves many steps. The paper must be examined for its content, its logical progression, its flow of ideas, its choice of words, phrasing, and overall impact. The revising stage is much like the drafting stage because each revision is simply a new draft. Until the revision stage is complete, the drafting stage is not.

McQuinn and Roach's fourth and fifth area are called word choice and sentence fluency. These two ideas are key to the revision process. Word choice has to do with, as the name suggests, the careful choosing of the most perfect words to express meaning. Sentence fluency is the smoothness and fluidity with which the sentences in the writing roll seamlessly from one to another.

According to McQuinn and Roach, " word choice is the use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader. It is the love of language, a passion for words, combined with a skill in choosing words that creates just the right mood, impression, or image in the heart and mind of the reader." To accomplish this is to really wrestle with words until the most perfect choices are made. Likewise, sentence fluency focuses on the sounds of the sentences. This forces the writer to consider sound devices such as rhyme, alliteration, creative phrasing, sentence structure, complexity and length. The sentences will read, in some cases, like music.

Finally, the writer has achieved a focused, organized and creatively crafted piece. He has one more step to complete. This step is the revision step. This step demands that the writer proofread his paper to ensure that the

conventions of the English language are followed. This gives the writer and the writing legitimacy. The reader recognizes that his writing will be more powerful if it is also correct in its use of punctuation, usage, spelling and other such conventions. While proofreading may be less creative than the stylistic drafting of the piece, it is nevertheless a vital step in the whole of the writing process.

While most process driven models of writing end here, the McQuinn and Roach model includes another area. This area is that of voice. They note that voice is the heart and soul of a piece, the magic, the wit. It is the writer's unique and personal expression emerging through words. Voice is the presence of the writer on the page. When the writer's passion for the topic and concern for the audience are strong, the text dances with life and energy, and the reader feels a strong and intimate connection to both the writing and the writer.

Voice is a more abstract tenet of writing, one that is harder to explain and harder yet to produce.

Voice pervades all writing, but not all voice is unique or engaging or even literate. Many writers take years to produce a recognizable voice. Some students never learn it. However, voice is the quality that separates adequate and good writing from great and enlightened writing, yet it is the most elusive quality of all.

The process described in the text and the process designed by McQuinn and Roach have many structural similarities. They both depend on good ideas, organization, drafting, revising and proofreading. However, the McQuinn and

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Roach model go beyond this to demand an element of uniqueness, of style, from the writers. This style is very difficult to teach. For this reason, it is much more difficult to use.

A student of writing would find the text much easier to follow. The steps are well-defining, and a student who carefully follows them will produce a good piece of writing. The steps are easy to repeat and practice, and they can be applied to many situations.

However, a student who has mastered this type of writing and desire another level to his work will find McQuinn and Roach an excellent step in this direction. While the tutorial on their website cannot guarantee that one will become a stylist, it gives a mature writer more dimensions with which to experiment in his writing. Word choice, sentence fluency and voice are all components of this dimension. Merely good writing can exist without them, but great writing can only emerge with them. Thus, the user-friendliness of these two models will depend on the level of adequacy that the writer has achieved.

## **References**

1. McQuinn, C. & Roach, M. The Writing Process.
2. Wordsmith A Guide to College Writing 3RD Ed.