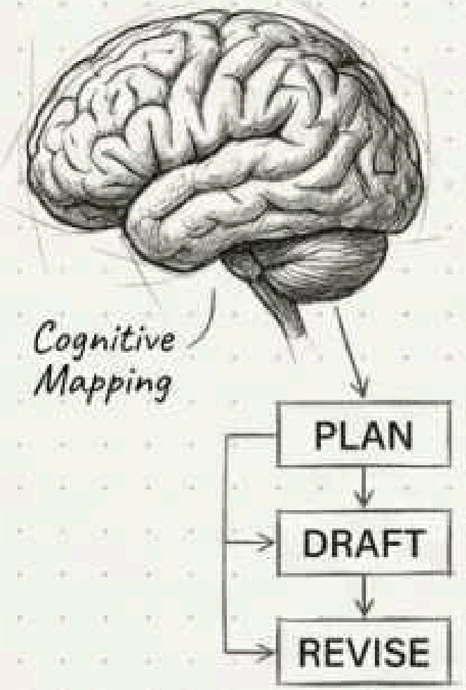
Writing Is a Process

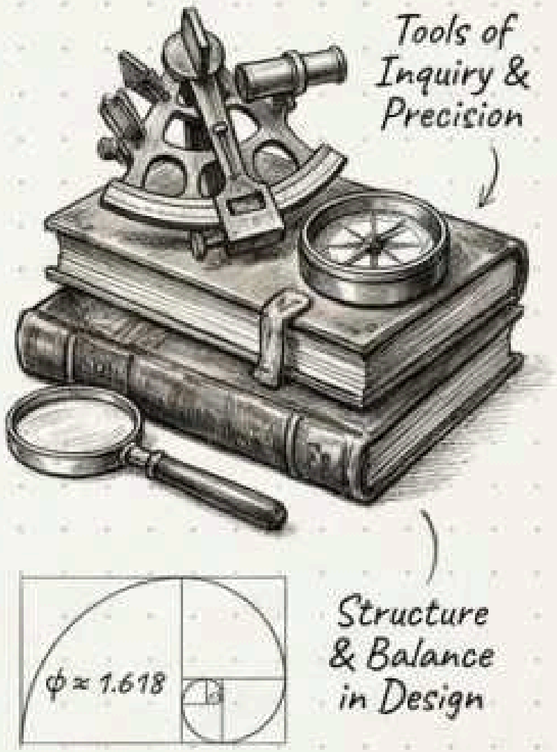
¶ 1.1

Good **writing** is made in stages of **planning**, **drafting**, and **revising** rather than produced in **one pass.** *Myth of the "Genius Draft"

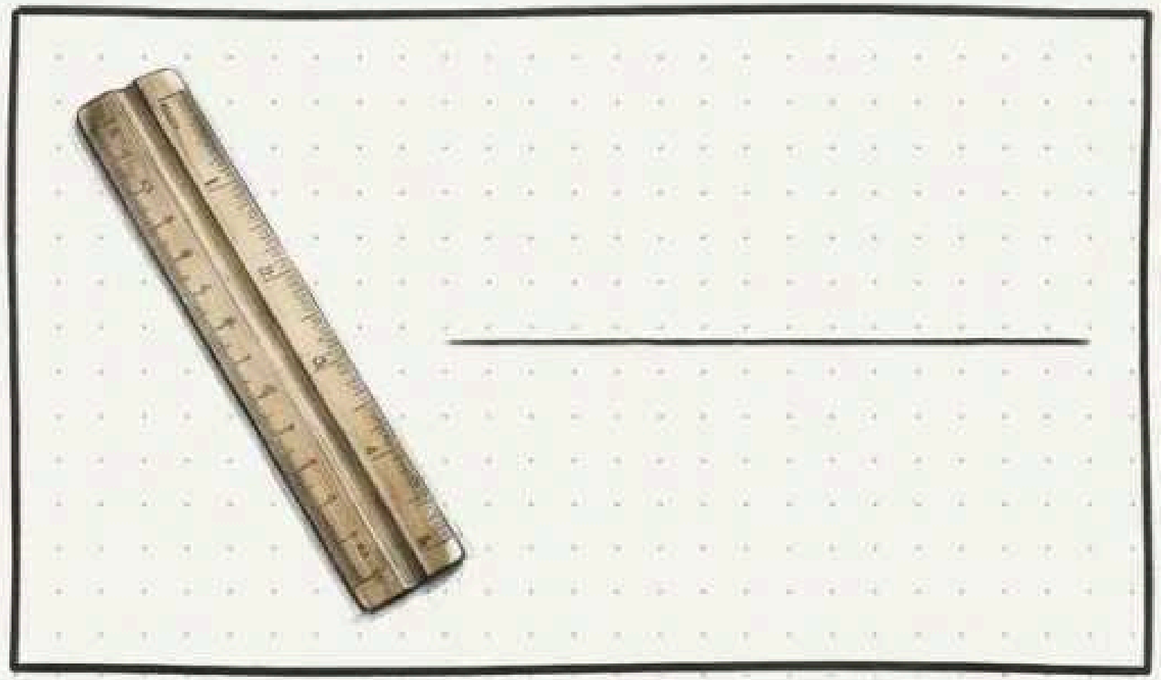
Lecture 1.



