

# CREATING THE FIRST DRAFT OF YOUR RESEARCH PAPER

Many people put off starting to actually write their paper; some spend extra hours over-researching the topic to avoid the need to begin writing.

Don't fall into this trap; instead, start writing your paper in chunks. For example, if you have finished your research on one part, start writing that part. If you wait until all your ideas are researched and all your thinking is clear, you'll end up writing a one and only final draft in one sitting and this is not an enjoyable experience! It also leads to a rushed paper, one that does not represent your best work because you have no time to revise and edit it.

## TO GET STARTED WITH WRITING:

- Talk about your topic—record what you are saying; listen to what you said; write it down.
- Call it an experiment and just write. (You don't expect experiments to work well. Stop worrying and see what happens).
- Imagine a reader who's really interested in your topic. Write directly to that reader.
- Free-write. Write as hard, as fast, and as freely as you can. Discover your meaning as you write.
- Write the easiest sections first. (Write your introduction last).
- Break down a large writing task into smaller parts. Write it in sections. Think of a long paper as being several smaller papers.
- Or, write a very quick, very rough draft of the whole paper without any notes. Then spend later writing sessions expanding, developing, and clarifying sections within that initial draft.

## REMEMBER THAT THIS IS A FIRST DRAFT—IT WILL NOT BE PERFECT; DON'T TRY TO MAKE IT SO.

- Turn off your internal critic as you write. Your goal initially should be to "write" rather than to "write well".
- Don't stop to edit as you're writing. Leave a blank space if you can't think of a word, or a quote, or a piece of information. Put a squiggle under words that you're not sure you spelled right. Check and clarify details LATER.
- If you draft on paper, leave lots of space so you can easily add things later. Write on every other line and leave wide margins.
- Don't delete or scratch out what you don't like, just add on any changes you make. You may see something of value in your first ideas later on as you revise and edit.

Follow your plan or outline (if you made one) as you draft but don't be afraid to deviate from your plan if you suddenly get a new idea. Plans should be good enough to use but cheap enough to throw away