



# WRITING PROCESS REPORT

Assignment 1

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# MY CURRENT WRITING PROCESS

Anne Hungerford's "Introduction to Writing Theory" discusses the current-traditional rhetoric approach to writing, which feels the closest to my own process:

*"If you start most writing tasks by writing and rewriting the first sentences of your documents, if you revise most of your sentences for perfection as you write, if you frequently have to stop writing in order to generate the next idea, if you do very little revision once the draft is finished, your writing reflects the values of current-traditional rhetoric" (2005, 1).*

My current writing process takes this general approach, usually by following these specific steps:

1. Plan the project (decide schedule and budget).
2. Conduct research and take notes (gathering).
3. Create an outline with a solid structure.
4. Write the introduction until it is perfect.
5. Draft the body of the document, linearly, moving through my argument presenting evidence from least to most powerful rhetorically.
6. Review and revise, if needed.

Like most current-traditional rhetoric approaches, mine has overlooked prewriting activities characteristic of writing process theory (Hungerford 2005, 4). Before TCOM120, brainstorming was the only prewriting (invention) technique I tried, apart from research and notetaking (gathering). When I encountered freewriting and heuristics in the course modules, they were novel concepts to me. I learned to write persuasively on my own, and most of my creative process is internal, occurring in my mind. More formal study of classical rhetorical theory, discourse theory, and social theory challenged me to think about the rhetorical situation in relation to what and who I was writing for, not simply about the text I was writing about, but this had not changed my fundamental approach to composition.

On the surface, my current writing process works. I am able to produce quality work with few grammatical or structural issues. I try to keep my audience and purpose in front of mind. However, my writing process is time consuming and frustrating. I do not devote time to invention, and my revision stage is brief. While I appreciate that the end goal of my current approach is to get it right the first time (Hungerford 2005, 14), this rigidity stifles my creative process and slows me down considerably. While I see myself among Maxine Hairston's plodders and bleeders, I would like to learn to be a sprinter (Hungerford 2005,15).

Process theory situates business writing within the 4 elements of the rhetorical situation: the exigence (what is the contextual need?), the audience (who is the intended reader or user?), the purpose (why am I writing this discourse, and why would the audience read it?), and the

occasion (genre – what am I writing?) (Hungerford 2005, 6-8). As “genres are developed by discourse communities and reflect community values, goals, knowledge bases, expectations, and conventions” (Hungerford 2005, 119), a genre-based approach to technical communication makes sense and offers effective, flexible, and time-saving techniques (Johnson-Sheehan 2024, 3-5, 472). The Technical Communication program has progressively exposed me to new techniques, based on the rhetorical situation as understood within process theory, and these approaches have destabilized my habitual writing process in a productive way.

## Case Study 1: TCOM120 Assignment

My TCOM120 assignment was my first time using a genre-based approach to technical communication. I chose to write my how-to guide (occasion) on a topic familiar to me, English Angora rabbits. I found a lack of resources available (exigence) for the fibre enthusiast (audience) who might want to learn to raise their own wool breed rabbit (purpose). My usual writing process leaned heavily on research and gathering information, and I did not want any irrelevant rabbit holes to distract me. Choosing a topic that I was comfortable with seemed like a solid choice. While I kept my audience and purpose in mind, I approached the writing process differently this time.

After reading the course modules and readings about mind mapping, I decided to try this technique as a step toward the unfamiliar prewriting stage. As I set out to create the mind map, I kept the rhetorical situation in mind. I included information that would be relevant to my readers and to the expository and directive purposes of the guide. The conventions of the how-to genre, the mind map, and the assignment heuristic helped me create section headings for my outline. This exercise disrupted my habitual, more rigid process in a positive way, and the overall experience was less frustrating. I visualized the sections of the guide clearly and placed them easily into a coherent order in the outline.

With this assignment, the instructions encouraged students to write sections out of sequence. Writing sections “out of order” was uncomfortable, but I embraced the process. I followed the current-traditional rhetorical method in devoting a large portion of my time to the drafting stage – I tried to meet all the qualities expected of technical writing prose while drafting each section, reserving the revising stage to address other requirements of the course, including the use of bulleted and numbered lists, tables and images, and white space.

## Case Study 2: TCOM110 Assignment

For TCOM110, my assignment to write on a core concept or practice of technical communication (occasion) started with online research where I found a need (exigence) for an article directed at an audience of subject matter experts and reluctant writers (audience) about the relationship dynamic between writer and editor (purpose). My rhetorical situation remained front of mind as I researched and gathered notes, which made up the largest part of my “prewriting” time. I created an outline. I then drafted sections, mostly in a linear way.

As I drafted, I deviated from the outline. I cut section headings and completed the draft, but I felt uneasy when I read the resulting text. Something was off: it felt as though the structure had gaps. I revisited the original outline and reflected on what I felt was missing from my first draft. I brainstormed, made more notes, added new section headings to the draft, and wrote accompanying text: things came together. After adding the new sections, I had a self-contained article that worked for the rhetorical situation. In retrospect, I think a mind map in the early prewriting stage would have been helpful.

I stayed within my habitual process at the prewriting stage, but I shifted my time investment away from continuous drafting (where I cannot move forward until each section is perfect) to more investment in structural revision and iterative versions. Multiple drafts and revisions are a positive part of the writing process. Each draft brings to light new opportunities to refine a text. However, my own writing process has combined invention, drafting, and revision into one long, often tedious step. This cumbersome procedure has often shut down my creative process.

## MY EVOLVING WRITING PROCESS

Shifting from current-traditional rhetoric to a process approach can help me escape the rigid constraints of “getting the outline just right” and obsessing over grammar and word choice. In a process approach, the writer should create space for invention at each step (Hungerford 2005, 5). This is something I would like to achieve in my own process. Mind mapping, heuristics, and freewriting are all prewriting techniques I can use to enhance invention before I begin drafting text (Hungerford 2005, 4).

In my customary writing process, I devote most of my time to drafting with only a brief time for revision. Experimenting with unfamiliar prewriting approaches, like freewriting, allows me to develop content much more rapidly and with less frustration. I can then adapt it to a rough outline or template in an abbreviated drafting stage. Also, developing material for sections “out of order” in separate drafting sessions allows me to direct my time at composing content without finding myself obstructed.

Content produced through freewriting exercises filled each of the sections of this assignment; this allowed me to shift from a generating voice to an evaluating voice in refining and revising the content efficiently (Hungerford 2005, 13). The freewriting exercises in this assignment made my writing process smoother and more productive. Spending more time revising also felt less stressful somehow – I molded the text into a unified whole, confident that I had already drafted the bulk of the content I needed. The invention part of the process and later development of the document felt more organic to me. In shifting from current-traditional rhetoric to a more process-oriented approach, I chose to be more patient to see that finished product.

## SOURCES

Hungerford, Anne. 2005. Introduction and Unit 1: Introduction to Writing Theory. In *Advanced Study in Writing for Business and the Professions*. Simon Fraser University Continuing Studies.

Johnson-Sheehan, Richard. 2024. *Technical Communication Today*. 7th Ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.