

Strategy for writing efficiently

David Pannell

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The key to my strategy for writing efficiently is to separate out the many creative tasks involved in writing. Many people try to do all the creative tasks at once and so get bogged down. By doing only one task at a time, writing becomes much easier and quicker. Here is my recommended process.

For Introduction, Lit Review, Discussion

Step	Comment
1. Brainstorm ideas for what could be included	Think broadly. Don't apply much of a filter. Capture any idea that might possibly be worth including.
2. Group those ideas together and give each group a heading	Group them according to theme or topic. These ideas will end up in the same section.
3. Sequence the groups	What order of the groups would flow best?
4. Within each group, sequence the ideas	Looking at one group at a time, look at the ideas within that group and think about what order of those ideas would flow best. Delete any ideas that don't fit into your preferred sequence. Some gaps might become apparent when you sequence the ideas. Fill gaps if needed.
5. Write the first draft	Write quickly. Don't worry about spelling, punctuation or good expression. Apart from just expressing the ideas, the only other thing to think about the flow from one sentence to the next and the flow from one paragraph to the next. Don't look back. Don't re-read what you have written. Don't cite references, unless you know exactly which ones are appropriate.
6. Insert references	
7. Polish the writing	

For Results

Step	Comment
1. Create potential tables and graphs for inclusion	Think broadly. If space is limited (a journal paper), create more than there is room for.
2. Select which tables and graphs will be included and sequence them	Which ones tell the most interesting, relevant or important story. Sequencing options: (a) start with the most important result first, (b) start with a simple, easy-to-understand scenario/result first and build up to more complex scenarios/results.
3. Brainstorm ideas for points you say about each table and graph.	Think broadly. Don't apply much of a filter. Capture any idea that might possibly be worth including.
4. Decide which of those points you will say in the Results and which you will save for the Discussion.	Descriptions of the results go into Results. Implications and comments about their relevance or connections go in the Discussion.
5. After each graph or table sequence the points you want to say.	Sequence them in a way such that the story flows.
6. Write the first draft	Write quickly. Don't worry about spelling, punctuation or good expression. Apart from just expressing the ideas, the only other thing to think about the flow from one sentence to the next and the flow from one paragraph to the next. Don't look back. Don't re-read what you have written. Since it is the Results section, you probably won't cite many references, if any.
7. Polish the writing	