Chapter 3. Drafting in the Writing Process: Composing Styles and Writing to Learn

Part I: Crossing the Threshold

Threshold Concept: *Expert academic writers engage in recursive processes to generate and refine ideas. These dynamic processes are required for the production of sophisticated, novel texts that build new human knowledge.*

While the field of writing studies has long moved beyond an idea that there is a "single" writing process for every writer, a linear writing process model still heavily influences how many emerging scholars think about writing, particularly in the absence of visible alternatives. And as we explored in Chapter 1, while experts often have tacit knowledge of the reality of recursive, messy, and cyclical writing processes, as an emerging scholar, you may have difficulty realizing that writing processes developed in coursework, which are often abridged, done on a very short time window, and supported in a linear way with deadlines, will not often work for publication. The complex writing tasks that professional academic writers must complete cannot be contained in a simple linear process or one bounded by the terms of the semester.

As we will explore in this chapter, approaching writing as a linear or limited process encourages you to think that a writer progresses through each stage in a clear way (invention ➔ drafting ➔ revising ➔ editing). However, this does not reflect expert writing processes for publication.

Table 3.1 Crossing the Threshold

Writing in Coursework Approach		Writing for Publication Approach
Linear, limited or constrained writing process or writing process that generates "new to you" knowledge.	T H R E S H O L D	Sprawling, recursive, and complex writing processes that generates "new to the field" knowledge.
Using writing as an approach to show what you know, complete a task, or engage in completing the requirements of a course.		Using self-directed writing as a way of thinking, discovering, and refining original knowledge.
Once turned in for a grade or course, work is complete, and attention is turned to the next project. This allows a linear process.		Once turned in for publication, work is far from complete and will need to be revised and revisited often multiple times (see Chapter 5). This demands a recursive and flexible process.

In my work with dissertation writers and early career faculty, I can often see the influence of this assumed linear process at play—it disrupts writers' understanding of what expert-level writing looks like, what constitutes writing activity, what peer review does, and why revision is always a reality of academic publishing. I hear emerging scholars say "my process is too messy" or "I'm embarrassed by how much I'm rewriting this" and realize that the linear process model is impacting their thinking. As this chapter and Chapter 5 will explore, expert writing processes rarely, if ever, are that linear.

In fact, John C. Bean (2011) describes the traditional linear "writing process" as a "positivistic" view that limits the ways that writers engage with real writing tasks. This is echoed by Johnson (2017) who explores a range of popular writing self-help writing for publication books. She found that these books end up reflecting more on the nuances of a single expert writer's process than on general expert processes that could be more broadly applied. Johnson notes that these self-help books often present the writing process as a linear one, one that focuses on the production of words, not the deep engagement of ideas. Expert writing processes discussed is in retrospective interview studies (Gallagher & Devoss, 2019; Söderland & Wells, 2019; Tulley, 2018; Wells & Söderland, 2017) offer another piece of the puzzle. These are useful to understand what writers think of their processes, but what previous studies have not shown is what is happening to texts as writers write them—and to that, we turn to our six expert writers and their documented writing process. Further, as we began to explore in Chapter 2, the other part of this is that most expert writers generate and refine ideas through writing, leading to the spiraling, often messy nature of expert writing processes.

Thus, we now delve into the lived experiences of how expert writers engage in complex, recursive writing processes that help them build new human knowledge and successfully write for publication. The goal of this chapter will be to help you understand our threshold concepts and to build an effective professional academic writing process over longer periods of time. What this chapter will do is demonstrate how we need to replace the concept of linearity with recursion; replacing the model of a line with that of a circle, to see how writing really functions for these writers.

Part II: Exploring Expert Writing Processes

How much time does it take to write a publication?

One of the major goals of this book is to make tacit knowledge explicit to emerging scholars, and so we now explore what real writing for publication processes look like, the time it takes, and the messiness and recursiveness that is often present. By exploring these processes, we will see our threshold concept at work. Thus, here, we begin by examining expert writing processes and what they did to produce a workable draft of their publications.

Let's first look at the big picture—how much time it took these authors to produce a near-complete draft of their article or book chapter for publication. Table 3.2 offers statistics from Google Draftback about what was recorded for each of these writing processes for the above publications.

What we can see from Table 3.2 is that while the actual on-page time of expert writers varies considerably, they all spend multiple months with their drafts, engaging in many different writing sessions over long periods of time.

Table 3.2 offers the metrics from Google Draftback for each of these publications. It is critical to understand that the above numbers only reflect the actual work of putting words on the page itself—these authors indicated in their interviews and reflected in their journals that they spent considerable time beyond putting words on the page. This included note taking, planning and invention, finding and reading articles, talking to other people about their ongoing work, thinking and planning, analyzing data, printing the draft out and re-reading, and so forth. Additionally, Table 3.2 only represents the authors' first draft to the point of initial submission—the table does not represent the time invested in formatting and preparing the manuscript for publication, communication with editors, engaging in revisions beyond the initial submission (which can take as much time as drafting).

Table 3.2 Time, Writing Sessions, Days, Changes, and Wordcount for Expert Writers

Expert Writer	Hours Logged in Google Doc(s)	Writing Sessions*	Total Time	Changes in Document(s)*	Days When Writing Took Place	Final Wordcount of Chapter
Alice (Book chapter)	21 hours 32 minutes	71	3.5 months	41,321	30	9,074
Dan (Book Chapter)	36 hours 41 minutes	146	21 months	117,516	48	12,182
Ryan (Journal + Book Chapter)	51 hours 39 minutes*	98	6 months	76,633	23	6,819
Matt (Article)	7 hours 37 minutes	24	5 months	11,511	9	4,639
Heather (Article turned Book Chapter)	17 hours 48 minutes	54	11 months	25,096	17	10,053
Stephanie (Book Chapter)	10 hours 50 minutes	28	5 months	28,527	16	3,541

Interviews with my participants and writing process journals revealed that their actual time investment, especially for more complex articles that require revision and resubmission (sometimes multiple times), is more in line with 70–100+ hours over a period of one to two years for their publications. For those working in empirical data-driven methods, this time may be further increased— to design a study, secure IRB approval, collect data, transcribe and clean data, and systematically analyze data could take a year or more on its own of regular research activity.

