



The Student Who Writes Too Slowly

Generally, writing quickly doesn't mean writing well. Yet some students find that they take so much time over even a short assignment that their work suffers. Papers might be chronically late, or the student loses sleep by writing into the wee hours, or too much time writing takes away from time for other schoolwork.

Fixing these common problems might speed up your writing:

Don't stop to get the right word or sentence

Do you want to say "nervousness," "anxiety," or "trepidation"? Hmmm... Instead of mulling which word is exactly right, put the word in brackets and keep writing.

ex. Chinese [nervousness] [anxiety?] increased over the next several decades as growing numbers of European traders arrived.

You can put a whole sentence in brackets if you're not happy with it. Or use empty brackets [] to remind yourself to add something in later. Write the easy parts, or parts you are sure of, and come back to the trouble spots at the end.

Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar after a draft is completed

Stopping to fix mechanical errors while you write can really bog you down. If you have this habit, break it. Tell yourself that you will edit your paper for errors after it is all written. Likewise, questions of formatting and citation style should be dealt with only after you've written a decent draft.

Edgewood College Writing Center

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Slow Writers continued

Organize notes and source material

Flipping through a stack of Xeroxed articles or pages of notes can add a lot of time and stress to your writing. First, mark up your source material or notes with a highlighter to show points you will definitely address in your paper or passages you will quote. You might need to re-highlight your material as a preparatory step before you sit down to write. And put a short note on the first page of source material indicating what it's about. This is especially useful if you have a lot of articles that look very similar. Then put material that is only tangentially useful in a different pile.

Learn to deal with writer's block

If much of your writing time is spent *not* writing because you can't begin, you need to find a method to free yourself of writer's block. This problem is probably more common than you think, and affects writers of all different abilities and experience. There are many ways to produce an unconventional rough draft that may help you get started. Try free writing, webbing, or listing. See the [Rough Drafts](#) article in this section for an explanation of these methods. Speak to a sympathetic instructor or Edgewood's writing specialist about your writing anxiety. Writer's block can be broken, making all your writing easier.