

# Writing Well by Doing Less: A Five-Step Plan

By Tijana Salaj

Become the go-to authority  
people turn to every time.

**W**riting about your organization, your segment of the nonprofit sector, or your field of interest is a great way to get the word out to people about the work your organization does. Whether you write a blog, a newsletter, or articles in journals, you need to write quickly and cogently. The key is to be sure you don't confuse being busy with being effective. Use this simple five-step plan of action:

“Don't confuse being busy with being effective.”

## 1. Select the Right Topic

Brainstorm subjects to write about, and list all the ideas that come to mind. Then take a break. Do something unrelated to writing for a while, and get back to your ideas later. You'll find that “amazing” ideas don't always seem so amazing a few hours later. Give yourself a chance to retain or reject your original ideas.

## 2. Research First

Before you start writing, be sure you know your topic. Do research ahead of time so you aren't going back and forth between writing and researching. Remember that research is a way of exploring new ideas. Thus, you may stumble upon something interesting and relevant for your topic. Knowledge of your subject helps your writing flow easily and gives your article depth.

## 3. Set Time Limits

Preparing a schedule will help you save time. Set time limits for each stage of the writing process. Plan how much time you'll write each day, and stick to it.

## 4. Minimize Distractions

Before you begin writing, close every other application on your screen, including e-mail and instant messaging, and turn off your cellphone. Set a timer to go off when it's time to go on to the next task. That way, you won't have to keep checking the time and can focus totally on your writing.

## 5. Edit and Proof – But Only at the End

Don't worry about editing while you're writing. Focus on getting the words down and getting the piece finished. When you're done, print your piece and put it aside for a few hours, then reread it. That's the time to pay attention to spelling, grammar, and language usage. Then print your piece again, put it away for another hour or so, and proofread it. Always proof your work in hard copy, not on the screen.

If you're writing an e-mail, you don't need to be quite so thorough with your editing, but do reread and proof every important e-mail message. And if it's really important, print it out before proofing it.

Once you've made these ideas into structured habits, you'll find yourself with more time to enjoy other aspects of your life and less unnecessary time spent on the writing itself. This in turn will insure that all your writing projects are worth the effort. 

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