The story of the trajectory of these texts, explored more in depth in Chapter 5, can also help understand these numbers. Matt and Stephanie were working on similar publications that were shorter pieces that drew on their long-term experiences as experts in their field and their previous publications, and these show with less time on the actual document and more straightforward writing processes.

Meanwhile, Dan, Ryan, and Heather were engaged in deeply defining and refining their purpose for writing and had projects that all radically transformed from their original intentions; these are reflected in the longer and more involved processes and time. Ryan has the longest time invested in the process because the original article he wrote became two different articles. Dan indicated that he had to write his way into understanding from the very beginning, and this was reflected in the number of writing sessions and total changes that he produced. Alice devoted considerable time away from her draft reading, taking notes, and planning, none of which are accounted for in her total hours logged—and by the time I followed her, she already worked out the structure and organization for each of her chapters.

Table 3.3 Session Length Recorded in Google Draftback

Participant	Shortest Recorded Session	Longest Recorded Session	Session Average
Alice	48 seconds (4 changes)	1 hour 29 minutes (3,605 changes)	18 minutes 12 seconds
Dan	13 seconds (25 changes)	1 hour 31 minutes (3,725 changes)	15 minutes 0 seconds
Ryan	26 seconds (15 changes)	1 hour 46 minutes (2,360 changes)	25 minutes 24 seconds
Matt	7 seconds (17 changes)	1 hour 27 minutes (3,044 changes)	19 minutes 53 seconds
Heather	49 seconds (66 changes)	1 hour 25 minutes (2,184 changes)	19 minutes 46 seconds
Stephanie	12 seconds (28 changes)	1 hour 20 minutes (2,945)	23 minutes 14 seconds

Table 3.3 offers an overview of how long writers spent directly engaged with their text in writing sessions. What we can see from this data, confirmed by conversations in interviews and journals, is that expert writers have many layers to composing a text, and often engaging with more than just the written page—they are reading sources, finding new references, taking short breaks, engaging in in incubation and invention strategies, and then delving deeply. The longest continual writing session for these authors—where they are writing directly on their document and did not have a gap of more than ten minutes, are about an hour and a half long, and most of these sessions are when they are substantially revising and reshaping existing text.

What do these tables teach us about experts writing for publication? One of the primary lessons is that writing for publication is a sustained process and that writers engage over long periods of time, frequently engaging in smaller writing sessions and regularly re-engaging with their drafts. As you look at these tables, you might compare these expert writing processes to your own process.

The Process of Invention and Initial Draft Production: Understanding Composing Styles and Invention Strategies

Now that we have a sense of the time spent on the page and how overall writing processes unfold in terms time, we can turn to what is happening in the drafts themselves. [3] Over 50 years ago, Malcolm Cowley (1958) postulated that writers generally had two different "writing styles." Based on famous musical composers, he identified "Beethovians" as writers that dove right into their writing without much invention. "Motzartians" were writers who spent extensive amounts of time on invention, creating outlines, lists, free writing, and dedicating time to thinking. A similar concept is known in the creative writing community through the labels of "planners" and "pantsers." Planners are those who meticulously outline their characters and plots in advance while some writers fly by the seat of their "pants" and leave the story to unfold as they write (Brooks, 2011). In fact, in all three datasets I saw a similar set of divisions, which I call planning, discovery, and hybrid. I will first define the three styles and then demonstrate how these styles functioned.

Planners. Planners choose to employ extensive invention strategies to pre-plan the way they will write their texts before they sit down to compose. The result of extensive planning allows them to achieve a more linear writing process

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3.   Please note that I have provided a more complete examination of composing styles with three of my participants (Alice, Dan, and Matt) in my chapter in "Planning, Tinkering, and Writing to Learn: A Model of Planning and Discovery as Composing Styles for Professional Academic Writers" in *Research on Faculty Writing Processes in Rhetoric and Composition*, edited by Jaclyn Wells et al. (2025). This chapter offers an abbreviated and revised version of this work.

on the page—writing each section in a methodical way, following their plan. Thus, by the time they sit down to write, much of the thinking and idea development has already been done. Planners have the following composing preferences:

- *Invention:* Planners engage in extensive invention and prewriting prior to sitting down to write. These activities may include including outlines, lists, organizing sources, and thinking through ideas (discussed in Chapter 2). Planners often create extensive outlines that include a breakdown of each section (purpose, target word counts) and overall arguments so they can simply sit and write with a plan in place.
- *Purpose*: Planners use their invention strategies to clearly define their purpose for the text prior to writing.
- *Drafting:* Planners engage in efficient drafting processes, writing directly to their purpose and generating a minimal amount of extra prose. Planners may predetermine the order, length, and content of what they want to write and their drafting proceeds from that plan. Changes can happen, but they are less extensive than those employing discovery writing styles.
- *Revision:* Revision often takes place after drafting, following a more classic linear writing process approach where the text is refined after the drafting is largely completed.
- *In between writing sessions:* Planners often have extensive "planning sessions" in between actual writing where they think through or outline the next phase of the draft. Deep thinking might be done during repetitive activity like exercising, walking, or cooking. Planners may make use of notebooks, idea boards, or other organizational aids as part of their process.
- *Process and order of ideas:* The writing process as reflect on the page itself is fairly linear; section after section is written following the plan.

Discoverers. Discoverers employ writing to learn, that is, they use writing as a primary way to generate new ideas, deeply explore concepts, and substantially refine their purpose as they write. Drafting is often messy, recursive, and may generate much more prose that is later discarded or repurposed into other publications. Discoverers have the following composing preferences:

- *Invention:* Discoverers begin drafting with a flexible, often less defined plan and purpose. While they have often thought about the initial ideas behind the text, this thinking process is conceptual rather than driven directly towards producing an outline or quickly drafting. Rather, they depend on the act of writing itself to deepen and refine their purpose and write their way into understanding.
- *Purpose:* The purpose of the writing is refined and revised extensively during each composing session, although writers may wrestle with ideas in between sessions.

