

WRITING FOR BEGINNERS A COMPLETE GUIDE TO BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE WRITER

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Abstract

The ability to write well and effectively is an important skill to master, especially for beginning writers. This paper aims to guide budding writers to become effective writers. It will discuss the problems faced by a novice writer and tips to become an effective writer. The method used is a qualitative literature study approach (library research). The result is that qualitative research is carried out with a research design whose findings are not obtained through statistical procedures or in the form of counts but aim to reveal phenomena in a holistic-contextual manner by collecting data from natural settings and utilizing researchers as key instruments. Data collection is done by finding sources and reconstructing from various sources, such as books, journals, articles, and existing research. This qualitative research design can be used as a method in research because the design is described in a comprehensive manner that is easy for researchers and academics to understand.

Keywords: problems in writing, effective writing, guide in writing

INTRODUCTION

Writing is the activity of pouring ideas or feelings in the form of writing that is arranged systematically. According to Suparno and Muhammad Yunus (2007), writing can be defined as an activity of delivering messages (communication) using written language as a tool or medium. Another opinion, Writing is a language skill that a person uses to communicate indirectly or without face-to-face by using written media

as a medium (Oktaviani, 2022). Writing is actually not something foreign to us. Articles, books, and stories are examples of forms and products of written language that are familiar to us. But unfortunately, many beginning writers have problems when writing because writing is not just copying words and sentences but also developing and expressing thoughts in an organized writing structure.

Problems in writing

According to Kaswan Darmadi (1996: 11), it is further explained that there are many problems faced by novice writers. In general, it can be said that there are four kinds of problems, namely

- (1) fear of starting
- (2) not knowing when to start
- (3) organization,
- (4) language, which can be described as follows:

Fear of starting

Writing or composing is like riding a bicycle. We can't figure out how to sit calmly on two wheels without rolling over. Yet, it is not easy to maintain balance. This has two implications. First, the job of writing can be considered easy. This assumption, of course, only applies to people who have written often or to professional writers. The second assumption is that the job of writing can be likened to an uphill task. This assumption relates in general to ordinary people, including students or students unaccustomed to writing.

There exist many reasons as to why we get afraid to write. One of them is because of the high demand from lecturers. Generally, lecturers demand that students write clearly and coherently, economically even with complicated language style and high vocabulary.

It may also be because we do not have a representative writing model that can be used as a measure to assess the results of our writing. Although interesting articles can be read in various media, they cannot serve as models because they are a type of popular writing. Yet such writings can be used as a model for higher education writing assignments because the writers have mastered writing techniques well.

Not knowing where to start

Most of the students who have never written have one common problem: it is not known when and how to start writing. This type of problem appears in various variants of complaints about what topic to work on, when to start working on it, how to work

on it, the demands of the mentor that are felt to be too high-and a number of other complaints.

It will resolve the problem of what topics to work on with much reading of books or research results in concert with their fields. At least a number of advantages would then be derived, such as knowledge of the problems at issue, problems that are vital and pressing, needing immediate solution; the problems researched or not researched.

So, if this kind of understanding is enhanced and the level of observation of the surrounding phenomena is whetted, then selecting or deciding on a topic will definitely be resolved sooner or later. We shall be able to decide on a topic quite easily once we know what all references can be used.

Laziness can be killed to solve how to start writing. Immediately, we must make a draft that could guide us in the development of our writing. Furthermore, we must decide to begin writing forthwith once the draft or outline is completed. We should, as beginning writers, imitate professional writers who never waste any time delaying a write-up and make full use of time to its fullest potential.

Organizing Problems

Organization of ideas is key in writing. A writing which is well-organized will be followed easily by the reader. If a writing is followed, it means that the reader captures the intended meaning by the author.

This is well understood by professional writers who know how grave this organizational issue is. Of course, the reason for that is because the organization of ideas is a reflection of the mind of the writer. For professional writers, already having very high flying hours, this becomes an insignificant problem of organizing ideas.

