

## TIME-EFFECTIVE WRITING STRATEGIES

Some students find that engaging in any kind of creative activity launches an internal "critic." This is the little voice, sometimes barely noticeable, sometimes roaring, that critiques, evaluates and may even deride every stroke of the drawing pencil or every word you write. You've seen cartoons where the writer struggles to put a few words down on a sheet of paper, then furiously crumples it up, tossing the imperfect effort into an ever growing pile on the floor behind him. In extreme cases, an over-active inner editor can cause writer's (or artist's) block, censoring the creative process into paralysis.



Many students don't realize that most forms of writing should involve a two-part process. The first is the creative, brainstorming, idea-developing phase, in which ideas are generated and disparate concepts synthesized into new forms, while thinking gradually becomes clearer and more organized. In this stage, in which ideas "cook" or "stew," the goal should be simply getting ideas generated and out on paper. As with brainstorming, a lot of what comes out will be garbage, but the garbage may lead to gold, or at least better ideas.

In the brainstorming stage there should be no concern for grammar, spelling, punctuation or other writing conventions. Organization can be loose and style can be sloppy. At this point it doesn't matter. The writer must give him/herself permission to put all these concerns aside, concerns which can choke the creative process.

Then, after notes or a very rough draft has been completed, the second stage begins. The writer's role changes from creative idea-generator to editor. The work is critiqued and revised, edited and polished, reviewed and rewritten. As the paper takes shape, style and grammar now become important to clarify ideas, transitions, and overall structure.

Separating the processes of idea generating and editing is a key part of writing effectively, and of using effectively the time you have available for writing. But there are no magic shortcuts here. Too many students end up handing in what amounts to their first draft because they have no time to revise or edit their writing. As a result of procrastinating or poor time planning, some students never work to their full potential, never push the limits of their talents and abilities, never really do their best work, and never get the marks - or the satisfaction - that they could. You can ensure yourself at least the chance to do your best work by planning the time required for major assignments carefully and starting early.