

Maximizing Your Time: When to Research, When to Write, When to Edit

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<https://www.enago.com/academy/maximizing-your-time-for-research-write-and-edit/>

What's the Difference?

Every person has both a different [writing](#) and learning style. Every student works on research papers differently. Those working on advanced degrees have the skills necessary to write a successful term paper. But as one gets farther in their degree program, papers get longer, more in depth, and more time consuming.

From a cognitive and educational standpoint, researching, writing, and [proofreading](#) are different skills. They differ in activity, strategy, and purpose. They utilize different parts of the brain. In order to maximize time, one needs to be familiar with when it's best to research, write, or edit.

Before beginning, adopt a flexible schedule that allows you to switch between actions. Don't set requirements regarding study time, number of words written per session, and so on. Although this helps some people be productive, at least be open to taking a relaxed approach to working.

Researching — A Passive Act

Beginning to write a paper requires research. Topics must be sought out, narrowed down, and examined. The research aspect is mostly a passive act (although active in the sense that materials need to be found, interviews need to be conducted, and information needs to be organized). The majority of this phase requires reading, taking notes, and absorbing information. Without undermining the labor involved, research is a calmer and less involved activity than writing or editing.

Although the style of a paper varies from assignment to assignment, it could be technical or creative, analytical, or fully original, writing in general is a more creative act. Creativity derives from a different portion of the brain than the one exercised in

researching and [proofreading](#). Many people find that bouts of creativity strike at seemingly arbitrary times. The same goes for bouts of drive. Those who have worked on lengthy, in-depth research papers know that the monotony of sifting through readings often leads to a boost of energy or a strong desire to do something different. During these, writing is most time effective.

Writing — Using Drive

After processing any amount of information gathered, if you feel you're able to accurately [paraphrase](#) or summarize what you've researched, it's likely a good time to begin writing. Don't discount the importance of writing spurts. Keep in mind that no paper needs to be written in its entirety after one sitting, nor in order.

Just as there's a difference in the way the brain handles writing and researching, it handles [proofreading](#), [editing](#), and sentence compositions differently. Psychiatrists have theorized that writing and research are cognitive abilities whereas grammar and sentence structure are linguistic abilities. Most people have strength in one and not necessarily the other.

Editing — Attention to the Details

Editing requires extreme attention to detail and a careful look at the technicalities of a sentence. It's like putting together a puzzle, but after you've painted the picture the puzzle derives from. For some it can be labor intensive, having to look up rules and guidelines of the given writing style. But of all aspects of writing a paper, editing is the only one that doesn't involve critical thinking on your [research topic](#). Although it has to occur after some material has already been written, it by no means has to be the last action taken.

By switching between these three aspects of writing, you can essentially provide yourself with breaks while still being productive. The differentiation in activity keeps one from getting burned out on any given action and gives one a break from each. The key to effectively alternating between actions is recognizing one's mood, the length of time spent on each segment, and loosely planning one's approach to the project allowing for some flexibility.

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