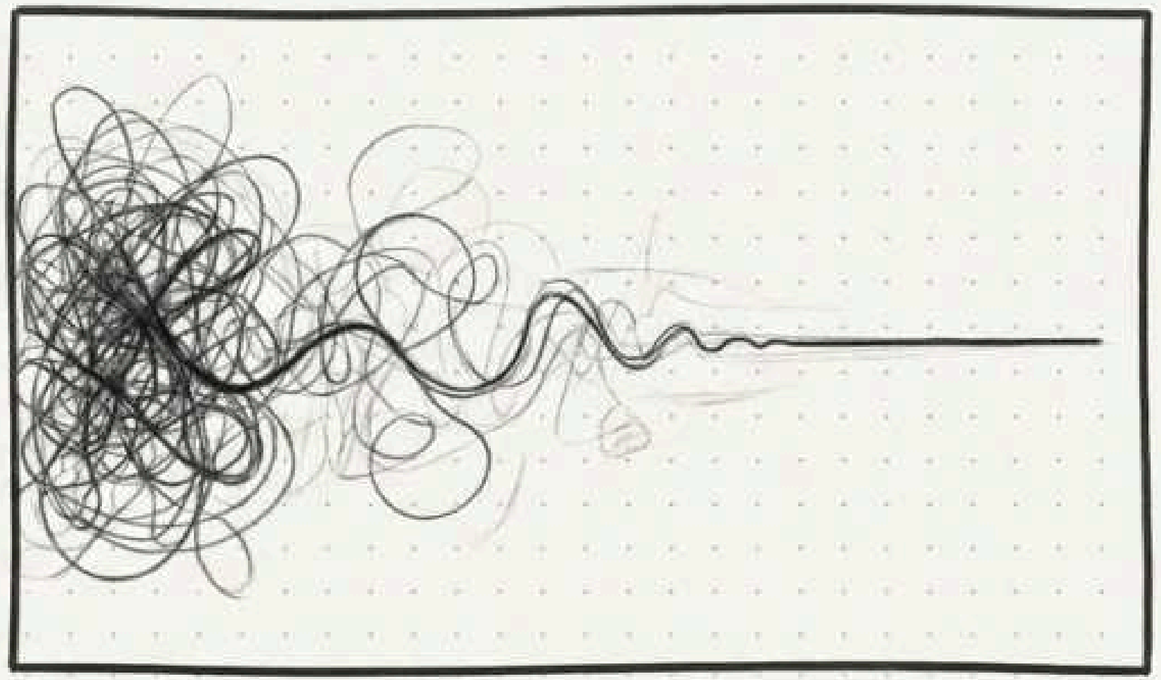




Real writing is inherently messy



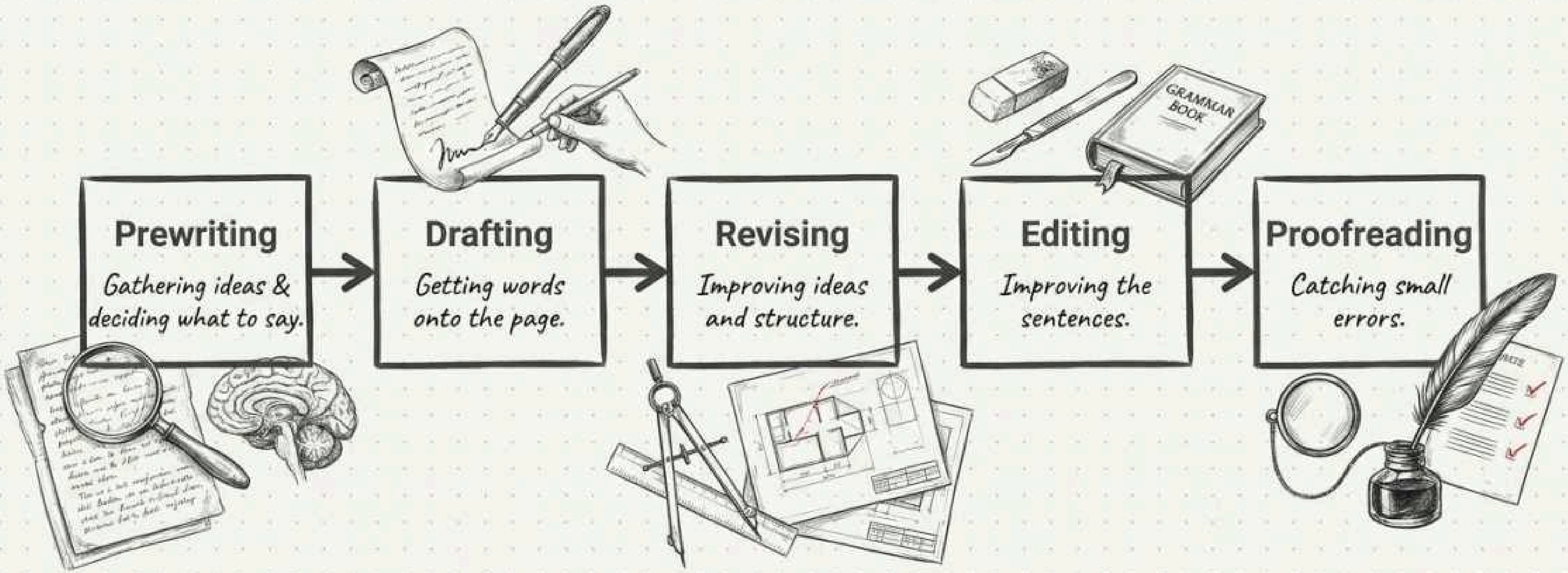
The expectation: Sit down -> Think of perfect sentence -> Write it.