- *Drafting:* Discoverers frequently return to their overall goals and purpose to refine, scrap, or amend ideas during each major writing session. They may end up writing multiple articles and generating more prose than is needed for the specific task at hand. This extra prose can be very generative and later be refined into future publications. This can result in a writing process that includes multiple versions of documents, cutting and pasting large chunks of texts that may be shaped into other publications, and writing in several potential directions before settling on one direction.
- *Revision:* Discoverers often engage in drafting and early revision in the same writing session; that is, writing done in previous sessions is revisited and refined throughout while the writer also drafts new material. This is particularly true of study purpose statements, which may be revisited and revised in nearly every writing session during drafting.
- *In between writing sessions.* Discoverers report engaging with ideas and concepts in between sessions, but not always towards crafting a distinct plan for writing.
- *Process and order of ideas:* The writer often jumps around considerably on the page during drafting process, may work on small sections throughout the draft. Writing on the page is not linear or sequential.

Hybrids: Hybrid writers use a combination of planning and discovery methods in their writing. Hybrid processes are a combination of the features of above, but hybrid processes may manifest differently depending on the specific writer. Some writers have distinctive plans for certain parts of their draft while recognizing that they need to engage in discovery/writing to learn for other parts of their draft, and thus, employ both approaches. Other writers may begin with a clear and detailed plan, and then, once engaging in the writing process, quickly realize the original plan needs to be scrapped and shift into discovery. This might be because their original idea wasn't nuanced or complex enough, their thinking or data had led them in another direction, or they had had a shift in their thinking.

To see these composing styles in action, we now turn to three expert writers in the study: Alice (Planning), Dan (Discovery), and Ryan (Hybrid).

Alice: Planning Style

Alice is a senior scholar who has widely published in the field of composition studies and whose CV includes multiple books, well-cited articles, and editorships of both books and journals. In her retirement from being a full professor, she continues to work on scholarly publishing projects, including writing articles and books, and editing a book series. I followed her through composing one chapter in *Literacy Heroines: Women and the Written Word* (2021), which focuses on exploring historical female figures who sponsored or used literacy in meaningful ways.

Alice describes herself as an "orderly, organized writer" and writes three hours a day in a typical week in her retirement. Alice demonstrates a strong preference for a planning composing style and emphasizes how "the plan" defines her writing. Alice's writing plan is supported by extensive pre-research, where she examines various historical sources to craft a narrative of each literacy heroine and then uses a board in her home office to capture important information needing to be written into her drafts—thus, she's engaged in an extensive invention beyond the page. Alice further describes how "the plan" manifests in her drafting process, "I tend to jump in and start writing, because I have this plan … I have a list of issues, historical issues, it's right up there in my bulletin board." This commitment to planning results in a much more linear drafting process on the page for Alice, where she often began where she left off and wrote in a linear fashion largely from beginning to end.

What follows are writing analytic visualizations from the Google Draftback plugin that show both time (which you can read left to right) and where in the physical document the writer worked (which you can read top to bottom). I have annotated the graphics further by indicating the primary activity that the author was engaging in during writing sessions in the graphics, which was ascertained from both the video playback in Google Draftback as well as writing journals each author kept. These phases include:

- Drafting: producing new text
- Revision: making higher-order or meaning-making changes to existing text
- Copyediting: making small changes to existing text for the sake of clarity, precision, style, punctuation, or grammar.

I offer these large phases with a caveat; these three phases are not mutually exclusive; all authors weaved between these three phases in various moments in their documents and for some, the different phases were melded together (and are thus, indicated as such on the graphics). Thus, these broad labels offer a more generalized view about what they were doing in their document at various stages and can help readers better understand the graphics.

Alice's composing represented the most linear of any of the six authors in the study, in that she wrote her chapter from beginning to end then returned to revise. In exploring Figure 3.1, we see that Alice started her composing process at the top of her document, in the introduction, and worked her way methodically through the chapter. This linear composing is represented by the concentrated dots demonstrating that she stayed in the document largely where she was writing, and as she continued to compose paragraph after paragraph down the page. During her writing session on 3/21, she shifted to revision, which we can see by the dots appearing throughout the document and in several sections rather than in a linear fashion. She returned to linear writing on 3/30 to complete the conclusion. After a break, she came back and began copy editing (represented by the long, thin lines showing she is moving from the beginning and down the document stopping at many points along the way), completing copyediting on 4/9.
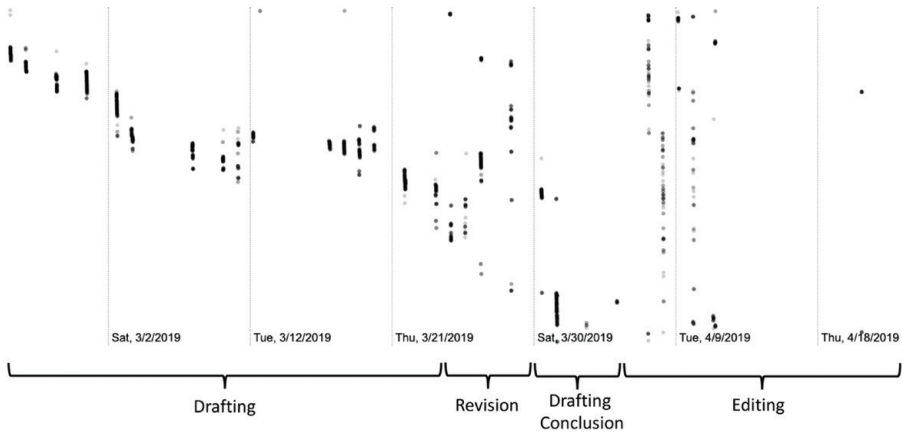
Figure 3.1 Alice's writing process.

What these solid lines represent is that Alice already has a clear plan for writing when she opens her document and she is able to enact that plan in focused writing sessions where she completes sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph. Once most of the drafting is done, she turns her attention to revision, drafting the conclusion, and editing.

