**Exercise 1.4**

**What Is Your Process?**

**STEP ONE:** Complete the Self-Evaluation Survey.

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**Self-Evaluation Survey**

1. When you’re given a school writing assignment, do you wait until the last minute to finish it?
   - Always ——— Often ——— Sometimes ——— Rarely ——— Never

2. How often have you had the experience of learning something you didn’t expect through writing about it?
   - Very often ——— Fairly often ——— Sometimes ——— Rarely ——— Never

3. Do you generally plan out what you’re going to write before you write it?
   - Always ——— Often ——— Sometimes ——— Rarely ——— Never

4. *Prewriting* describes activities that some writers engage in before they begin a first draft. Prewriting might include such invention activities as freewriting or fastwriting, making lists, brainstorming or mapping, collecting information, browsing the web, talking to someone about the essay topic, reading up on it, or jotting down ideas in a notebook or journal. How much prewriting do you tend to do for the following types of assignments? Circle the appropriate answer.
   - A personal narrative:
     - A great deal ——— Some ——— Very little ——— None ——— Haven’t written one
   - A critical essay about a short story, novel, or poem:
     - A great deal ——— Some ——— Very little ——— None ——— Haven’t written one
   - A research paper:
     - A great deal ——— Some ——— Very little ——— None ——— Haven’t written one
   - An essay exam:
     - A great deal ——— Some ——— Very little ——— None ——— Haven’t written one

5. At what point(s) in writing an academic paper do you often find yourself getting stuck? Check all that apply.
   - [ ] Getting started
   - [ ] In the middle
   - [ ] Finishing
   - [ ] I never/rarely get stuck (go on to question 9)
   - [ ] Other: ___________________

6. If you usually have problems getting started on a paper, which of the following do you often find hardest to do? Check all that apply. (If you don’t have trouble getting started, go on to question 7.)
   - [ ] Deciding on a topic
   - [ ] Writing an introduction
   - [ ] Finding the time to begin
   - [ ] Figuring out exactly what I’m supposed to do for the assignment
   - [ ] Finding a purpose or focus for the paper
   - [ ] Finding the right tone
   - [ ] Other: ___________________

7. If you usually get stuck in the middle of a paper, which of the following cause(s) the most problems? Check all that apply. (If writing in the middle of a paper isn’t a problem for you, go on to question 8.)
   - [ ] Keeping focused on the topic
   - [ ] Finding enough information to meet page-length requirements
   - [ ] Following my plan for how I want to write the paper
   - [ ] Bringing in other research or points of view
   - [ ] Organizing all my information
   - [ ] Trying to avoid plagiarism
From *The Curious Writer* by Bruce Ballenger

- Worrying about whether the paper meets the requirements of the assignment
- Worrying that the paper just isn’t any good
- Messing with citations
- Other: __________________________________

8. If you have difficulty finishing a paper, which of the following difficulties are typical for you? Check all that apply. (If finishing isn’t a problem for you, go on to question 9.)
- Composing a last paragraph or conclusion
- Worrying that the paper doesn’t meet the requirements of the assignment
- Worrying that the paper just isn’t any good
- Trying to keep focused on the main idea or thesis
- Trying to avoid repeating myself
- Realizing I don’t have enough information
- Dealing with the bibliography or citations
- Other: __________________________________

9. Rank the following list of approaches to revision so that it reflects the strategies you use *most often to least often* when rewriting academic papers. Rank the items 1–6, with the strategy you use most often as a 1 and least often as a 6.

   ____ I just tidy things up—editing sentences, checking spelling, looking for grammatical errors, fixing formatting, and performing other proofreading activities.
   ____ I look for ways to reorganize existing information in the draft to make it more effective.
   ____ I try to fill holes by adding more information.
   ____ I do more research.
   ____ I change the focus or even the main idea, rewriting sections, adding or removing information, and changing the order of things.
   ____ I rarely do any revision.

10. Finally, do you tend to impose a lot of conditions on when, where, or how you think you write most effectively? (For example, do you need a certain pen, do you always have to write on a computer, do you need to be in certain kinds of places, must it be quiet or noisy, do you write best under pressure?) Or can you write under a range of circumstances, with few or no conditions? Circle one.

   Lots of conditions———Some———A few———No conditions

   If you impose conditions on when, where, or how you write, list some of those conditions here:
   1.
   2.
   3.

**STEP TWO:** In small groups, discuss the results of the survey. Begin by picking someone to tally the answers to each question. Post these on the board, a large sheet of paper, or a spreadsheet, so they can then be added up for the class. Analyze the results for your group. In particular, discuss the following questions:

- Are there patterns in the responses? Do most group members seem to answer certain questions in similar or different ways? Are there interesting contradictions?
- Based on these results, what “typical” habits or challenges do writers in your class seem to share?
- What struck you most?