

PRODUCTIVE PROCESS

Writing be difficult, time-intensive, and stressful, especially if the document is substantial in terms of length or depth. You are working the muscles in your hand, your back, and even your head (i.e., your brain). However, you can make writing less problematic and even more productive and rewarding.

When beginning to create a document/project, try keeping these guidelines in mind:

1. Mentally-Situate Yourself

Give yourself some time to think about the topic (consciously and unconsciously).

Consider the

topic and then go do something else for a while. Start quickly on a project or new document, but then let ideas “bake” in the mind (like a cookie or cake) while the body is doing other things.

Typically, we receive inspiration for specific things while doing other non-related things, such as driving, playing video games, running, reading, etc. Our brains need time to process problems and develop solutions. When the brain is finished processing, the solution simply appears (oftentimes, without any warning). The theory is that the brain needs time to synthesize information and to create the proper connections. With this idea in mind, we suggest that no one procrastinate. Again, start early and work quickly to put your main (or big ideas down quickly).

So, instead of creating the entire document/project at one time, create in short spurts (using short bursts of energy). If you spread out the task, you may help your brain to think more productively and improve the quality of your document/project. You will help the body in its processing of the idea and allow more focus for even greater ideas.

2. Physically-Situate Yourself

Prepare a space (or a sort of "nest").

Remember: Familiar environments actually reduce the stress of performance, reduce anxiety, and encourage productivity. Be consistent with your surroundings.

The practice of creating, especially longer documents, involves stressing your body to some capacity. Therefore, try to make yourself as comfortable as possible. Get comfortable to create (work out the ergonomic aspects involved) and get anything you need to help you.

Consider doing the following:

a) Adjust your computer display. Consider the height of the computer monitor (lay a few books under your monitor). If the monitor is at eye level, then you will reduce stress to your neck. You might want to consider an external keyboard and mouse if you have a laptop.

b) Sit in a comfortable chair. Remember, you may be on your "rump" for hours and hours, depending on how long the your design session may be. Keep your feet flat on

the floor and make sure your knees are bent at a right angle. All of these aspects are important to avoid long-term stress on your joints and back.

c) Reduce noise and distractions (Or, if you need some mild noise, try soft music, such as classical or ambient music). If noise is a total distraction, consider ear plugs or noise-cancelling headphones.

d) Adjust the lighting.

e) Control the temperature.

f) Declutter your space.

g) Purify the air (Consider purchasing a small air purifier or simply buy a nice plant. Keep in mind that green spaces actually reduce stress).

3. Think of Reward

A grade is a reward from the teacher; and consequently, good grades are earned. Usually, if you just want a decent grade, you simply complete the work, while following the rules/guidelines on the assignment. If you want a good grade, give the paper plenty of your attention. If you want an even better grade, give the paper plenty of your attention and call in the "reinforcements" (that is, ask other people to help you to revise/edit your paper).

Last but not least, do not forget to reward yourself personally. Do something special for yourself (when you can) to reward yourself for your hard work. Regardless of whether you are consistent in rewarding yourself every time, operant conditioning (working for a reward) has shown effective in conditioning us to carry out the task every time.

The reward need not be monetary or expensive. But, the reward should be positive and consistent (as much as possible).

4. Speaking of Rewards... Give Yourself Breaks/Rest

Similar to the idea of a grand reward, give yourself mini-rewards in the form of breaks. Take breaks enough to encourage productivity, but also enough to reduce stress. Walk around every few minutes. Prolonged sitting can affect your health. Plus, the brain needs stimulus to stay alert and awake. Some doctors recommend a 20-minute "nature break" (see the article here for more details: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/a-20-minute-nature-break-relieves-stress>)

5. Leave Holes When Needed.

Start your document/project with the idea that you will not finish it in a single sitting. Write in short spurts. Consider leaving holes in the document (or blank sections), which you will fill-in later. When you are ready to resume working, return to document and finish filling in the holes. Remember: Let your mind process the document/project (consciously and subconsciously).

6. Be Aware of and Taken Advantage of Your Body's Natural Rhythm.

Your body has a "natural rhythm" which helps you to access higher amounts of energy throughout the day and night. Researchers call this the "Circadian Rhythm," a natural rhythm of the body which is based on routine as well as the prevalence of daylight and

the need for food and sleep. (see the article here for more details:
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/why-your-sleep-and-wake-cycles-affect-your-mood-2020051319792>)

You see, the body stores energy for tasks and makes such energy available later. Likewise, the body allows you to sleep or rest to recuperate that energy. So, listen to your body. Try to find out when your "peak energy" is present. Then, decide to do your work during that time. Heck, even do all your homework at that time of the day. You may find that you are much more productive.