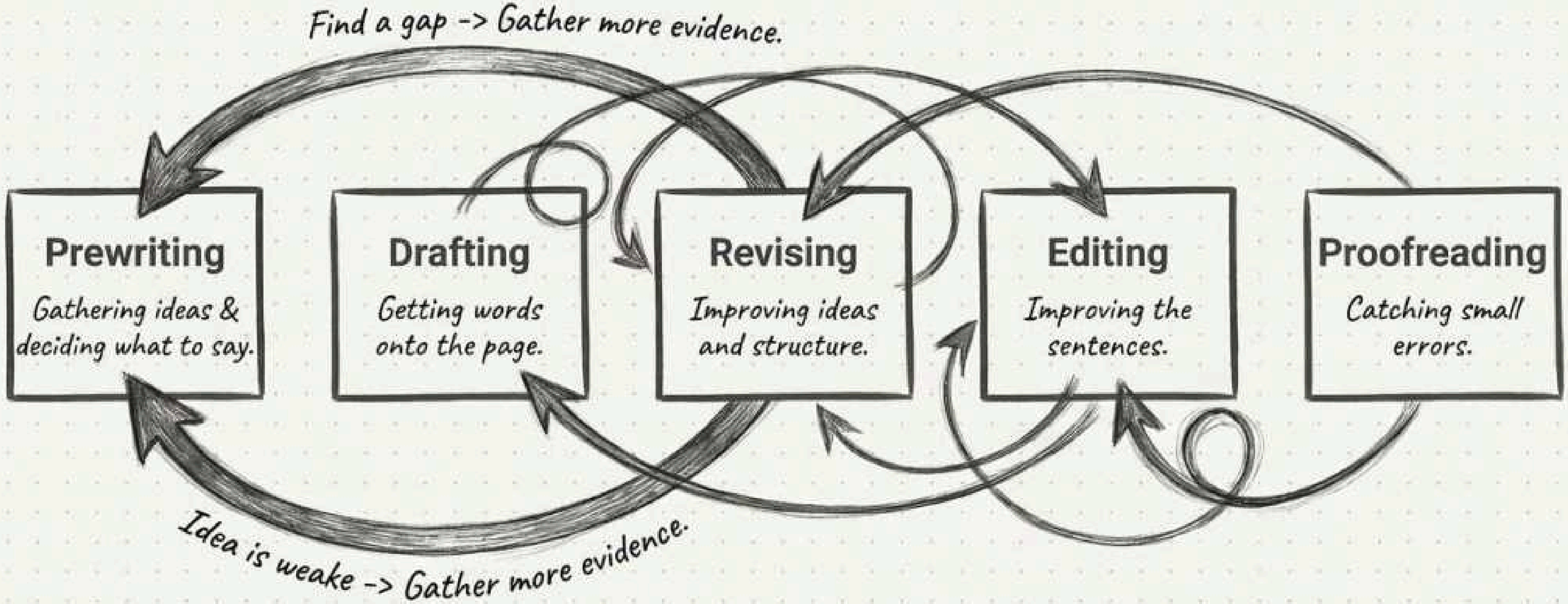
The reality: Half-formed ideas -> False starts -> Iterative improvement.

Once you understand this, writing becomes much less frightening.

The Five Stages of Writing



The stages are a map, not a rigid schedule

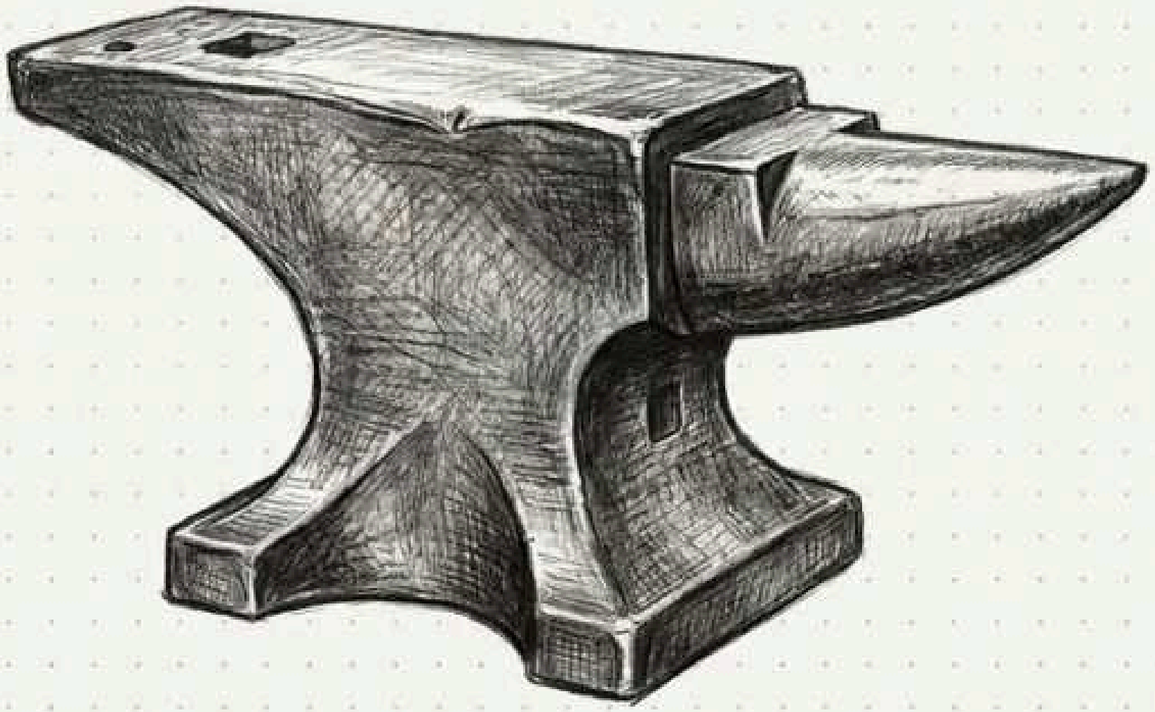


Good writers loop back.

