

Typical Writing Steps

I think it's important to begin with an overview of the writing process. It helps writers know where they're going, keep the end goal in mind, and avoid skipping steps.

Here are some typical steps that I have compiled from various writing books over the years.

Step 1: **Think & Prepare**

- Read background
- Clarify your idea
- Formulate questions
- Consider nut graf

In this step, you also need to hone your story's approach.

Use a single, **dominant theme** with varied types of material to develop your idea. Don't document. Tell a story.

What's your storyline? "A limited tale well told has more impact and persuasiveness than a sweeping story..." one teacher says.

To generate story angles, ask yourself about various aspects of the story. William Blundell, in the *Art and Craft of Feature Writing*, suggests asking the below.

What is the story's:

- History
- Scope
- Reasons
- Impacts
- Countermoves
- Futures

Step 2: Research & Record

Once you have thought about the points above, move to more research.

- Collect targeted background
- Define narrow focus of story
- Select sources for interviews

- Consider possible structure of your article - What answers are you likely to get?
- Interview according to expected structure/storyline

Step 3: **Reduce**

- After interviews or written research, summarize key ideas
- Categorize those ideas

Step 4: Organize your **thoughts in a logical flow**

- How would you explain this story as an elevator pitch?
- Do you have an A-B-C? 1-2-3?
- If not, go back for more research and interviewing

Step 5: **Write**

- Trying writing in one pass... If you don't have all the key data/information at hand, insert a placeholder like TK or ?? or XX and keep writing so that you get the overarching storyline onto paper. Then go back and insert missing info.

Step 6: **Rewrite & Edit**

- This last step is not to be forgotten. Good writing is often the result of lots of rewriting and tightening
- If you start to bog down when reading your own text, or you begin to glaze over certain sections, that's a sign that the section needs work.