This is the problem of most beginners in their writing process; some of them even consider this problem as the main problem. It is, therefore, important that novice writers learn from professional writers by reading their writings as much as possible. In reading good writing, experience is gained on patterns of organizing ideas they usually use.

Language Problems

Almost every author is bound to encounter language problems. This is because the usage of language changes from time to time. The terms, idioms, and even the words change from day to day.

All this is generally known by professional writers. They generally know how to cope out in the field of language; they always try to keep up with the language.

Those who write at the novice level cannot even know the essence of such changes that go on in a language. Besides, novice writers generally have a trivial view of language. For them, language is only a medium for communicating with others, not the fundamental carrier for thinking. Further, many novice writers fail to master the language well. This is evidenced from the various complaints raised by supervisors upon this matter. Generally, such complaints are on making of strange sentences, sentences which are not connected, paragraph arrangements at will, and logics which do not fit (Soenardji, 1991).

By considering language as a medium for thinking, we will definitely not slight language, with better awareness in learning it. And being aware that the purpose of learning the language is to express thoughts, caution in the use of language would be easier to have.

Awareness of language use is a construction of strange sentences, sentences that do not connect and the like. It is not just an error in language but a failure in reasoning as well. Logical reasoning takes the shape of appropriate language use. Instead, poor use of language reflects, besides, irrational reasoning. Justification of such language errors must, therefore always be related to justification on logical grounds.

Tips on how to be an effective writer

According to Jeff Goins (2022), Here are five tips for how to be an effective writer, namely (1) Read, (2) Brush up on grammar, (3) Pre-write, (4) Write, (5) Re-write, which be described as follows:

Read

A lot. My mom used to read the dictionary to me on long car rides, quizzing me on random words. While I don't think this is necessary, it helped me win the 6th Grade Spelling Bee. Words are your main tool in writing and if you don't build your vocabulary through reading, you greatly limit how you can express yourself.

Brush up on grammar

Get a good sense of general English grammar, but let me warn you – once you understand the “rules” better, you realize how flexible many of them are. Nevertheless, you must learn the principles behind them before you just poetically bend all of them.

Pre-Write

Pre-write Your ideas are to brainstorm, make rough outline, make lists, do that silly spider-thing you learned in Grade School (it is where you join all the ideas inside the bubbles to the main bubble which looks like a spider’s body). Do this at all costs and it may take you some time to get it right but it will be worth the effort. Then create some structure with a primary idea of what you would like to have achieved or where you would like to go. Structure gives context within which you can create without losing yourself in unproductive detours.

Write

I do this every day, well, that’s a lie. What I do is try to post a blog every day, which means that even when I’m not writing something every day, I’m pretty much constantly revising and editing for my blog. That keeps me sharp, even when I’m not drafting brand-new stuff.

Re-write

Once you write something, it becomes important to go through it and even get it reviewed by someone you trust. Now, comes the part squarely intended to the author’s inhibits which I find it very difficult. If it doesn’t work, just scrub it out. You do not, of course, abandon the general idea or structure of what you have written (if that stinks too, well maybe) but this prevents you from the temptation of trying to save a line or two simply because it sounds nice. This rough draft is not going to work (and should not work) Fortunately, use this for supercharging what you had already written. That means actually writing the whole thing out once again and changing how a work piece looks and feels. This point could possibly be the most crucial in the writing having process – letting things go.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method in this article uses a qualitative approach to literature study (library research). This is a method of collecting data by understanding and studying theories

from various literatures related to the research. According to Sugiyono (2012, p. 9), "qualitative research methods are research methods based on the philosophy of postpositivism, used to research on natural object conditions (as opposed to experiments) where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are triangulated (combined), data analysis is inductive/qualitative, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization". Then Moleong (2007, p.6) stated that the purpose of carrying out research using qualitative research is as follows:

"Qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, etc. holistically and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing various methods. Holistically and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing various scientific methods". Based on the above opinion, it can be concluded that qualitative research is research conducted to find out and even understand events that occur both living and inanimate objects by describing in the form of words and language in a certain context. The data is collected by finding sources and constructing them from various sources, such as books, journals, articles, and research that has already been done. In analyzing the data, the researcher will use content analysis techniques to identify key themes that emerge from the literature. Library materials obtained from various references are analyzed critically and must be in-depth in order to support propositions and ideas. This aims to find patterns, relationships, and contradictions in previous research, as well as to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic under study. The advantage of this method is its ability to access existing knowledge and integrate it into the current research context. As such, this research not only contributes to academic understanding, but can also provide practical recommendations for stakeholders. The qualitative approach method through literature study also has several advantages, including

Cost-effective: Literature studies tend to be cheaper compared to field research that requires costs for data collection.

Time efficient: Researchers can access a lot of information in a short period of time, without the need to conduct primary data collection.

Flexibility: Researchers can explore various sources, such as books, journals, articles and other documents, according to the needs of the research.

Identify Trends and Issues: Through literature analysis, researchers can identify current trends and important issues in a particular field.

In-depth Analysis: Qualitative approaches allow for in-depth analysis of data, helping researchers understand the context and meaning behind the information found.

Finding Research Gaps: Can help in identifying gaps in existing research and formulating relevant research questions. Through this qualitative approach, it is hoped that the research can provide in-depth and comprehensive insights, as well as highlight the social implications of existing findings in the literature.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Writing is, for most of us, a bit like riding a bicycle: threatening at the beginning. When one tries to balance on two wheels without moving, falling seems inevitable. The same thing happens with writing, especially for inexperienced writers: getting started is often the toughest part. For seasoned writers, writing is an easy, straightforward activity; but for those who haven't written much yet, all writing seems a clumsy, painstaking ordeal up the mountain. There are many reasons for this fear of beginning and learning to know these reasons is the first way towards overcoming them.

Some of the causes of this fear include high expectations by lecturers or mentors for clear writings, coherent writings, using high-level vocabulary, and sustaining an advanced level of language. This is too much for a student or a novice writer, of whom success may be demanded, though they are not so sure. Meeting such demands may immobilize them and make them even incapable of having the first words written.

Another factor is that, for the most part, beginning writers do not have a concrete model or reference on which to base their writing. While many articles and essays are available within popular media, those cannot necessarily serve as templates for academic writing. Popular articles are designed to be engaging and accessible, which tends to lead to writing that is quite different from what is called for in academia. Students therefore lack an appropriate model upon which they might base their own writing. This knowledge gap adds to the element of fear, too, that they might not be able to satisfy their targeted audience: either a lecturer or a general reader.

One of the major issues that beginners also face is not knowing how or where to start. Students with little or no experience in writing often find themselves stuck at the very beginning. They may be hindered in selecting a topic, determining when to begin, or deciding how to organize thoughts. Such tendencies are normally the root cause of procrastination, which, in turn, makes the task of commencing all the more daunting. These types of indecisions do not involve no ideas; rather, they reflect deep-seated uncertainties about one's competence and the eventual failure.

Among these, one of the most effective remedies to deal with such a problem is extensive reading and research. Novice writers learn from the debates, discussions, gaps in research, and other ways of looking at critical issues in their field by being submerged in literature related to their line of study. Such familiarity with the subject matter aids them in the selection of topics that are interesting and significant. Reading introduces them to a wide variety of writing styles, thus helping internalize good

writing mechanics. A better understanding of their subject matter and confidence in knowledge surmount the inertia that prevents them from beginning.

Another effective way to solve the problem of getting started is making a draft or outline. This builds a rough outline, setting down thoughts and giving structure to ideas before actually writing. It helps in setting the direction and thereby takes away a great percentage of tension that one would feel if he had to begin writing right on. The trick is to begin with whatever form of expression comes-your outline, a list in bullet points, or even pieces of disjointed sentences. The objective was placing thoughts on paper, however imperfect, and refining them bit by bit. The writers shouldn't perfect each sentence they write. Instead, they could get down the ideas, knowing that they can then edit and revise later.