Dan: Discovery Style

Dan is an associate professor of English and serves as the writing center director at a public mid-sized university. He has published many articles, book chapters, textbook materials, and also has been awarded several grants. His research focuses on writing centers, media studies, and cultural studies. I followed him in writing the introductory chapter of his book, *Naming How We Feel: Specific Affect and Emotional Labor in the Writing Center*, which focuses on embodiment and affect in writing centers.

As he introduced his project, he noted "I don't know if this is one chapter or if I'm going to have to make two separate ones. This summer's project is an IRB and really just diving into the literature. My plan is that I'm going to start prewriting a bit in the summer as well and just trying to determine if this is one or two chapters." Dan recognizes that he needs to write to discover the organization of his chapters in the book manuscript. Dan notes that his writing process for this project was similar to his previous works, where he works on multiple documents at once, including one to two main text files and additional files with discarded-for-now-text, and comments to himself. "I usually have four Google Docs open for a project where one is a clipboard, one is one section, one is another section, one is a guide that I'll constantly use." As he describes, he is composing his way into understanding through the use of these documents and initially using writing to simply think through ideas; some of this will end up in his final publication but some writing will not. When asked about his composing style, Dan firmly

indicates that he ascribes to the discovery (Beethoven) style: "Yeah, I would say the Beethoven. … some of these chapters have been—that I'm working on for this book—had been literal years in the making as I've been working on other stuff and just thinking about it … I want to get writing so at least I have some sense of where I'm going and I'll do the research and I'll do the reading as I go because it might let me see things a little differently."

Figure 3.2 offers a visual of Dan's documents compiled from his multiple drafts. In comparing Alice's and Dan's images (Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3) we can immediately see differences: Alice had clear "lines" where she was drafting ideas in successive writing sessions right down the page, while Dan's position on the document moves around much more in his draft in each writing session. For example, in Dan's writing session on 9/6, many of the dots are spread out, indicating that he is making changes in many different parts of the document as he shapes his ideas. Evident in Document 1, Dan also returns frequently to the beginning of the document where he continues to refine his purpose for the chapter. The purpose evolves as his text evolves, which is why each time he opens Document 1, he first engages in the opening of the document to revisit his purpose. Dan transitioned to Document 2 when he went on sabbatical, representing more focused writing time where he was able to complete his introduction draft.
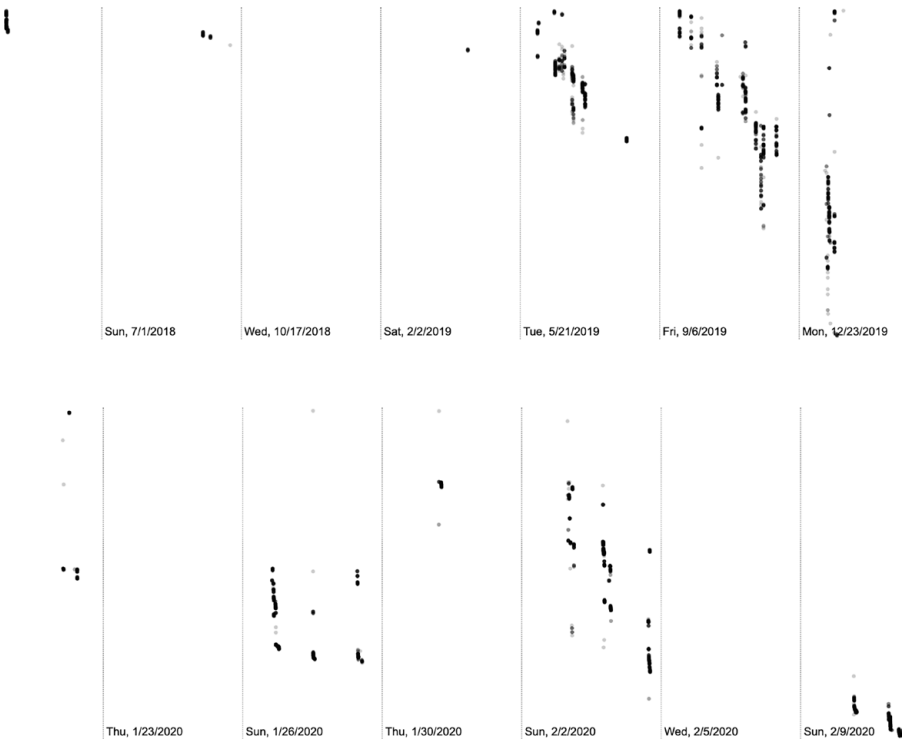

| Sun, 7/1/2018 | Wed, 10/17/2018 | Sat, 2/2/2019 | Tue, 5/21/2019 | Fri, 9/6/2019 | Mon, 12/23/2019 |

| Thu, 1/23/2020 | Sun, 1/26/2020 | Thu, 1/30/2020 | Sun, 2/2/2020 | Wed, 2/5/2020 | Sun, 2/9/2020 |

Figure 3.2 Dan's composing style.

Dan continues to generate and refine ideas in different places in the document, engaging in both drafting of new content and refining existing content. This is also when he creates the "notes" file, where he cuts 2,400 words of text out of Document 2 and, as he indicates in his interview, he saves it for other parts of his book or for later use.

Ryan: Tinkering and Hybridizing Planning and Discovery

At the time of data collection, Ryan is an associate professor of rhetoric and composition and also engages in writing program administration at a large public state institution. In addition to publishing articles, edited collections, books, and special journal issues, he regularly writes articles for several major news outlets on politics, rhetoric, and current events. His core work focuses on public rhetoric, both historical and contemporary, and given the current US political climate during the Trump era, he's focused his recent work on Nazi and fascist rhetoric, demagoguery, and fake news.

