



What is a zero draft and why you should write it



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Have you ever felt like you have a bunch of interesting ideas but when you sit down to write you go BLANK? Or, when you start writing you don't know how an idea relates to another, and you end up overthinking — and NOT writing?

This happens because even though you have ideas, they are *unprocessed*.

Say, you want to bake a cake.

You take eggs, flour, baking powder and place them on a table. These are all essential ingredients to make a cake.

But you won't call them a cake yet.

For these things to *become* a cake, you'll have to *process* them a certain way.

Think of the different ideas you have as ingredients. For these ideas to *become* a manuscript (of an article, dissertation, monograph), you'll have to *process* them a certain way.

And that's where a zero draft comes in.

The sole purpose of a zero draft is to help you process your raw ideas *in and through prose*. A zero draft is not meant to be shown

to anyone for feedback. You won't ask someone to taste your cake batter and share their feedback.

So, how do you get started on a zero draft?

Pick a time when you have minimum distractions. Put the phone away. Disconnect the internet. If you have a family or dependents, communicate with them that you need a half-an-hour to work.

Now take a notebook or open a document in MS Word or Google Docs. Set the timer to 25min. Start writing the moment the timer goes off.

But write what, you ask?

Write anything that comes to your mind. You can even start with a meta-sentence like so: I've sat down to write a zero draft for my article/dissertation chapter. I am thinking of X, but it seems like a tricky concept.

Don't worry at all if your sentences don't make much sense. Don't worry about spellings or grammar. Your only job during these 25min is to put words on the page/screen.

Stay focused, and just keep writing/typing. You only have to do for 25min.

After you're done, celebrate and reward yourself. This positive reinforcement will make your mind think that writing zero drafts is rewarding.

Don't think of your zero draft as "shitty," "trashy," or "messy." These words will make you resent your zero drafts.

Do this exercise once a day for a week.

At the end of it, you'll have written thousands of words. Out of these thousands of words, you'll have a few hundred (or even more) *useful* words. Write them separately. Or, you can cut and paste them in a new document.

A zero draft does two important things:

1. It helps you process your ideas.
2. If you write zero drafts regularly, you'll never have to face a blank page ever. You'll always have some words to start with. So, no writer's block anymore.

A zero draft helps you think *through* writing.

That's it for this week. I'll see you next week.

Until then, keep writing!

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