

The Basic Rules All Good Writers Know

Rule 1. Everybody writes rotten first drafts.

Corollary: it takes a rotten first draft to get to a good final draft; you have to make a mess before you can clean it up.

Rule 2. All writers need informed feedback to produce their best work.

Corollary 1: Writing is a **social** phenomenon. Cultivate good writing relationships; help others so that they'll help you.

Corollary 2: Good writers know when they need help from others:

- * when they don't understand how to approach a writing task
- * when they're blocked on account of fear, anxiety, or self-hatred
- * when they've written a rotten first draft and need help seeing a new direction
- * when they don't really understand what they wish to say
- * when their thinking is muddled
- * when they don't understand some sort of writing rule or convention, including genre issues (what does a lab report look like?), style issues (is it OK to use the first person in this kind of writing?), and usage/grammar/punctuation rules (is this a good place for a dash?)
- * when they've written so much that they can't "see" the paper anymore
- * when they've completed the final draft and need help editing it

Corollary 3: Good writers use facilities like the SSU Writing Center and the Tutorial Center.

Rule 3. Good writers know good writing takes time.

Corollary: Procrastination does damage--really.

Rule 4. Good writers know that no one ever stops learning how to write.

Corollary: Every class is a writing class.