Ryan indicates that he engaged in considerable reading and thinking outside of actually sitting down to write. He says, "I do tend to sort of stew on things in my mind before I write things down. I've been collecting and reading articles for a long time." When asked about his composing style in the first interview, Ryan indicates he uses both planning and discovery: "I think it's sort of a combination. I spent extensive time planning, inventing, reflecting all of those things, and then I dive right in and have multiple drafts and messiness. It's sort of the worst parts of both." He notes that it depends, in part, on what he is composing, "I think that there are times that I have things that I very definitely planned to say and that come out really quickly and really easily." However, in the second interview, Ryan and I returned to this issue of planning and discovery after seeing the progress of his own draft. He describes how he "tinkers" on his drafts. In his journal, he shares,

> Although I've been working exclusively on writing all day, I also have to keep stepping away. I went for a short walk, came back to writing, ate lunch, came back, read Facebook, came back. In each of those moments, I've made some small realization that I needed to change something, address a significant question, etc. If I don't step back, sometimes even for just a minute or two, I get stuck. I've almost completely redone thousand words of my introduction a few times now, but the things I've removed from it are looking like they're going to become major parts of the body of the argument. I've just stashed them off in another document or below the part I'm actively working on.

One of the things that is striking about Ryan's process, as it unfolds on the page, is how he engages with the text frequently—sometimes five or ten different moments across the day, continually returning to his text and making small

changes. He describes this as a textual engagement technique, "It's better if I can just do a little bit every day and just to stay again involved and engaged." He notes he uses more discovery early in the draft, "But the first 1,000 words or the first section up to the main argument for me is always the hardest part. It's always the part that takes the most tinkering to get to. It still works through all of these sections most of the time." He spends a good deal of time revising his purpose, which is critical for Ryan's process, and which is reflected through his writing analytics, below.

Ryan's process (Figure 3.3) represents a hybrid between the planning and discovery styles, which can also be reflected in how he engages with his text over time. Like Dan, Ryan frequently engages with the opening of his text and returns to it as he refines his purpose. But like Alice, Ryan also demonstrates more linear drafting, where he starts working on one section of a text and remains focused on that section for several writing sessions. The major difference between Ryan and Alice is that Ryan "tinkers" with the earlier parts of the draft before coming to the next section and engaging in more focused composing, as he continues to refine his purpose. The revision/editing sections of Document 1 on 10/29 and Document 2 on 7/22 represent Ryan reading through the text intensively and making both revisions to bring sections of the document in line with his evolved purpose as well as editing the document for clarity, precision, formatting, and punctuation.
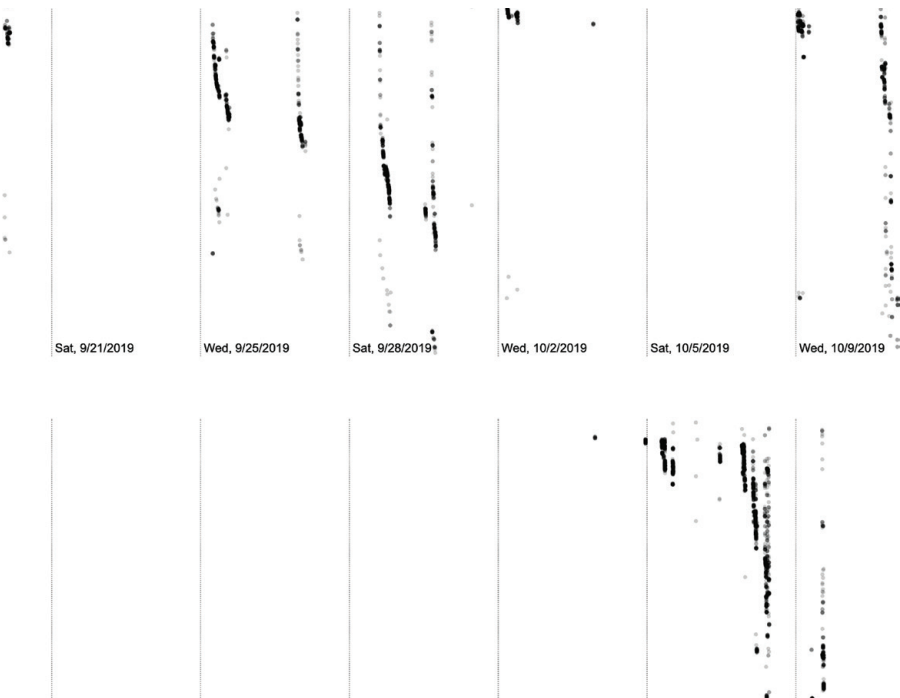

| Sat, 9/21/2019 | Wed, 9/25/2019 | Sat, 9/28/2019 | Wed, 10/2/2019 | Sat, 10/5/2019 | Wed, 10/9/2019 |

Figure 3.3 Ryan's hybrid process.

While we see major distinctions in the drafting and revision portions of the writing process for the case study participants, the editing stages of the manuscripts look similar for all three writers. Once a writer's purpose is refined and the text is mostly drafted, all writers work on textual refinement and copyediting.

One final thing to note about these composing style examples from the experts: the choice of which composing style a writer employed is a matter of personal preference and the needs of the specific writing situation. All three groups of scholars explored in this book (experts, emerging scholars, and survey respondents) indicated that they had a preferred composing style, but, indicated that they could shift depending on the specific rhetorical situation. For example, if experts were writing on a very familiar topic, planning out a draft was easier; likewise, if they were writing in an unfamiliar area, they may need to engage in more discovery. Timing may also matter: a writer may enact a plan in their draft, but then, after receiving difficult peer and editorial feedback, may have to start playing with the text directly to figure out how to proceed, shifting into discovery. Finally, genre also likely plays a role—both familiar genres, as well as genres that are more rigid, may allow for more planning. For example, the standard IMRAD research format is more prescribed; more theoretical, rhetorical, reflective or historical pieces that have a less prescribed format may require more discovery.

How Prevalent are Different Composing Styles?

As Figure 3.4 describes, writing with a discovery style or hybrid style was indicated by the strong majority of the participants (89.9%). Planners (strong or weak preference) comprised only 10.6% of the dataset. Discoverers (strong or weak preference) comprised 48.4% of the dataset. Hybrid planner/discoverers comprised 38.9% of the dataset. Thus, these statistics suggest that most writers employ discovery composing styles or use them in combination with planning, while only a small subset of writers rely more extensively on planning as a primary composing style. This suggests the large majority of those writing for publication employ writing to learn and discovery methods tied directly to our threshold concept.

