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First Things First: Writing Strategies

Marilyn L. Grady

Do It Now

Perhaps you know writers who, “Bat it out and fix it later” as their writing strategy of choice. This method is an excellent means of getting it down while the material is fresh and the flow of writing is brisk. In fact, this is an ideal method of avoiding the practice of over editing the first sentences to avoid writing!

One major flaw in this technique is the failure to keep an accurate reference list. “Going back” and “doing it later” are not effective. The details slip away in stacks of papers and mountains of books.

Before you begin to write, have the current style manual in hand so that you have a clear understanding of the details that must be included in each citation. Different style manual requirements can pose challenges if you have not recorded the proper details from the beginning of your writing quest.

Web addresses and websites require careful attention since these addresses and sites are fluid and may disappear in the middle of the night. Also, take care in recording web addresses since transposed letters and numbers are common errors that may occur.

Recording complete references as you write requires a perfectionist’s touch. The individual who chooses to copy the quoted page, title page, and copyright page may have a better grasp of the challenges of managing the references.

Searching for the lost references when it is time to submit the manuscript or when the editor sends a list of missing references is not the ideal approach.