The root cause of Writer's Block

$$W_{block} = \lim_{t \to 0} (Ideas + Organization + Polish + Commas)$$

Trying to do everything at once freezes the system.



The process lets you do one job at a time, making each job easier.

$$Process = \frac{Work}{Time}$$

Writing is a way of thinking



Prewriting: The Freewriting Technique





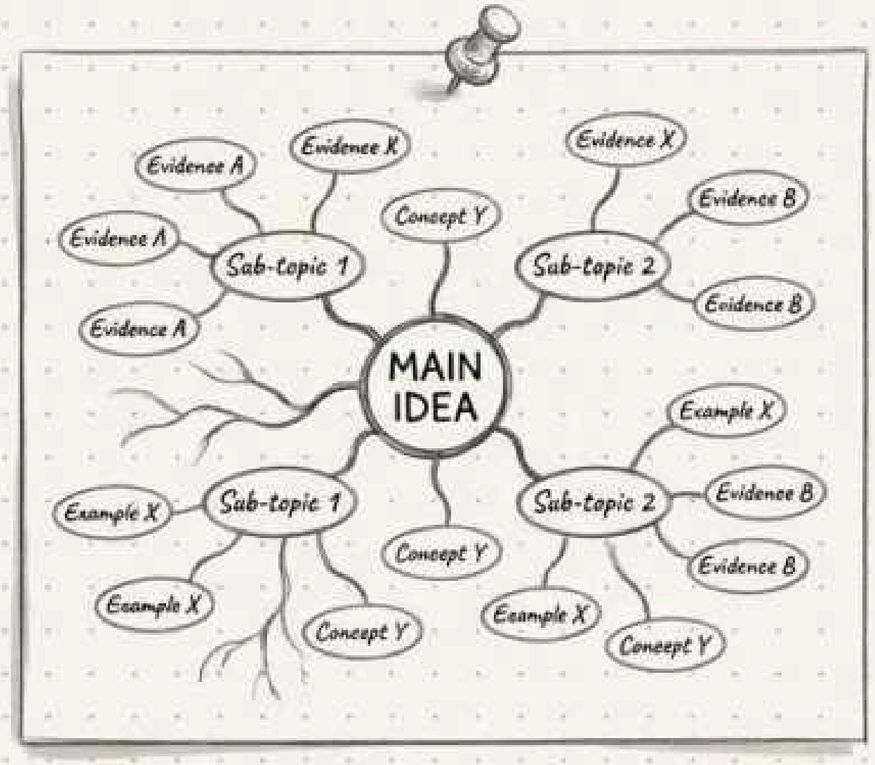


The Rules of Freewriting:

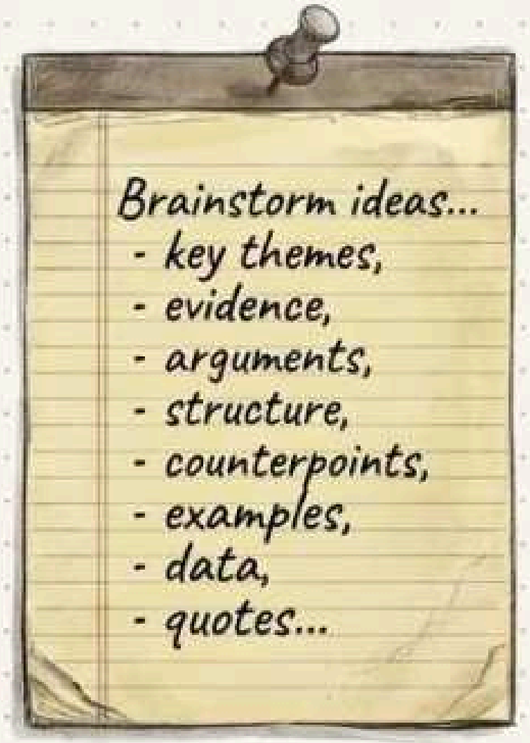
1. Set a timer for 10 minutes.
2. Write continuously.
3. Do not stop to correct anything.

No deleting. No judging. The point is to bypass the inner critic and see what you actually have to say.