After early analysis of the composing styles of the expert writers, I conducted a survey to understand the prevalence of composing styles and writing processes of those engaged in writing for publication more broadly. The survey was completed by 198 individuals associated with the field of writing studies who had indicated they were writing for publication. Participants indicated a range of publication experience (from over 25 articles published to working in their first article). The results indicate that composing style is largely a matter of personal preference, and this preference does not significantly correlate to any major demographic factors, including self-reported expertise, institutional status, teaching load, gender, ethnicity nor how many publications one has produced.
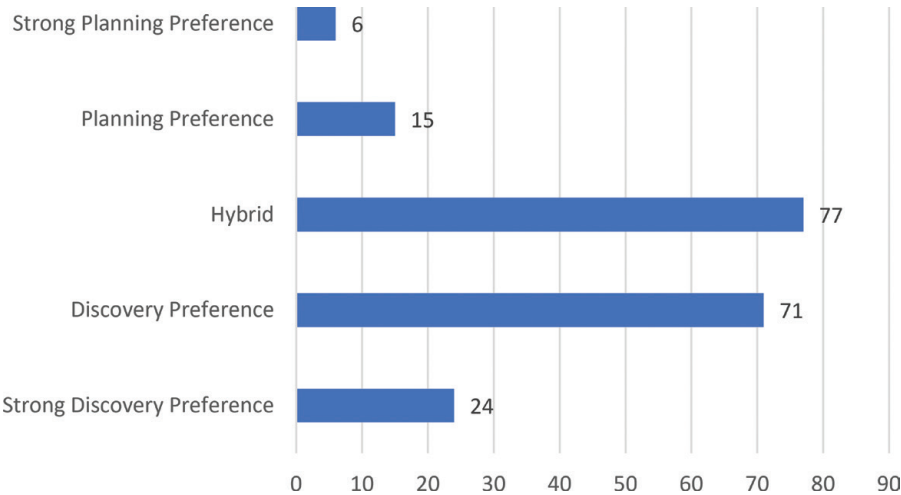
Strong Planning Preference — 6
Planning Preference — 15
Hybrid — 77
Discovery Preference — 71
Strong Discovery Preference — 24

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90)

Figure 3.4 Composing styles among survey participants.

Composing style has a weak but significant correlation with required publication (Pearson's correlation, 2 tailed, Bivariate, .142, p<0.048, N=194). That is, those 48% (95) individuals who reported that publication is required as part of their job or studies were more likely to indicate a planning preference. This may suggest that individuals with the pressure to publish may engage in planning more out of necessity in a "publish or perish" situation.

It is compelling that the choice of discovery or hybrid styles are equally as likely from emerging scholars as expert scholars. The challenge of generating novel ideas and contributions that shape a discipline and ultimately contribute to human knowledge requires messy, recursive processes and discovery is used by the majority. For most writers, the act of writing itself allows is the best vehicle for this deep engagement with ideas to take place, through what Kellogg (1994) notes as recursive processes.

Neurodiversity and Composing Styles

Concerning composing styles, I interviewed Amal, an emerging scholar who identifies as neurodiverse (identifying as dyslexic and having attention deficit disorder), having an anxiety disorder that interferes with public speaking, and who is also a multilingual writer. She notes that she prefers a planning composing style to assist her as a writer due to these factors. She says, "I'm somebody who is neurodiverse, so I have a whole set of challenges that I have to deal with in addition to everything else. One of which is my dyslexia and my dyslexia makes it much more challenging for me to read very quickly, especially research …" Amal notes that she uses outlining as a way to overcome these challenges: "I'm not somebody who can sit down at my computer and write. … So, the other thing that I do is

I outline. Without an outline, I cannot write. So, what I can do is—the only way I found myself to be able to write … I have to write by filling in the blanks, otherwise I can't do it." Thus, the choice of planning style may also be impacted by neurodiversity or second language status, although as this is emerging research, more work in this area is needed.

Part III: Core Concepts and Activities for Developing an Effective, Expert Writing Process

Now that we've delved into what the initial drafting and revision processes look like, the remainder of this chapter investigates you can develop effective, expert writing processes that allow space for growth, discovery, and the development of novel ideas.

We return here to our threshold concept that is guiding this chapter: Expert academic writers engage in recursive processes generate and refine ideas. These dynamic processes are required for the production of sophisticated, novel texts that build new human knowledge. Key takeaways that help you cross the threshold are as follows:

- Experts spend considerable time (many hours in many writing sessions over many months or years) shaping their initial drafts for publication, somewhere between 70–100 hours over a period of one to two years for some publications.
- Some publications take more or less time, depending on the familiarity that writers have with the subject, the demands of the writing task, and the nuances of the specific genre in which they are writing.
- In addition to the time spent "on the page" expert scholars spend considerable time preparing to write through reading, talking to others, thinking, planning, analyzing data, and more.
- Writers return to their drafts frequently throughout their time spent drafting, deeply engaging with their texts. This often includes exploring and refining their purpose and goals as they write.
- Expert scholars display three primary composing styles, particularly in the drafting stages: planning, discovery, and hybrid.
  - Planners choose to employ extensive invention strategies before they sit down to write (refining purpose, creating notes and outlines, lining up sources) and often compose in a more efficient, linear fashion as their thinking is already planned out.
  - Discoverers employ writing to learn, using writing as a way of generating new ideas, exploring concepts and refining their purpose. These writers often have much more messy, recursive, and unstructured writing processes.

- ◦ Hybrids may employ strategies from both planning or discovery composing styles depending on their needs of the specific writing situation or where they are in the process.
- All three composing styles are equally effective, in that all three result in successful writing for publication.
- Composing styles are a matter of personal preference rather than based on demographic or expertise-driven factors.
- Neurodiverse writers may find that certain composing styles more effectively allow them to produce writing depending on the nature of how their brains work.

As we have explored in this chapter, creating an initial draft of an article for publication requires not only deep engagement with the subject matter but a deep understanding of how you work as a writer and developing a nuanced process that works for you.

