



Assignment Sheet: Process Analysis

Chris Friend • ENC1101 • Spring 2014

1. BACKGROUND

If the writing process takes place exclusively inside the head of the writer, how can composition researchers learn how other people write? A traditional method used by composition researchers is a “think-aloud” protocol in which an author is asked to say everything that comes to mind while writing. Like Sondra Perl, you will observe a writer’s process to see what you can learn. Unlike Perl, you will be your own research subject by studying your own “think-aloud” from a previous assignment.

You started the semester reading from John Swales about the moves made by authors when creating introductions to their research. The paper will report your findings from original research, so you should incorporate those moves, as well. Start with what is already known, establish your niche, and present your findings. (Make a map, find the gap, and fill the gap.) Follow the traditional IMRD pattern for the remainder of your report.

Additionally, we will employ Lamott’s approach to “shitty first drafts” by conducting extensive peer reviews in class. You should also strive to avoid Rose’s “rigid rules” to help your writing flow more naturally. As you can see, this paper will document (through commentary) and illustrate (through direct evidence) your understanding of the readings we have done.

2. PROCEDURE

More discussion of each of the stages of this project can be found on WAW 322–25, and student examples from Clayton Stark (WAW 278–91) and Dominieq Ransom (WAW 292–98) show two approaches others have taken.¹ The general stages of the process can be summarized as follows:

Brainstorming: What kinds of things would you like to learn about your own writing process?

Researching: You will use the “Portrait of a Writer” assignment as your testing scenario. Record yourself writing that paper so that you can analyze your process in that assignment for use in this one.

Analyzing: Transcribe the recording you made all of your writing process. We will work in class to build a code that can be used to analyze that transcript. With highlighters, codes, and creative thinking, you will identify trends and events in your writing process.

Planning: Determine the following parameters for what you choose to write:

- Your intended audience (Who could benefit from your newfound knowledge?)
- Your purpose for writing (What are you trying to accomplish with this paper?)
- Your level of formality (How can you sound academic when writing about yourself?)

Drafting: Be sure to include both the CARS and the IMRD steps to mimic the structure of a scholarly research report.

Revising: Be prepared to make substantial revisions to your first draft. Refer to the rubric to make sure you meet the expectations you have for your own grade.

¹As you read the student samples, remember that they are “final” drafts submitted with a portfolio, and that Stark was in an Honors course. Your papers are still experimental; theirs are polished.