

MS CAMMY MAN (3): MY COMPOSING PROCESS

What is the process that you go through to produce your best work?

The first step for me to prepare for, for example, like an essay assignment, the first thing would be I'll go to the library to gather all the books that are relevant and to go to the chapters that are relevant to the essay topic. And I would photocopy the very limited paragraph or the pages that are relevant to the topic. And after gathering all the books, I would go online and search for relevant articles, for example, like the journals published by different scholars on this topic. And after gathering all these paper materials, I would lock myself in the library, so I'd go through all these materials, so that I can gain a very fundamental understanding of the background of the topic. And after reading all these materials, I would be able to find what is commonly mentioned in all these articles, so I know that would be the focus of the topic. And there are usually some footnotes or some articles mentioned through the texts or from the books that I have read, so I would go online to search further as to the articles or the journals that are mentioned therein. So I would do some further research and after reading those materials, I think that would give me an idea as to what are the arguments that I can use to support the essay that I'm going to write.

So from that stage onwards, I would try to take out a blank piece of paper and I would try to write down the very basic structure of the essay. And most of the time, I would keep it to three points, to three main arguments, so that I can keep the essay short and also keep it in a very organized way. So I would number the arguments that I'm going to present, so I would go back to the paper materials that I have read, and I would categorize them according to the number that I have put to each argument. Then I would move on to the next stage that I would try to start writing each of the topics, so whenever I write, for example, the Topic 1, I would go back to the materials that are marked '1', so I know what are the relevant materials that I can cite or use for that topic. So after repeating this process for all the arguments, I would then write the conclusion part, so I would know what are the standpoints I can form. And at that stage, I would go back to the introduction part because writing the introduction part at last would allow me to give a very clear roadmap for readers to know what I'm going to present in the whole article.

So after doing this, I would, for example, take a break and I would move on to the next editing stage

because this is a very first draft that I have produced, so I know there must be mistakes. I would first read through them and I would do some changes while I read through them. And then I would go into every paragraph to know what I should look for, for example, there are places like to keep the expressions more consistent. For example, the way we cite a case, the way we cite the legislation and these kind of things that I may not be very mindful of when I write. So while I do the editing, I will do more consistent changes for these kind of expressions.

What advice do you have for students about adopting a productive process?

To adopt a productive process in writing an English article would be to understand or to set a timeline for yourself, so that you won't be rushing at each stage. For example, you won't be worrying about how many days or that you have spent too long on researching the relevant materials for writing. And also, you would not be afraid of spending too much time writing the article or you would be left with too little time to edit your own work. So what I suggest would be to divide the whole writing process into a few stages. For example, in the pre-writing stages, you would spend around three to five days in searching for the relevant materials and then you can have plenty of time to digest them, and also to find any further materials that you need in order to write the articles. And also during the writing stage, it's important to allow yourself to have plenty of time to write the articles, so that you won't be rushing and you can have plenty of time to plan ahead as to what to write in each section. And at the editing stage, some people may neglect the importance of editing their own work, but actually, it really helps because while you're writing, you may not focus on the expressions you use. You may just focus on the content that you would like to include in, so it's important to allow plenty of time to do the editing. It's not a one-day thing. It's important to do it over a few days.