Once the first draft is written, momentum needs to be established. The problem most prevalent in novices is procrastination, where they fail to maintain consistency in their writing schedule. Professional writers know that requires much discipline; hence, they make it a point to write even on those days when the muse has left them. Amateurs can learn from them and thus take out a certain time of every day to write. Such regular habits will not only improve their writing skills but also save them from the nervousness caused by thinking of 'a new beginning' each time they sit down to write. Other significant concern of the beginning authors is the structure of the ideas. A decently structured text will allow the readers to follow the writer's argument with ease; what he or she will say will be comprehensible and accessible for the readers. The professional writers carry this process instinctively due to the long practice and good acquaintance with the metier. They have worked out that the organization of ideas represents the thought process, and that a disorganized piece of writing will express confusion or unclear thinking. To inexperienced people, however, organizing ideas in a logical and coherent way can be intimidating.

Novice writers will benefit in their endeavor to improve by reading extensively. By observing how experienced writers organize their thoughts and present their argument, beginners learn to recognize patterns and techniques that recur in a good piece of writing. All these models help analyze how ideas may be presented and brought together to facilitate the organizing of one's thoughts.

Apart from the obstacles of methodology mentioned above, there are many novice writers for whom the use of language presents the greatest challenge. The conventions of language assume that a writer is using it in ways which will get their usually complex ideas across and communicate arguments, etc., effectively to reach their conclusions. All the while, language is in continuous flux, as words, idioms, and grammatical structures are dropping out and others gaining use along with time. Of course, professional writers are more aware of such changes and try to keep current. Indeed, beginners do not realize them at all and find themselves struggling for words,

struggling to put thoughts into words that will at least basically express what they need to say.

Besides, novice writers often believe that language is used merely to communicate, but not to think by means of it. All this can lead to different language problems in the form of awkward sentence construction, poor paragraph links, and logical fallacies. Approaching language, on the other hand, as part of writing will help the student to overcome all such drawbacks. Language regarded as a medium of thought, and not of communication, implies sensitivities being cultivated and evokes Words and phrases of reflection.

Reading is generally deemed one of the most effective ways to create a broad base in language. Really, through exposure to various styles and genres, a writer expands their vocabulary and develops an intuitive sense of how language functions. Apart from reading, it is also relevant for the beginners to strengthen their grasp of grammar. Proper grammatical knowledge builds up the skeleton on which meaningful sentences that make sense can be framed. Though there might be some exceptions to certain grammar rules since these are flexible and contextual, it would be good to master these first before breaking those creatively.

This will also be aided by techniques such as brainstorming, outlining, and the use of mind maps, which allow writers to plan their thoughts in great detail before actually writing. This lessens the cognitive load during the actual writing process. Similarly, advance planning with the clear structure should allow writers to pay greater attention to language use and expression, rather than struggling for words in the course of writing.

Writing is actually an iterative process of drafts and revision. A first draft should be regarded as merely a beginning rather than some sort of an end. In this first draft, the author has the facility to put down his ideas on paper without much concern for his language or grammar. Further revision will be refining your content, coherence, and language. Equally challenging in this phase is that one needs to get rid of sentences or paragraphs that do not work. Most writers, particularly the not-so-seasoned ones, are attached to certain catchphrases and expressions and would not want to get rid of them even if these disturb the general flow. Yet, that critical editing of one's work is a vital ingredient in coming up with a refined piece of writing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Perhaps for some people, the greatest hurdle to writing is how to begin. Many times, such fear arises from sources like high expectations, uncertainty about a model, or even not knowing where to begin. And these cannot be resolved by any one strategy but rather through extensive reading and drafting and continued creating on a regular basis. In addition, organizational issues and language use also have to be held in consideration in order to come up with good writing. It is with practice and an

iterative process in writing that the novice will develop confidence and grow in their skills to turn them into effective writers, thereby transforming them and turning the anxiety of a writing experience into a creative, rewarding, and fulfilling one.

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