WRITING AS AN ITERATIVE PROCESS

I used to think that I had to complete a perfect paper when I first sat down to write. That mindset made me defensive and unresponsive to critical feedback because I thought it didn’t need any changes since it was already perfect. This was detrimental to my improvement as a writer because incorporating feedback is crucial to making sure the audience understands what I am saying. Now, I embrace an iterative writing process. Each iteration is a complete draft that improves the previous draft.

The rough draft is all about the major structure of the paper and the supporting points for my thesis. If I have to stop here for any reason, my ideas are intact and documented with citations for future reference:

1. Gather research
2. Create working thesis
3. Develop high-level outline of argument

4. Get feedback
5. Revise thesis
6. Deeper review of research
7. Add bullet points to outline from research (with citations)

8. Get feedback

Draft one converts the outline into prose. The paper is not excellent, but it is logically sound and human-readable:

9. Convert top levels of outline into descriptive headings
10. Create topic sentences from lower level outline and paragraphs from bullet points
11. Write conclusion
12. Revise thesis
13. Write introduction

14. Get feedback

Draft two focuses on flow which facilitates the connection of ideas:

15. Include introduction and conclusion connecting to thesis for each major section
16. Add transitions between paragraphs
17. Write abstract

18. Get feedback

**Draft three** applies polish:

19. Read aloud for grammatical mistakes
20. Check spelling
21. Apply formal style guidelines

This is my process (there are many others), and I often stop here. I can also keep going: get feedback, make changes, repeat. The advantages of this iterative process are (1) priceless feedback and (2) a complete, if not pretty, representation of ideas after each iteration.

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