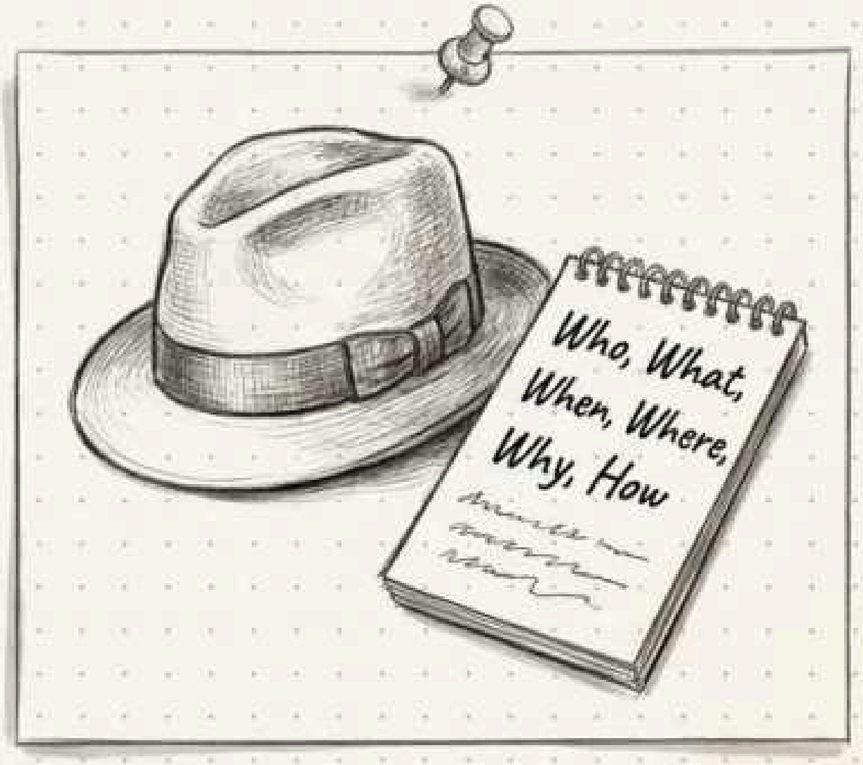
The Prewriting Toolkit



Cluster Map



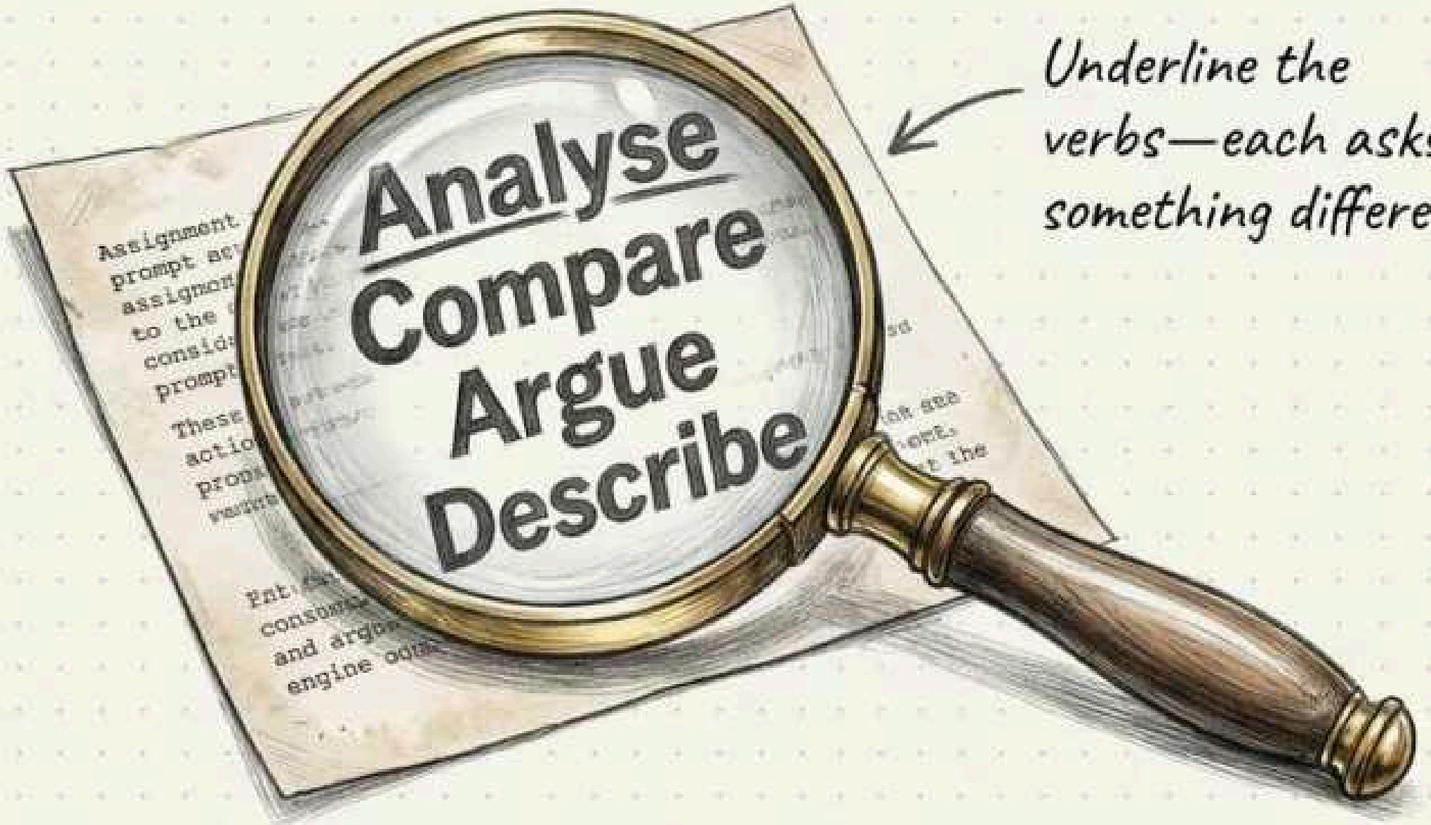
Brainstorm List



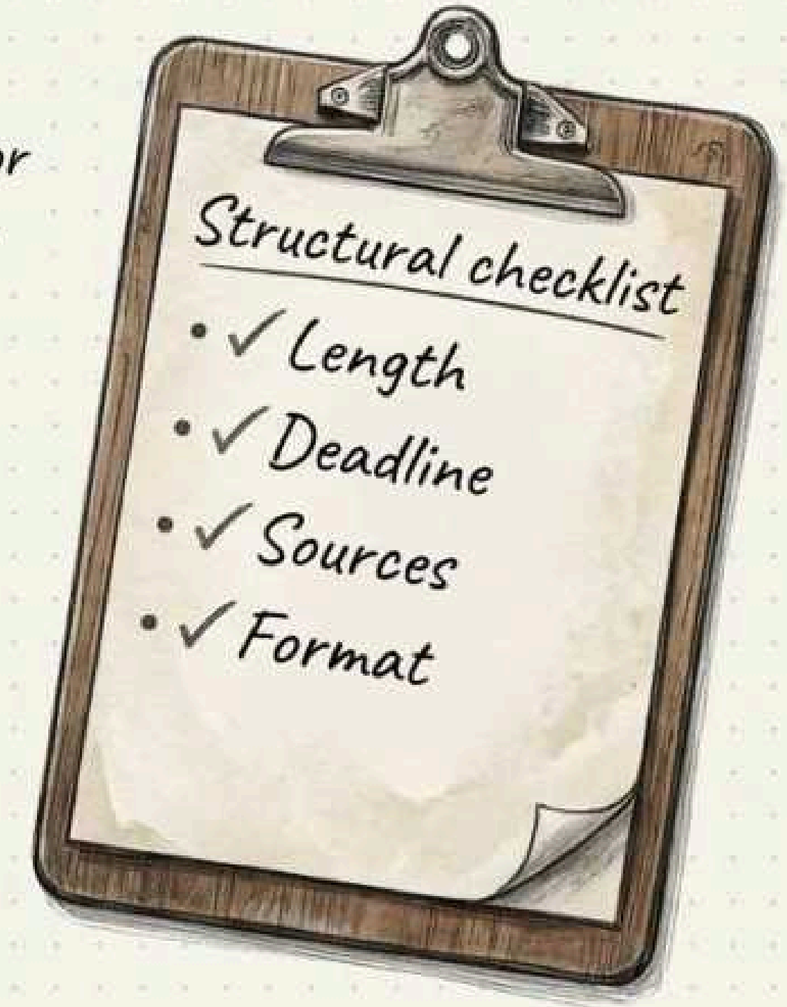
The Reporter's Questions

