

# 10 Steps to Excellent Writing

## *A Process to Produce Your Best Possible Work*

Here at Get It Done, our clients often tell us:

"I want my writing to be really good. Actually, not just good. I want it to be *excellent*."

We ask:

"What does 'excellent' mean to you?"

Most say:

"It means that my writing is clear and powerful. It makes a difference in my reader's life. It makes a strong impression. It's something they remember for a long time. That's what 'excellent' means to me."

If that's your goal, here's the writing process we recommend:

# 10 Steps to Excellent Writing

- ✧ Give yourself an assignment
- ✧ Complete the assignment as best you can: rough draft
- ✧ Do your first review: basic check
- ✧ Do your second review: simplify
- ✧ Do your third review: originality
- ✧ Do your fourth review: explanation
- ✧ Do your fifth review: fact check and ethics
- ✧ Do your sixth review: typos and little things
- ✧ Do your seventh and final review: “hut” check
- ✧ Completion: share your work

Follow these steps to create something truly excellent — a completed piece you’re proud to share. Your personal best.

Read on to see instructions for each step.

# Give yourself an assignment

Don't sit down at your computer and stare at a blank screen. Instead, give yourself a specific assignment to complete.

Examples of your assignment could be:

- ✧ Write a true story (around 1,000 words) about the bravest thing you ever did. What happened and what did you learn from that experience?
- ✧ Write a letter (200 words) to anyone who just lost a pet and is grieving deeply. Provide comfort to your reader. Start with this phrase, "More than anything else, here's what I want you to know..."
- ✧ Set a timer for 30 minutes and write advice on how to create a long-lasting relationship. But write from the perspective of an ancient redwood tree. A tree that has seen thousands of couples come and go through the years. "If this tree could talk..."
- ✧ Write a list of things to do before you ask your boss for a raise. What are some ways to prepare for that conversation and to walk in with confidence? Lay out a plan for your reader, but limit yourself to 5 pages.

When you have a clear assignment, it's a lot easier to dive in and start writing.

# Complete the assignment as best you can: rough draft

Close your office door. Silence your phone. Log out of your inbox. Clear distractions. Play some music. Start writing.

Fulfill the assignment to the best of your abilities. Avoid the temptation to add unnecessary complexity to your project. Keep it simple.

## Do your first review: basic check

Read your piece. Ask, "On a basic level, did I complete the assignment—or not?"

Did you write a true story about a brave deed? Did you write a letter to a grieving pet owner? Or did you veer off in a completely different direction?

If you veered away and ended up with something unexpectedly amazing (better than whatever assignment you originally planned), great! Keep it.

If you veered away and ended up with a mess, go back to the original assignment and try again.

Once you've got a rough draft you feel content with, move onto the next step.

# Do your second review: simplify

Read your work again. Ask, "How could I make this simpler?"

Also, ask:

- ✧ "What's the main message I want to leave echoing in my reader's mind?"
- ✧ "Is that message coming through clearly?"
- ✧ "If not, what could I subtract to make this message very evident and obvious?"
- ✧ "Is there anything in this piece that feels 'nice to know' but not absolutely crucial?"
- ✧ "Is there a part of this piece that feels cluttered? What could I subtract?"

Make adjustments. Simplicity is a gift to your future reader. Less is more.

# Do your third review: originality

Ask, "Did I include something in this piece that is uniquely 'me'? Something that could only come from my brain and my life?"

This could be:

- ✧ A true story that happened to you
- ✧ A lesson you learned from your grandparent, mentor, friend, or colleague
- ✧ A funny anecdote plucked from your life or career
- ✧ A particular style of humor that's uniquely yours
- ✧ A process, system, or framework you invented
- ✧ A particular style that's distinctive to you (such as, you add a "PS" to every piece you write, you love quoting your Filipino grandma in your writing and dropping in her gems of wisdom, you're from South Carolina and use distinctively Southern sayings and slang in your work, or you say the things that most people never talk about, etc.)

Make adjustments. Make sure your unique fingerprint is visible in this piece.

Goal: a reader could rummage through a pile of 10 pieces with no names attached, and they'd know which one was written by you, because it's got that distinctive voice that's yours and yours alone.

"Oh, *this one* was written by Yuliya. For sure. This is definitely her voice."

"*This* piece must be written by Dave. It totally sounds like him."

## Do your fourth review: explanation

Consider your future reader. Who is this person? Are they a young reader or grown-up? A beginner in your field or more advanced? From your city or not?

Check your piece for acronyms, jargon, words, or terms that your future reader may not know. Add explanations so they can grasp what you're saying and follow along.

For instance, instead of saying, "When I got into BU, I was shocked." Say, "When I got into Boston University, I was shocked."

Instead of, "Winning a Queerty changed my life," say, "Winning a Queerty Award—which is like an Emmy Award, except specifically for LGBTQIA+ folks—changed my life."

## Do your fifth review: fact check and ethics

Read it again. Ask, "Is this accurate? Are my facts iron-tight?"

- ✧ If you make a big claim, do you provide evidence (and a source) to back it up?
- ✧ If you include names, dates, locations, historical details, or gen-

ders, are all those details correct? Is everything spelled right?

- ✧ If you include a statement from someone else, did you get their permission to use it?

Double-check to make sure your work is accurate and ethical. Make fixes as needed.

## Do your sixth review: typos and little things

Check and see: "Are there any tiny things I missed?"

Check for:

- ✧ Missing words: "My puppy's shiny brown eyes looked up me" (missing "at")
- ✧ Duplicate words: "My puppy's shiny brown eyes looked up at at me" (double "at")
- ✧ Any other typos or issues you catch

If possible, ask someone else to do this step for you, because it's really easy to miss your own typos.



# Do your seventh and final review: “hut” check

Check in with your “hut” (heart + gut). Ask your hut, “Is there *anything else* I could do to make this piece excellent? Anything else I ought to add, subtract, change, or do?”

Your hut might say:

- ✧ “Nope. No further changes. This is excellent. You’re done. Great work.”

Or your hut might say:

- ✧ “Bring more honesty into this piece. How did you *really* feel when you didn’t get that promotion? Let those angry, hurt, disappointed emotions come through in the story. Don’t sugarcoat it.”

Or your hut might say:

- ✧ “Add something to convince the reader to take action. Add a startling statistic to prove to them: *you really need to do this.*”

Or your hut might say:

- ✧ “Sleep on it, then read this again tomorrow morning—one last time—with fresh eyes.”

Ask your hut for guidance. Your hut is very smart.

By listening to your hut, you're learning how to trust your creative instincts—and this makes you a more confident writer.

Instead of looking elsewhere for validation (such as, asking ten friends, "Do you think this is any good?"), you become more self-assured about your own work.

When you take instructions from your hut, you can feel and sense when your writing is clear, strong, and complete—instead of needing other people to tell you when it's "good enough."

## Completion: share your work

Once you've done each review—including whatever your hut instructs you to do—then, congratulations.

You are officially *done*.

You can send, publish, print, or distribute this piece of writing. Share your work with one reader, with ten, with hundreds, or millions.

Because you did several rounds of reviews, you can feel peace of mind and know, "I did my absolute best with this assignment. I was thoughtful. I was thorough. I went above and beyond. This is the very best writing I can produce at this time. I'm proud."

# Recap

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Do those steps to produce a piece of writing that is truly *excellent*.  
Your personal best.

Is this the only way to approach writing? No.

But this is a solid approach you can use with any type of project—writing a book, essay, article, true story, presentation, or just about anything else.

Try it. Enjoy the process. Keep flexing those writing muscles.

Your confidence will grow with each piece you complete.

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