



Start writing essays

Different approaches to research

Jane Van Hool:

Some writers plan their work more than others. Some do it all in advance, others develop their plan as they go along. Here's a selection of different ways of working. Brian Walden has been a Member of Parliament, presenter of the current affairs programme Weekend World, and has written for all the leading newspapers.

Brian Walden:

You need to plan. On the basis of, well, first I shall say this, and that will lead me to say that, and that will lead me to say this, and when I say that of course, that raises the criticisms that they make of him, which I shall deal with in four, so I need an extra paragraph on that, and so on, and so on. You should plan *before* you write, not write in the hope that the thought will come to you while you're doing it. That is the way you produce a kind of mishmash of an answer. A logical answer is almost invariably planned. If, when you start writing, you think it's flowed very well, well then, don't fiddle with it too much. But if you get the impression that you're flat, maybe you didn't have a particularly good night's sleep, it's not very inspiring stuff, not even your mother would love it, don't hesitate to change it, don't hesitate to think, 'God, this is a dull boring paragraph, isn't it? I didn't quite mean to say that anyway, why didn't I bring that more interesting point in.' Yeah, pick away at it, change it.

Jane Van Hool:

John Pilger.

John Pilger:

I think mine is some enormous process of elimination. I start with as many sources as possible, and I, then I eliminate them so the structure of it begins to have a life of its own, and as it goes onto the page it begins to change and you see another way it can go, and there's no actual, logical reason for this it just happens.

Jane Van Hool:

Jane Dorner.

Jane Dorner:

I'm not an architectural writer, I don't have the whole concept of the entire building in my head before I go and start constructing it. I'm a bit more of a, a bricklayer, this isn't my own image but it's one I like. And for me, I don't really know what I'm going to say until I see myself saying it. So I build up, brick by brick, and then I go back and see how they're getting on, and whether the thing is holding together, and if it isn't I take the bricks down again and start again.

Jane Van Hool:

Martin Amis.

Martin Amis: I used to be a, a doer of plans, but now I find that, you know, you write perhaps six words or .. maybe to give you a structure. But er you, you're squirming around very quickly usually and try to find your, your, you know, grope your way forward and you don't, someone like Henry James said: 'I don't know how I feel about a book until I see what I say about it.'

Jane Van Hool: Richard Dawkins.

Richard Dawkins:

One of the reasons I don't get writer's block is that I just start writing, without much planning and that, in the long run, is probably a bit of a time waster because, I mean, certainly when you've got a limited time as in an exam, planning is essential. But my rather bad way of

operating, to start writing, and that in itself starts to draw thoughts out of me, rather than to plan everything I, I want to say, before I even start writing.

I'm much more likely to sort of, start writing, that will cause me to start thinking, that will cause me to go on writing in a different way, then I'll start thinking again, and then I'll realise the whole thing's going hopelessly wrong, so I'll start again. But it's the act of writing that has got me thinking, rather than, a very well planned set of, sort of, headings and subheadings and things, which is clearly, on the face of it, a better way to do it.

Jane Van Hool:

Helena Kennedy.

Helena Kennedy: I would advise people to create a skeleton of what they're going to argue, but be prepared at times to deviate from it, because sometimes that's where you get exciting new finds.