Use whichever method gets your ideas moving. Combine them if you like.

Decode the assignment before you draft

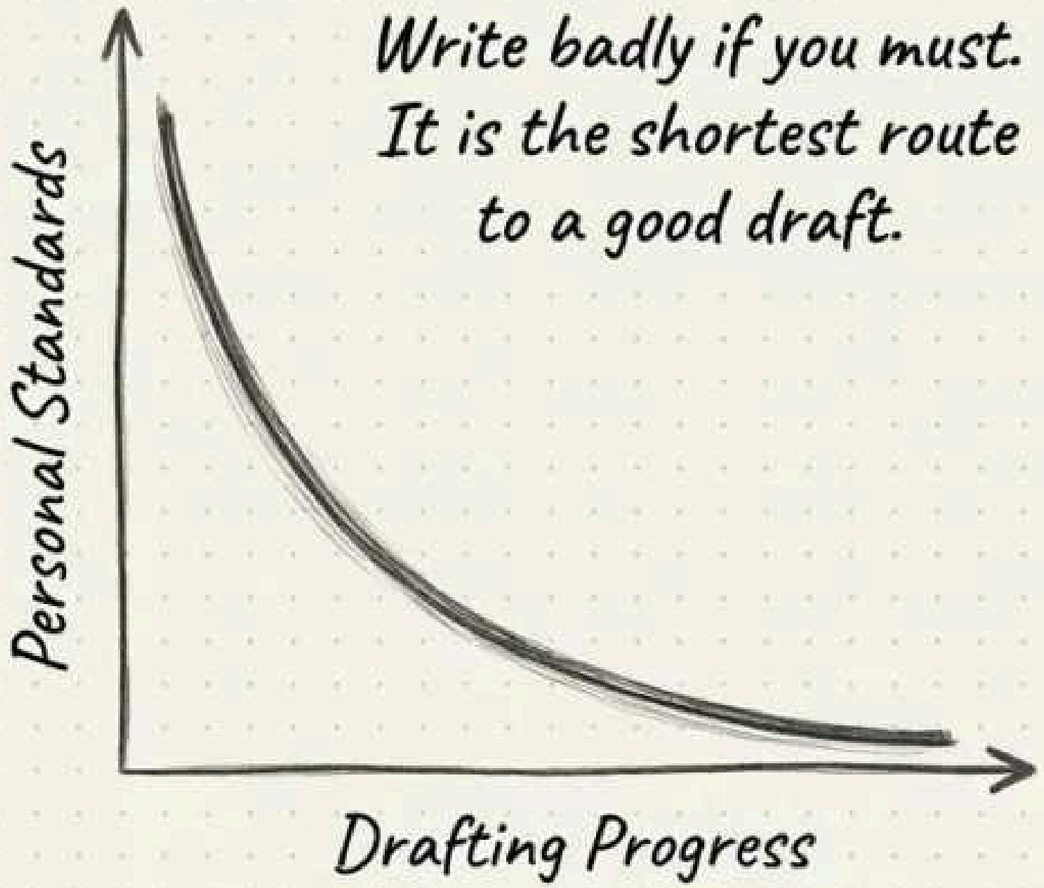


Underline the verbs—each asks for something different.

