

if everyone has a story, so does every piece of writing

introduction to the writing grid by marissa luck



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Like any craft, writing requires practice. Often, the best writers are also the ones who put the most care and effort into their words. How a writer composes, shapes, and edits their words comprises their writing process, or the back story behind the final written product.

Before I came to the Writing Center, I had never heard those two words together: *writing* and *process*. Nor had I pondered the distinct yet fluid stages of the writing process: brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading. I would worry about the way sentences sounded before I had even written my ideas on a page. When I became a tutor, I realized I wasn't the only one who struggled with this; there were many, many writers who attempted to brainstorm, draft, and revise all in one sitting, often making the whole writing

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experience tiring, unenjoyable, and less than fulfilling. As a tutor, I discovered that more often than not, people were able to write better when they devoted energy to each stage of the writing process. This is one reason why we have dedicated significant space in this anthology to exploring this process.

The Writing Grid is a tool for you to engage in your practice as a writer by becoming aware of your needs in each stage of the writing process. The five stages are laid out vertically on the left side of the grid. Each row aligns with three separate columns: product, strategies, and feedback. With each stage in the process you can ask yourself:

*What product do I wish to generate? What strategies can I use to accomplish this? And how can I seek meaningful feedback on my work? (Yannone).*

The answers to these questions are different for each stage of the writing process. For instance, when I'm brainstorming, my desired product is to develop an idea I want to write about. The strategies I use to do this are to think about the piece independently, talk to a friend or a fellow tutor about my ideas, and then make lists or freewrite to get my ideas going. The feedback I get in this stage is informal; I'm just looking for someone to help me expand my ideas or confirm my efforts. When I'm revising, though, I want to produce a significantly revised draft. To do this, I read my paper aloud to myself and rewrite sections to clarify my ideas. In this stage, I want critical feedback on my writing, and I'll often reorganize complete sections of a piece. After I receive feedback on a draft, I may need to return to brainstorming to figure out how to change or revise what I've written.

Sandy, the Director of the Writing Center, likes to think about the writing process as a hand with each finger

representing a stage in the writing process. She pointed out that "Some writers collapse all stages into one, creating a tight, closed fist." This closed fist does not promote thoughtful development (Yannone 33).

When your hand is unclenched, when you spread the fingers of the writing process, you are left with an open hand, one more willing and able to receive insights from the world. With an open hand, you craft your ideas into words more methodically, precisely, and imaginatively. With an open hand, you create.

#### Works Cited:

Yannone, Sandra. "Writing as a Process." *Inkwell*, Vol. II. Ed. Shawnell Johnson, Andrew Olmsted. Olympia: The Evergreen State College Writing Center, 2007. 33-34. Print.

### the writing grid

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stage	product	strategies	feedback
brainstorming			
drafting			
revising			
editing			
proofreading			