



Ken Wachsberger's

13 Steps to Successful Writing

Step 1: Panic, could approach vegetative state.

Step 2: Still panicking but beginning to take notes and research.

Step 3: Still panicking, taking notes, and researching but begin to organize notes and conceptualize topic divisions.

Step 4: Panic rapidly fading away, may be only remnant of before or perhaps have faded away totally. Organizing of first stage of notes is in full force; beginning to create order out of chaos with help from cut-and-paste and Track Changes; write first drafts of initial chapters, which may or may not be first chapters in the book; table of contents emerging; further note taking and researching concentrated in later chapters of book and in filling in gaps of chapters being written.

Step 5: By this time, panic no longer exists. It has been replaced by frenzy as it all begins to come together and the first draft is in sight. By now you will have finished first draft of earlier chapters and have begun rereading and revising even as you work on later chapters. Rereading continues until you submit your final draft to your publisher or typesetter and is a progressively larger portion of each review.

Step 6: Hardly any note taking and researching by now. All information gaps are filled in except for minor questions that require last-minute phone calls and searches. The first draft is finished. By this phase, some chapters that you started first may be polished but later chapters will be sketchy.

Step 7: Put away the notes and sit by the side of the river with a completed first draft. Watch children play. Begin to read for the flow. Replace weak verb plus string of adverbs with one strong verb. Revise "there is" and "there are" sentences using active verbs. Eliminate all uses of the word "very." Replace all uses of "thing" with concrete nouns. Tighten up transitions between paragraphs, between sentences, and within sentences. Combine short, choppy sentences to form smoothly flowing compound and complex sentences. Vary sentence structure; watch out for too many "subject-predicate" sentences. Expand one-sentence paragraphs unless they are for emphasis or dialogue. Check for consistency in verb tense and voice. Check for subject-predicate and antecedent-pronoun agreement.

Step 8: Give polished draft to peers for evaluation, then to editor. Demand their love and honesty.

Step 9: Read and consider comments. Complete final draft. Draft is complete when you can say, "This is great; I wish I had written it," and realize that you did write it.

Step 10: Submit manuscript to publisher or typesetter.

Step 11: Total exhilaration as you read and reread the already submitted manuscript and marvel at your brilliance and artistry.

Step 12: Twinges of bummer set in with onset of postpartum depression combined with fear that you peaked with latest submission and are now over the hill.

Step 13: Panic, could approach vegetative state.

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Ken, please contact me right away:

I'd like to talk to you about coaching to get my book written. I'd like to talk to you about editing to move my content to a higher level.

Name _____ Email _____ Phone _____