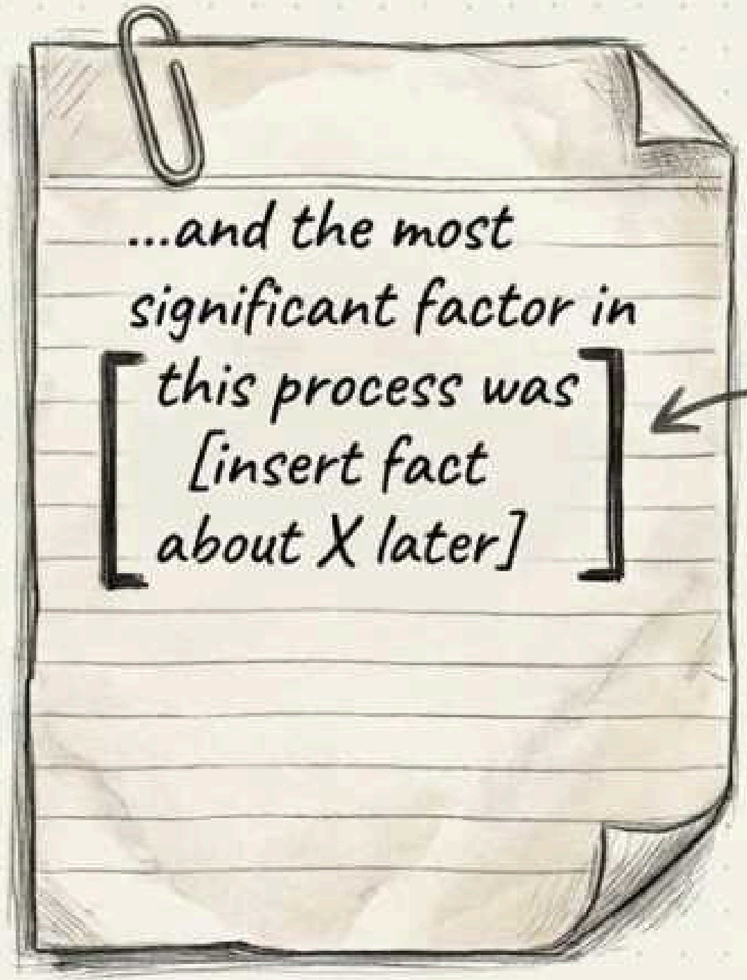


Beware: *A surprising number of weak essays are simply good answers to a question nobody asked.*

Drafting: Lower your standards on purpose



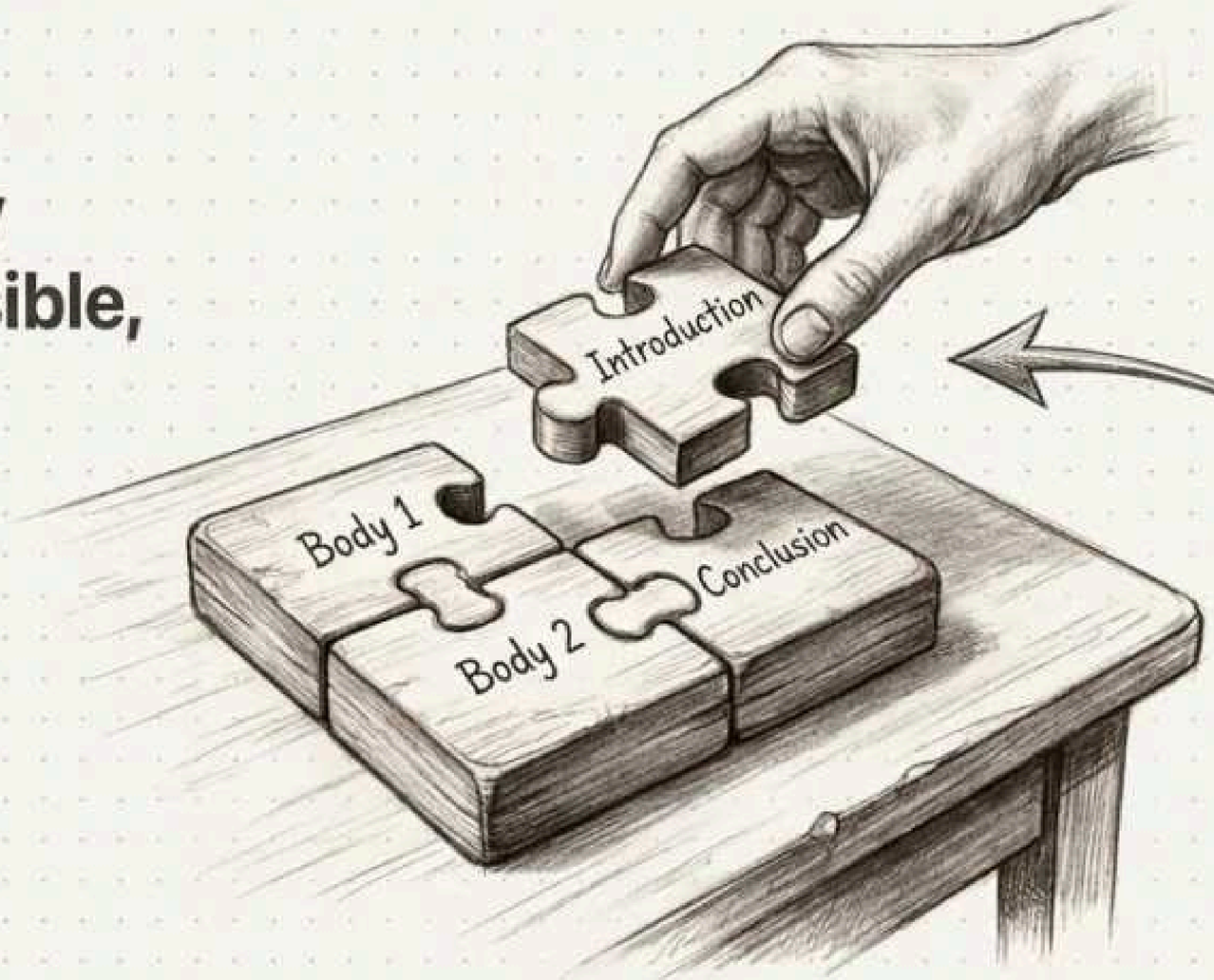
You cannot improve a blank page.



