

What Kind of Writer are You?

Read each question about how you typically write and circle the letter of the most appropriate answer.

(1) When getting started on a writing assignment or project, I . . .

let the topic develop in my head.	(c)
brainstorm and write down anything that is possibly related to the topic.	(a)
read, research, or collect anything remotely related to my topic.	(b)
write multiple introductions and decide later which one to use.	(d)

(2) While writing, I . . .

use outlines to develop my ideas.	(c)
draft without worrying about structure or organization.	(a)
write about whatever I find most interesting or inspirational.	(b)
write parts or sections (e.g., introduction) multiple times.	(d)

(3) While writing, I . . .

work through several drafts or attempts to get to the core of what I want to say.	(d)
prefer to draft or revise multiple sections at once.	(b)
often find myself surprised at the ideas I develop during the process.	(a)
tend to follow my outline.	(c)

(4) When my writing assignment or project is nearing completion, I . . .

need time to make organizational changes.	(a)
need to make only minor corrections.	(c)
need to review previously saved versions and select the best one.	(d)
need to revise for unnecessary repetition and ensure that I have a clear conclusion	(b)

Total and record in the boxes below the number of times you choose a, b, c or d.

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)

Developed with material from: Ulrike Scheuermann: „Die Schreibfitness-Mappe: 60 Checklisten, Beispiele und Übungen für alle, die beruflich schreiben“. Wien: Linde

Four Common Writer Types: Adventurer, Squirrel, Gold Digger, Decathlete

(a) The Adventurer: "The Journey is the Destination"



You like jumpstarting into writing. You know how to start and you develop ideas and often even structures while writing. Famous adventurers include André Breton, Martin Walsler, and Siegfried Lenz.*

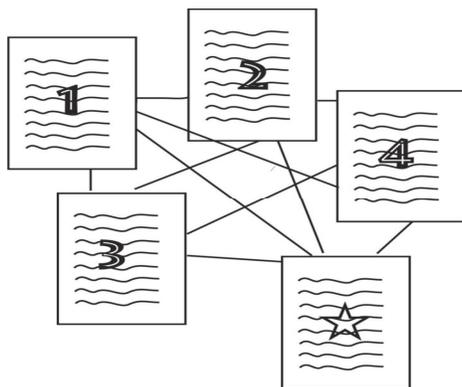
Benefits of this process:

- + You write freely and unencumbered and it is rarely boring.
- + You are open to new ideas and you find them when you write quite often.
- + You can quickly see that you have accomplished something.

Potential Risks:

- You might deviate from the central issue.
- You must allow more time for revision.
- You do not see the end.

(b) The Squirrel: "Collecting and Jumping"



You do not write in a linear way from A to B, but jump around from one part of the draft to another. You tend to interrupt writing to research additional information.

Famous Squirrels are Eichhörnchen sind zum Beispiel Ingeborg Bachmann, Günther Grass, and Thomas Mann.*

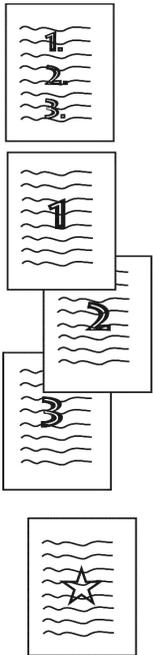
Benefits of this process:

- + You are flexible and can work on a different part of the text when you get stuck.
- + You take many small steps, which reduces anxiety for writing longer texts.
- + The provisional nature of your procedure prevents unhealthy perfectionism.

Potential risks:

- You might postpone difficult parts of your text endlessly.
- You can easily lose track.
- You do not see the end.

(c) The Gold Digger: "Planning and Digging Deep"



You prefer to make a plan before you start writing and follow this plan as you write. In other words, you dig deep with a treasure map in hand in search of the perfect text.

Famous Gold Diggers are Peter Handke and Hermann Hesse (planning without taking notes) or Henning Mankell and Carl Zuckmayer (complex written outlines)*

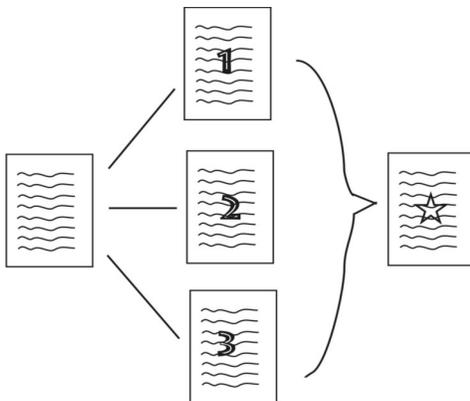
Benefits of this process:

- + Your approach is straightforward and allows you to plan your time efficiently.
- + You can always find the thread of your text.
- + You can explain your plans to others and therefore write in teams as well.

Potential risks:

- You are not open to new ideas.
- You can lose yourself in the planning and start too late to write.
- It takes a long time before you see tangible results in the form of text because of time spent on planning.

(d) The Decathlete: "Several Starts Before Getting to the Point"



You write your text in several versions. You often throw paper away or open a new file, start several times or (re)write parts of the text.

Famous decathletes are Friedrich Dürrenmatt (entire books written in several versions) and Heinrich Boell (chunks of text written several times).*

Benefits of this process:

- + You can write without struggling with perfection if you embrace your approach.
- + You utilize writing for thinking.
- + Your final texts are very focused and straightforward.

Potential risks:

- You have to get loose of much text that won't appear in the final version.
- Your approach seems to be time consuming.
- You could lose overview if too many versions arise.

*Famous writers mostly taken from Hanspeter Ortner (2000): Schreiben und Denken. Tübingen, Niemeyer.