Developing Accurate Views of Expert Writing Processes: Recursive Processes vs. Linearity Mindsets

Part of the reason this chapter's threshold concept is critical to learn to publish is that due to previous educational experiences and instruction, many people often have a bias towards linear-style, planned approaches to writing. In fact, even my expert writers who were discoverers spoke negatively about their discovery processes, despite the fact that these processes led directly to multiple successful publications. For example, one expert writer spoke of their process as follows: "I usually have four Google Docs open for a project where one is a clipboard, one is one section, one is another section. … It's a nightmare." Another participant, also with a discovery composing style said, "Yeah, I'm definitely a Beethoven (Discovery) and that's a nice way to put it because I've always thought of it as just a shitty first drafter or the opposite of the perfect drafter person." As these two quotes indicate, for some of those who engage in discovery-based processes, a negative view of a "messy" process may impact their self-perception as writers. These are the same perceptions were present in the interviews with several emerging scholars—the "ideal" of a linear process actually can get in the way of a productive, discovery-based process.

I suspect this issue comes from at least two sources. First, despite extensive research and theories concerning moving "beyond" the traditional linear process approaches (Kent, 1999), much high school writing and first year composition pedagogy is still taught using the traditional linear writing process model, with many current books being used for training in teaching writing focus on linear processes (Murdic, 2013; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007). This constant exposure to linear writing processes normalizes people into believing that this is a "right" or "correct" process. You may have this same idea of writing in your mind, and holding onto that idea too firmly can spell trouble when your writing doesn't look that way.

The second consideration concerns the difference between coursework and publications (initially explored in Chapter 1). Specifically, the short deadlines required in many courses where you learn to write academically means there are simply less opportunities for you to engage in deep discovery. Participants in my study thought about the publications they were writing often for months or years before putting any words on a page, and once they started to write, they wrestled with their texts for months and/or years before coming up with a manuscript that they were willing to submit for publication. And then that process of publication took more months and/or years. Coursework is very temporarily constrained and does not allow for deep scholarly engagement and the production of new knowledge.

In fact, in teaching doctoral-level writing for publication, as well as supporting advanced graduate writing on my campus, I have frequently heard students' express frustration over the messy nature of writing dissertations and articles. They come into a writing for publication course with an expectation that their writing should look somewhat linear and proceed in an orderly fashion because that is what they have taught or experienced in coursework, and lament that there is something "wrong" with their writing when they end up using a discovery-based composing style. And yet, getting lost in the process, having writing that you later discard, or feeling like you need to rewrite large portions of your draft to achieve clarity are common experiences in writing for publication.

In fact, during my analysis and early writing of this article, I shared my emerging results about composing styles with my writing for publication students. Many students noted the relief that expert writers routinely experience discovery-based processes that still resulted in successful publication. Thus, one key takeaway of this chapter is that you can embrace messy, recursive drafting processes as these are often necessary for the production of novel human knowledge.

Table 3.4 offers a summary of writing strategies used by expert writers in both composing styles. All writers use a mix of these strategies, but you may shift these depending on the needs of the specific publication, context, and purpose. You might review this chart and see what appeals to you as you move forward with your own publications.

Table 3.4 Planning and Discovery Strategies

Planning-Oriented Strategies	Discovery-Oriented Strategies
Invention: Engage in copious amounts of invention including outlining, lists, organizing sources, and so forth. Many activities take place prior to actually beginning to draft. This may include target word counts, what the purpose of each section is, and the overall purpose for the piece.	**Invention:** Often "jump right in" to drafting with a loose plan or purpose moving forward. Will have loose conception and ideas. Discoverers literally write their way into understanding. For data-driven studies (empirical, historical, rhetorical), this may take place both during data analysis (finding the story) and during writing

Planning-Oriented Strategies	Discovery-Oriented Strategies
Outline/Plan: Often have "planning sessions" in head in between major writing sessions where they think through the next phase of the draft. These might be done during repetitive activities like exercising, walking, or cooking.	**Outline/Plan:** Returns occasionally to loose plan over and over again; loose plan becomes refined, scrapped, or amended frequently.
Drafting: Few words are "wasted" during this process due to the extensive plan. The writer largely knows what they want to say and how they want to say it.	**Drafting:** May end up writing "multiple articles" and generating much more prose than necessary. This can result in multiple versions, cutting and pasting large chunks of texts that may be shaped into other publications, and writing in several potential directions before settling on a single direction.
Process and Order of Ideas: Writing process on the page is somewhat linear, working through each section in a linear faction; sections are written in some pre-determined order during drafting.	**Process:** Writer often jumps around considerably during drafting process, may work on small sections throughout the draft. Writing on the page is not linear.

Developing Recursive Dynamic Writing Processes and Embracing Writing to Learn

Writing to learn is a very powerful tool for the production of unique human knowledge, and it has a long history within composition, and unlike many other early theories of composition, it has had tremendous staying power because it appears to be a consistent truth across writers and contexts (Emig, 1977; Fulwiler & Young, 1982; Herrington, 1981; Langer & Applebee, 1987). Recent studies continue to support writing to learn as an empirically validated construct, including writing's capacity to aid long-term memory (Silva & Limongi, 2019) and writing's ability to support learning content in a variety of fields (Henry & Baker, 2015; Klein & Unsworth, 2013). Further, these findings are supported by Kellogg's (1994) work, which indicates that experts use recursive processes, including a combination of planning (a range of invention strategies), translating (shifting ideas from the mind into prose), and reviewing (re-reading the text and making revisions and edits). Thus, expert academic writers may cycle through rounds of prewriting, drafting, and revision as they engage with their text. Further, Kellogg (1994) notes that planning, translating, and reviewing can work together to help expert writers develop more sophisticated ideas and texts. As we can see from this body of work, writing recursively and deepening purpose through writing to learn support expert writers' processes. This leads us to our second threshold concept, "Expert writers use writing to learn to generate and refine ideas within their texts."

Writing to learn is a necessary condition for you to write successfully for publication. Almost 90 percent of survey respondents indicated that they use

discovery or a hybrid of planning and discovery, and this messy, recursive process appears to be the dominant process for the production of novel information and new ideas. That is, to be successful, you need to develop a dynamic process that is recursive, responsive to feedback and that allows for the time, thinking, and deep engagement with the subject matter capable of producing novel scholarship.

