

## Writing the First Draft

The purpose of the first draft is three fold--to get your information down on paper; to begin to organize that information; and to discover what information you still need. Research is ongoing.

Write this draft without regard to word choice, style, and grammar. Just get it down.

Some writers call the first draft "pre writing".

Do only a sketchy introduction--but be sure you include the thesis and some background. You will need to rewrite the introduction later.

When you see a "hole" where you need more information, write "need sentence on so-and-so here", or "need paragraph on...here".

You will also begin the process of eliminating information. Your first draft should have more information than you need. If it is not 15 to 25 percent more than your finished goal, you may be in trouble.

Include all of the research information you have. Be sure you include your sources. This is a very dangerous step, one where you can easily use a phrase or even a quote, and forget the source. Then that un-cited phrase winds up in the final draft.

One trick is to include longer numerous quotes at this stage only--remembering such quotes are strictly limited in the final draft. But using quotes in the first draft easily identifies the information as from another source. Then, in your revisions, you can decide if you wish to use the quoted information, and how...as general information, as a paraphrase, or as a short quote--all with careful citations.

Use your outline to move paragraphs around in the first draft. Do not be afraid to take a hard look at this. Ask yourself questions. Is the material presented logically? Is the information presented chronologically? Does all information support the thesis? Doing this on computer word processing programs is a breeze, but you may wish to keep all drafts, and label them draft one, draft two, three and so on.

Another approach is to think of the first draft as a move from the topic outline to a longer sentence outline.

Write the first draft in clear sections. Brainstorm about each section and get all of your ideas out.

As you write be certain each section contains clear evidence in support of your thesis. And be sure each section and each paragraph is tied together. Use good transitional phrases and comments to make the links between paragraphs clear.

You can polish the transitions later but for the first draft use phrases like therefore, in addition to, and as a result. Since this is a history paper, use time as a transition when appropriate. For paragraph transitions write "during the next nine months", or other phrases to indicate a turn to a subsequent

time.

Also ask yourself if you have enough background information. Is each person, battle, event given a proper context? Use the full name of each person and each battle in the first instance.

Do not spend time on grammar and polished stylistic changes in the first draft. The first draft is for organizing and completing your argument. You can polish your paper in final drafts. One note of caution here--you should have complete names, complete dates, and full citations in the final draft--do not skimp here. While the first draft is "rough" it contains more information than you will need.