Collaborative Writing

Managing content and design in group writing projects

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LSCM 466
Students and professionals handle collaborative writing assignments differently

“Students generally paid little attention to their teammates’ writing skills…”

“Professional managers (perceive) writing as what could make (an employee) stand out.”

Agenda: Collaborative Writing

- Challenges of writing collaboratively
- Choosing how you will collaborate
- Outlining and storyboarding
- Document design strategies
Challenges of collaborative writing

Collaboration increases the complexity inherent in an integrated document

The writing process generates emotional commitment

Documents are reworkable and subject to infinite revision

Lack of commitment to team

There are different ways teams may choose to write collaboratively

- Four major ways to collaborate
- Variations and combinations may occur
- Pros and cons of collaboration styles overlap
There are different ways teams may choose to write collaboratively

1 Team or group plans and outlines. Each member drafts a part. Team or group revises the whole.

Note: This style may also be modified to have just a subset of the team revise the document.

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**Advantages**
- Promotes equal contributions
- Surfaces factual conflict
- Builds team cohesion

**Be mindful of**
- Elevates group think tendency
- Takes time to understand contributions
- Supports working in silos

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2 Members agree on assigned writing tasks. Each member carries out individual tasks. One member compiles the parts and revises the whole.

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Advantages
- Involves all members
- Promotes equal contributions
- Edits made in one voice

Be mindful of
- Heightens workload on one member
- Ignores emotional ties to writing
- Supports working in silos
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3 Team or group plans and outlines. One member writes the entire draft. Team or group revises.

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Advantages
- Centralizes writing duties
- Originates in one voice
- Minimizes drafts of the document

Be mindful of
- Heightens workload on one member
- Discourages dynamic group interaction
- Creates barriers to factual conflict resolution

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4 One member plans and writes the draft. Group or team revises.

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Advantages
- Originates in one voice
- Capitalizes on expertise
- Decreases number of opinions

Be mindful of
- Discourages dynamic group interaction
- Delays group feedback until the end
- Relies on individual ability to take group perspective into account
Use outlines and storyboards to plan and revise the document content and flow

Television and Children's Violence

I. Introduction
   A. Does television cause violence?
      1. Brief mention of previous areas of research
      2. Identify causation dilemma
   B. Present studies on both sides:
      1. Some studies are "for"
      2. Some studies are "against"
   C. After weighing evidence it appears that TV does not cause violence

II. Research "For"
   A. First study "for"
      1. Method
      2. Results
      3. Analysis of their conclusions
         a. insufficient sample size
         b. but representative sample
   B. Second study "for"
      1. Method
      2. Results
      3. Analysis of their conclusions
         a. faulty instructions
         b. poor control group

III. Research "Against"
   A. Study "against"

Source: [http://www.uncc.edu/webcourse/sb/storyboard.htm](http://www.uncc.edu/webcourse/sb/storyboard.htm)
No matter what method you choose, planning is a critical step in document creation

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Outlining can be used to achieve agreement on main points in the report

- Main topic is already established
- Establish subheadings based on the assignment goal
- Fill in key points and content

Hint: Use team room white boards, classrooms with projectors
No matter what method you choose, revision is a critical step in document creation

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Storyboarding can be used to achieve agreement on main points in the report and easily reorder and revise content.

Topics and content areas are written on cards.

Use cards to create a logical flow to the document.

Make cards for key points; add and delete areas easily without losing content.
Outlining and storyboarding also help build a cohesive team

- Everyone can see what the responsibilities are
- Team has sense of shared authorship
- Workload can be distributed fairly; members can be held accountable for work
One cohesive look and feel to a document is as important as one voice

- One voice concerns
  - Grammar
  - Word choice

- Document design concerns
  - Headings
  - Font
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