Thus, this data presents a set of clear insights for you both in terms of what effective writing for publication processes look like, normalizing the processes that are invisible in end publications, but also offers a series of strategies and suggestions for how novice scholars can adapt their processes from coursework and dissertation writing to publication. Given this data, the following are suggestions for you to consider when exploring their own writing processes:

- *Embracing recursion and revision by recognizing that new human knowledge takes time to produce, and you cannot get it right on the first try.* As demonstrated in this chapter, even expert scholars do not get their ideas and thinking right on the first try. Create space and trust your own process.
- *Cultivating key habits of mind that support discovery-based and hybrid processes.* These habits of mind (*Framework for Success in Post-Secondary Writing*, 2011) include **flexibility** that allows writers to abandon previous plans in favor of novel directions and develop deeper purpose, focus, and goals through drafting. **Openness** to explore ideas originally not considered as part of a plan. And finally, **creativity**, which is critical to producin g and cultivating novel ideas (see Chapter 2). Central to these approaches is recognizing that when we enter new subject areas or write in new genres, we might have to write our way into understanding.
- *Understanding the ongoing and recursive nature of invention.* Invention for expert writers doesn't fit the typical linear process (Chapter 2). Rather, invention is something that writers are always engaging in—as they plan, as they discover, as they refine their purpose and goals. Invention strategies may be internalized through a planning style or manifest on the page, through a discovery style.
- *Recognizing the value of purpose-driven drafting and recursive writing.* Key to both planning and discovery is defining and refining one's purpose for writing. As the writers' purpose was defined and refined, this shifted drafts, goals, and approaches. Not all writing may end up in the text, and that's ok.
- *Valuing the writing of extra prose.* Expert writers may write many more volumes of prose that end up not being part of their final published products. It is useful not to see this extra prose as "wasted" but rather material that can be reshaped into future publications and projects.

Activity 3.1: Mapping Your Own Writing Process

As an initial activity to work through the material in Part II of this chapter, start by taking time to map out your writing process for the last "high stakes" project

that you worked on (an article, course paper, dissertation chapter, etc.). You can visually map it out on paper or digitally using a mind-mapping or other program. Reflect on your map:

- What do you learn from mapping your process in this way?

After you've read through the rest of the material in this chapter and explored the other activities, return to your map. Consider:

- How does your process support your writing and drafting?
- What changes can you make to facilitate a more effective process for future writing for publication or other high stakes writing tasks?
- How does the material in this chapter help you identify what changes may be necessary?

Activity 3.2: Comparing Your Writing Processes

Consider the last academic paper you wrote (or use the material in Activity 3.1 above). Was it for a class? Conference? For work with your advisor? Now consider the writing processes explored in this chapter, specifically in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. Given that, make a list of your expectations for your current process vs. a process necessary for writing for publication. What might you need to change to make that happen?

Activity 3.3: Composing Style Quiz

Think about what is "typical" for you when you are engaged in writing any higher-stakes, longer-term writing like a major course paper, article, grant, dissertation chapter. Answer these questions based on those writing experiences to discover your composing style.

Question	
1. I am able to create an outline before I write and largely stick to the outline as I compose.	Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4
2. I plan my writing extensively in my head in between writing sessions.	Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4
3. Even if I go in with a writing plan, my plan often changes considerably as I write.	Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4
4. I find myself moving between multiple documents and drafts and multiple sections of my document during writing sessions.	Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4
5. When I am drafting, I typically start writing at the beginning (introduction) and continue writing in a linear fashion to the end (conclusion).	Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4

6. I find that I have to "write" my way into under-standing, where my purpose or thesis may shift as I write.

Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree

    1 2 3 4

7. My finished works often are fairly similar to what I planned or intended when I started.

Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree

    1 2 3 4

8. The act of writing itself allows me to consider-ably deepen or change my understanding of my purpose.

Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree

    1 2 3 4

Scoring:
- Question 1, 2, 5, 7: A strongly agree or agree indicates that you have a **planning composing style.**
- Questions 3, 4, 6, 8. A strongly agree or agree indicates that you have a **discovery composing style**.
- If you strongly agree/agree to multiple planning and discovery questions, you have a **hybrid style.**

After you take the composing style quiz, consider the following questions (in small groups or through individual reflection):

1. What is your composing style? Did your result surprise you in any way?
2. How might you best support that composing style?
3. How can you integrate the knowledge of composing styles into your writing process for publication and other high-stakes long term writing in the future?
4. Based on that list, what changes will you need to make to your writing process to be successful?
5. How might these realities of publishing change your own timeline, inter-action with your subject, etc.?
6. How have you been influenced by the "linearity" mindset of writing (that is, thinking that writing processes are short, effective, and follow the gen-eral invention à drafting à revision à editing model)?

Activity 3.4: Addressing Perfectionism and Embracing Shitty First Drafts

A challenge that emerging scholars noted was the need to put perfect words on the page each time. That is, rather than recognizing that they can always revise a draft later, some writers indicated that they labor over each word as they write it initially, often spending precious minutes or hours perfecting small sections of text. This slows them down and creates considerable frustration. This also can be a problem for writing for publication specifically, as your first draft is never your last draft, and all the time spent crafting perfect sentences could be better spent

in revision later. If you find yourself in this situation, you might consider any of the following strategies useful:

- Embrace the "shitty first draft." Writer Ann Lamott (1994) has a famous essay often used to teach college-level writing in which she describes the "shitty first draft." She notes that the first draft is where you "let it all pour out … knowing that no one is going to see it and that you can shape it later" (p. 234). Allow yourself to write a shitty first draft rather than a perfect one.
- Use strategies to minimize perfectionism. One such strategy is to turn off your monitor and continue to type, or to close your eyes and type your words out and not look at the screen.
- Another strategy is to set word count goals (as many emerging scholars do, see Chapter 8) and force yourself to continue to meet those goals.
- Reflect on where your perfectionism may be rooted. Did you have a teacher in middle school that demanded grammatical perfection? Recognizing that we may have strong previous experiences that drive our behavior but no longer serve us can be a productive approach to getting past perfectionism.