

Generating More Writing: Loop Writing

These questions are useful when you have written a draft and are struggling to write a truly revised, improved mid-process draft. Spend at least two minutes on each question though do not stop answering a question if you find yourself writing easily and/or usefully.

1. Silently read your draft. Try to pretend you are someone else, perhaps a friend, and just read to yourself and pay attention to what is being communicated.
2. Give the draft to your instructor or a friend so that you can't see it.
3. Open a new word processing file, or get out a notebook if you prefer hand-writing, and prepare to write! Take a minute to close your eyes and psych yourself up for a peaceful, thoughtful hour or so of writing. Open your eyes and mind.
4. Freewrite about your topic. Really let go – just write about the topic, whatever is on your mind after having re-read your paper.
5. Switch gears entirely. Write a one or two paragraph letter to a respected elder in your life. In this letter explain to your elder what it is that you have written about. Explain what your point is, and how you made your point.
6. Reread what you have just written in questions 4 and 5. Now think for a moment. Then, re-write what your central claim is – that is, what it is that you are trying to say. Your central claim is your argument, your point – not a description or a topic.
7. Take this sentence or two and re-write it on the top of a fresh page.
8. Write a paragraph directly to readers in which you talk about the topic and explain why it is useful for a population of people (e.g., students, teenage girls, teachers, native speakers, legislators) to think about or act upon the topic you are focusing on. [This MIGHT be a good new intro, or perhaps a later paragraph.]
9. What's very funny, intriguing, odd, or shocking about your topic or point of view? Write directly to your readers about a surprising idea, fact, or point of view that is raised by your topic. You might start like this: Although you may have thought _____, in fact the truth is _____.
10. Go to your primary text – the text, experience, story, or example – that you are analyzing in your paper. Look for details and features that you know you haven't written about in your earlier draft. Jot down all these details and features in a list.

11. In your essay you have probably begun to write about specific examples or bits of evidence that support or exemplify what you are writing. List those specific examples and bits of evidence here, from memory, and then brainstorm out new examples or bits of evidence. The point is to generate new raw data, new thinking, new support. Try out half-silly examples – the point is to get the list out. Then, once the list is out, try to write a few sentences on each example or bit of evidence, fleshing out how the particular (example or evidence) might support your point of view. [Here may be the beginning of new body paragraphs.]
12. Now, switch gears and, instead of working from memory, go to the readings you are using in your essay. Search the readings and write down two good quotes that are different from what you have chosen in the draft you have already written.
13. In a few sentences, explain how one of these quotes you have just selected speaks to the ideas in your essay.
14. Write a new conclusion. A conclusion often comes from inspiration. A conclusion often asks readers to do something: to act or think differently. What are you asking of your readers? Write a totally new paragraph.
15. Get your draft back and plan your revision. What can you throw out from your original draft? What can you bring in from the loop writing?

Inspired by Peter Elbow's *Writing with Power* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986).