



EYES, PENS, AND YOU: A D-I-Y GUIDE FOR TAKING YOUR PAPER TO THE CHOP SHOP

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I ride buses to the Boys and Girls Club twice a week in Tumwater, WA, overseeing waist-high hellions tackle spelling packets and fractions. They use their notebooks. They use their hands. They use their fingers. They use their pencils. Utensils? No, pencils! What is worthwhile if it doesn't have a screen or a hard drive and can't write sixty words every minute? As slow as it sounds, the power of watching words emerge from a pencil that have been born by neurons firing and thoughts traveling is like Catwoman transforming into academic writing. Badass, dangerous, and dressed in super tight leather.

Having the power to cross out words makes me feel like God, ultimately choosing the verbal outcome of a paper's Rapture. Crossing out words does not mean something is WRONG, but redirects the path of thoughts as ideas and arguments collide, frantically looking for an escape inside the brain. Witnessing the shift of a paper, a paragraph, and a phrase is graphic when I make changes in front of my face. I can taste the paper. Starchy. I can smell the pens. Grapefruit. The act of handwriting is a scene that unfolds; it is mental improv that is visceral in its sense of violently cutting away words, but in a very blood-stays-inside-the-writer kind of way. Creak goes the Formica. Scratch goes the pencil.

*When I stare at a computer screen I am a Zombie period I can't process thoughts period
The screen dominates period The Internet beckons games girls news farms period Wait.*

What paper was I writing? I fly when I type. Eyes CLOSED. Music LOUD. I soar over thoughts and hone in on mountain-sized topics, only to be carried off by a crescendo or pulled away by the gusts of a quote like, "This isn't an opinion, this is math!" The power chords wail and send my thoughts into the outer realms of comprehension, as knuckleheads sing about anarchy and drum sixteen-count linkages within my skull. It is a comforting feeling, looking at dark eyelids as neurons slam dance and endorphins pogo. From the depths of mental turbulence, I realize my fingers are moving. I pay closer attention to them and realize they aren't counting cymbal crashes or playing my air guitar. They are moving at an inconsistent but meaningful pace. *Oh crikies!* I think with a start. *I'm typing now? I'm writing a paper NOW?* Get away from the computer and own your paper. Claim

words and claim your thoughts as you break the monotonous bonds of the taptap- tap and become familiar again with the scratch-scratch-scratch. The goal is to liberate yourself from the shackles of autonomous writing, separate your mind from another filter to interact with a paper product. Trees, Gromit. I'm writing on trees.

The pencil: a powerhouse. The thought: up for review. The pencil is the boss; the word is the intern; and you are the management. Make the decision. Make those interns cry as you realize their superfluous uselessness in the bigger picture of your paper. You, as the paper manager, have the physical power to cross, add, chop, lengthen, cut, rearrange, and rewrite. I dare you to:

Double space paper

Print it out before it's due

Handwrite your edit.

(P.S. That's a haiku.)

Arguments focus. Length fluctuates. Ideas prosper. The power of writing begins to be harnessed by the writer. Each word is chosen for reasons unbeknownst to the reader, but obvious cake-over-broccoli decisions for the writer. Having a hard time swallowing? Ask my friend, your nemesis, the Red Pen.

Hi! I'm Red Pen, and I'm gonna fuck your world up! Ooo boy, I'm gonna paralyze your brain so hard your medulla will think you died. I'm gonna cross out every single word and make you start over. I'm gonna make you cry so hard you're gonna think your face was raining. I'm gonna STOP! This is the kind of power accessible for you to harness.

This is the sort of decision making at your disposal, and you get to physically watch a paper evolve and grow as you write it. You'll become intimate with each word, as you create e-a-c-h-l-e-t-t-e-r. Every single sentence will scream, "I chose that!" and your content will say, "Here's why, Booger!"

Writing is a conscious act. I used to write when I was loaded; now I write when I'm focused. I used to mentally blindfold myself and write papers; now my Letter Security is on red alert. The efficiency and production of my writing maximizes when I watch it closely. A friend of mine cringes when I mingle with the thought of relating my writing to a product, but when due dates and expectations are apparent, so is the mentality of write-type-read, write-type-read-think, write-type-read-think-talk-type.

So what's all this talk about empowerment, violence, acts, consciousness, and processes? It's just a seminar paper. It's just a response to an online post. It's just an email to a faculty member to get off the waitlist. Writing has been ingrained in me since I first scrawled those big D I M I T R I letters on a worksheet twenty years ago. Combine that automatic ability to write when asked with a technological device that sends your writing process into ANOTHER BRAIN, ANOTHER

MEDIUM, ANOTHER FILTER. The reason I write papers by hand is to use conscious decision making throughout a paper's creation to break that all too easy cycle of generating speedily typed fluff.

Typers, unplug and listen! I dominate the 'scape of letters, words, and paper rewriting. I am the spider. I am in your path. Which direction will you turn? Eight legs in your way, menacing, threatening the space between you and your next draft. You scurry back and forth, as all legs threaten you with a pen. Wait. Every leg is a pen.

Creak goes the Formica. Scratch goes the pencil.