



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Wilderness Waste *The Writing Process* (drafting)



Drafting

Drafting begins when a writer develops content through persistent production of connected prose. It is getting a vision down on paper, cutting loose with it, so to speak, with little regard to refinement and correctness, but much regard to making meaning. The number of drafts may depend on the type, length, and complexity of the writing task, but in an early draft, mechanics and formal aspects of the writing are generally not emphasized.

Get Something On Paper

The important thing in the drafting stage is to get words on paper, not necessarily the right words, but the first words. "Get it down," William Faulkner writes. "Take chances. It may be bad, but it is the only way you can do anything really good." If descriptions are not fully rendered, if thinking is half-baked, if assertions are unconnected, that's fine. That's what a draft is for. The goal is to begin to realize and shape the content of the piece in a form that allows the writer to explore and understand the territory of the subject. Writing may move from a 'discovery draft' in rough form to a more focused presentation in which the material is shaped, organized, and structured in a final form for an authentic audience. When we learn to interact with our drafts, they tell us what needs to be expanded, refined, or expunged.

Drafting Is a Process

Drafting is like an artist with a sketchpad who begins to find the contours of the subject. Writers make light, quick lines; nothing is permanent. Upon beginning, each writer has his or her own style; some bolt quickly down the page, their momentum building, their thoughts leading in unexpected directions. Others work in smaller units, toying with their beginnings, trying a line one way then another, drawing in to write, then pushing away to see what they have said. It's important to note that writers use the same drafting process for nonfiction writing that they use when working in any other genre.

Don't Worry About Errors - Yet

Remember, writers must be encouraged to write without worrying whether they are making errors. Once they have written a draft they will have time for editing, but during composition, concern about correctness competes with the more timely concern about content, word choice, voice, tone, and rhythm. Rough drafts are meant to be rough. There will be a time later for making it beautiful.

References:

Atwell, N. (1998). *In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann.

Calkins, L. (1986). *The art of teaching writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

National Writing Project, & Nagin, C. (2006). *Because writing matters: Improving student writing in our schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Romano, T. [1987]. *Clearing the way: working with teenage writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Smith, F. (1982). *Writing and the writer*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.