

Examining collaborative and individual writing processes

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Examining Collaborative and Individual Writing Processes Stephen McLeod
University of Phoenix Collaborative writing is a tool that is being utilized more often in the professional world as well as the educational world. The collaborative writing process is similar to the individual writing process as many of the same rules apply. In this paper we, as a learning team, will illustrate some examples of how to use the tools of individual writing in the collaborative process.

Writing as a group facilitates a more thorough and accurate end result because the work is shared between all members rather than resting on the shoulders of only one individual. It also enables more opinions and facts to be presented by the team as productive writers making the reader able to easily understand what is being expressed. The most logical place to begin this process is by brainstorming. According to [www. dictionary. reference. com](http://www.dictionaryst.com), brainstorming is defined as: “ a conference technique of solving specific problems, amassing information, stimulating creative thinking, developing new ideas, etc. by unrestrained and spontaneous participation in discussion. ” In order to write an excellent paper, for any topic, requires much brainstorming to have the paper written well. There are many ways for teams to brainstorm, some of which include all members of the team writing their own ideas down and then sharing them with the group, or the facilitator of the brainstorming group writing down ideas on a big, whiteboard while the team members shout their ideas like a game of charades. Both are excellent ways to come up with ideas and have fun in the process which, in turn, keeps all parties involved, relaxed and more focused.

However, ending up with too many vague or off-topic ideas will cause the team to lose focus resulting in the first problem arising. A great way to succeed is matching up the ideas and topics from brainstorming and putting it together in writing. When working with a group versus individually, more ideas and topics will be brought up that otherwise might have been overlooked. Brainstorming is more effective with a group than with an individual because everyone is giving their ideas to the paper. It is more difficult to put the paper together when everyone is not in agreement on the topic. Resolving conflicts is necessary for effective brainstorming. One way to resolve conflicts in the group is to have two ideas for each specific topic, allowing everyone in the group to give his or her feedback. Another solution to resolve conflicts would be to take a vote based upon the most thorough information presented to the group. The issue of plagiarism should also be resolved during the brainstorming process. The group should agree upon the level of plagiarism that will or will not be tolerated for admission into the paper.

After a while, a team would determine if the paper is perfect for that particular topic. As for an individual, he or she would know if the paper has met the requirements however, without the advantage of brainstorming with another person, one would have no feedback upon which to base the decision. Once the topic has been agreed upon, the next step is to begin the research. The first action that is necessary when doing research as a team is to identify the topic that is going to be written about and develop that topic into a specific subject matter.

Making a list of possible places one can look for information, whether it is on the Internet or in a library, is a smart place to begin. Having multiple people who can offer their ideas and opinions is much better than doing the research on one's own. Being organized is important because it assists the writers in keeping track of citation information, keeping the irrelevant information out of the way and preventing confusion by placement of paragraphs and sub-topics throughout the editing process.

Doing this will enable the reader to easily comprehend the paper. The next step is to find background or other information the team could use to analyze and observe the main subject matter. Referencing an encyclopedia, a news article, or bibliographies will help set the context of the research. Having multiple people involved makes the search quick and easy. Knowledge of a specific subject by someone in the team is not always necessary which, in my opinion, is what makes the research the most important part of any writing.

Research is needed in order to delve deeper into whatever subject being written about, thus creating more information to analyze to determine what is useful and what is irrelevant. This is where a big difference between collaborative and individual writing processes occurs. Individually, only one opinion and set of facts are considered; whereas, for a group multiple sets of research are examined during the writing process. The individual writer, assumingly, doesn't want to bore the reader with information that is not pertinent to the outcome.

The writer will usually discuss the information obtained with another individual to gain another perspective. When a team is researching and encounters a problem or an obstacle, it is a good choice having the writer's solution will assist the reader in understanding how the information was obtained and provide some explanation as to why the information provided was arranged in that particular order. Continuity and cohesion make an essay easier to comprehend and more pleasurable for the reader.

A writer may arrange his facts in several different manners that may include chronological order, alphabetical order or by subject matter, for example. After the team is comfortable with all of the researched facts, the team as a whole decides what information is most pertinent to the subject matter and what will provide the most enjoyable read. Editing plays a major role in writing any type of document. In particular, when writing an essay one will have to pay close attention during the proofreading step to ensure that proper editing takes place.

A group that collaborates and goes through the editing process as a team has a better chance of catching a mistake than if it was edited only by the individual who wrote the paper as a singular source. and intelligently when being read. When these steps are practiced the writing process is easier to accomplish. This will help detect many mistakes that were made that the editors eyes may have overlooked. By following this rule, you become very familiar with the information that you have researched to compose your essay. Obviously, when working in a group this step is automatically performed.

If some part of the work does not sound correct to a member of the group, they should then go back and try to detect their problems. If the team overlooks these problems, they will only compound them and create more problems later on in the essay which gives more reinforcement for working on a paper as a team rather than individually. One example of this may be found in the inclusion of unnecessary information. A way to resolve this would be to include information in a precise manner. Sending a good message to the readers of your essay will allow them to comprehend the subject more easily.

Another pitfall that one may encounter would be to repeat sentences over and over. One should stay focused on the most important sentences without adding any unnecessary filler for emphasis. The structure and length of the sentences makes an enormous difference to the readers. If the essay is not structured properly, readers will most likely become unfocused on the message, resulting in distraction. Team identity is very important when the writing process starts. Team meetings and frequent consultations among members of the group will assist in developing a viable team identity.

A good suggestion for finding a specific member's identity would be to find out what each person does best and what he or she isn't good at and build from that. Each person on the writing group should be assigned a different function toward the completion of the paper. Throughout life, school has taught children how to work as a team. Sports are a good example on how teamwork is practiced and writing a paper is only different in the aspect of it

isn't physical. The team charter helps the team understand one another. It also states the strengths of the individuals in the group.

By using this information, each team member can be put in a position to succeed. This allows the identity to show through the work that is done. Success follows when teams learn their identity in classrooms and in the workplace. References Meyer, R. G. Meyer. (2003). The Writing Process Steps. Writing Prompts. Retrieved from <http://www.etc.net/writing/PDFfiles/Writing%20Process%20Steps.pdf> (The Writing Process Steps, para. 1) Renard, J. Retrieved October 25, 2009 from. http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/show_tag?name=writing&page=2