

## Multi-Version Writing

Suppose you have four hours to write something. Divide it into four units of an hour.

For the first 45 minutes, simply write as quickly as you can, as though you were talking to someone. All the things that come to mind about the matter. Stop after 15 min.

Take the last 15 minutes to think back or read over what you have written and try to see what important things emerged. Write a short reflection.

So now you have used up the first of your four units of time. You have written your first version.

In the next hour, simply do the same thing. Start on a new page or in a new file. Write quickly without much stopping and correcting for 45 minutes again. And again use the last 15 minutes for a short written reflection: what do I like about this

text? What emerged here? What could I do better?

Write a third version and a third reflection.

In the fourth hour you can rewrite again or you open all your versions to bring them together in a common version. Use this hour also to edit and correct.

This method means more words written and thrown away. Perhaps even more work. But less banging your head against a stone wall – pushing with all your might against something that won't budge. So though you are tired, you are less frustrated. The process tends to create a transaction that helps you expend more of your energy more productively.

From: Peter Elbow, *Writing Without Teachers*, Oxford University Press 1998, 18-22.