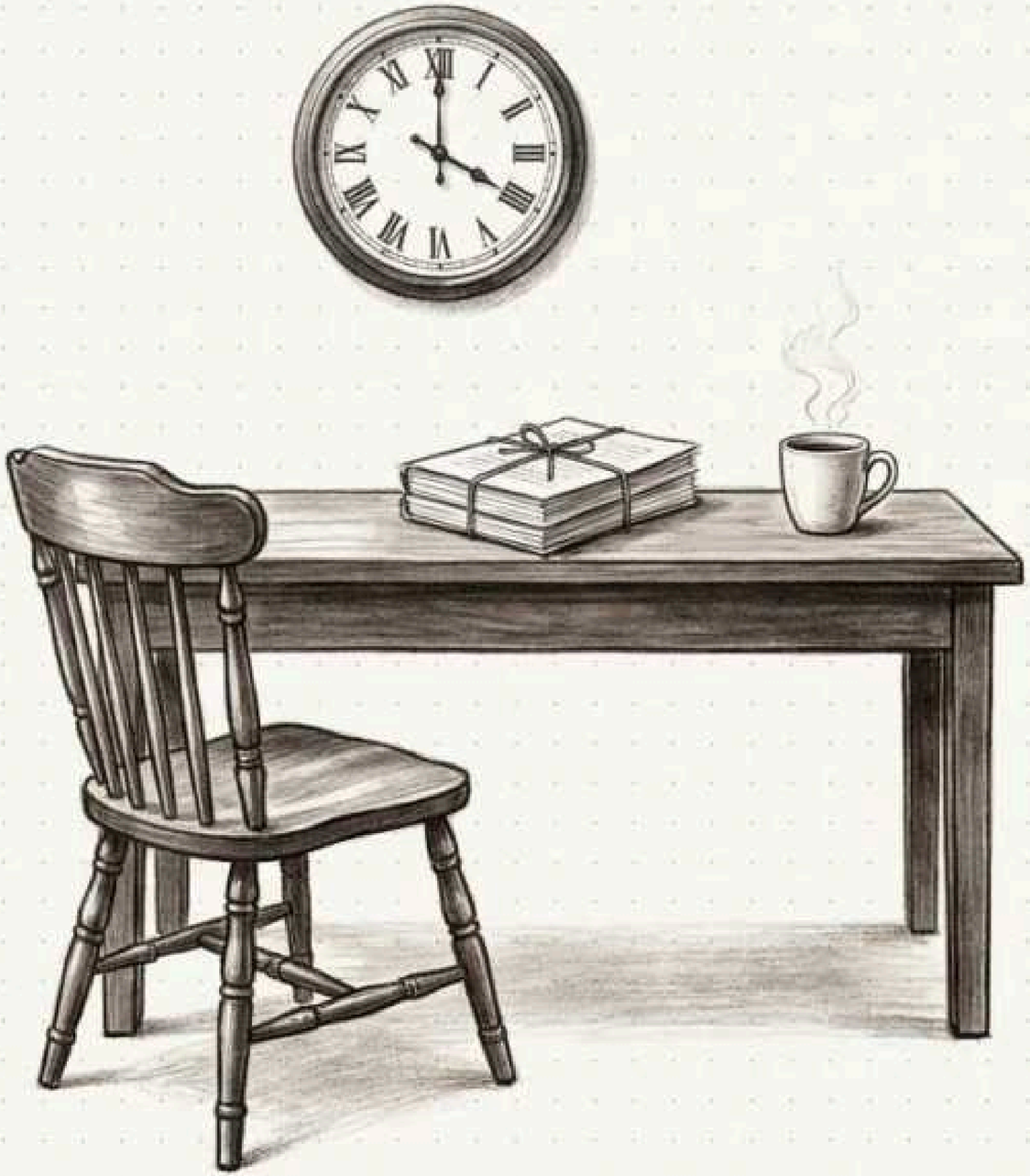
If stuck on a sentence, leave a note to yourself in brackets and keep moving.

Draft in modular chunks

A long essay feels impossible, but a single paragraph does not.



You are allowed to write parts in any order. Many find it easier to write the introduction last, once they know what the essay actually argued.



The analytical power of distance

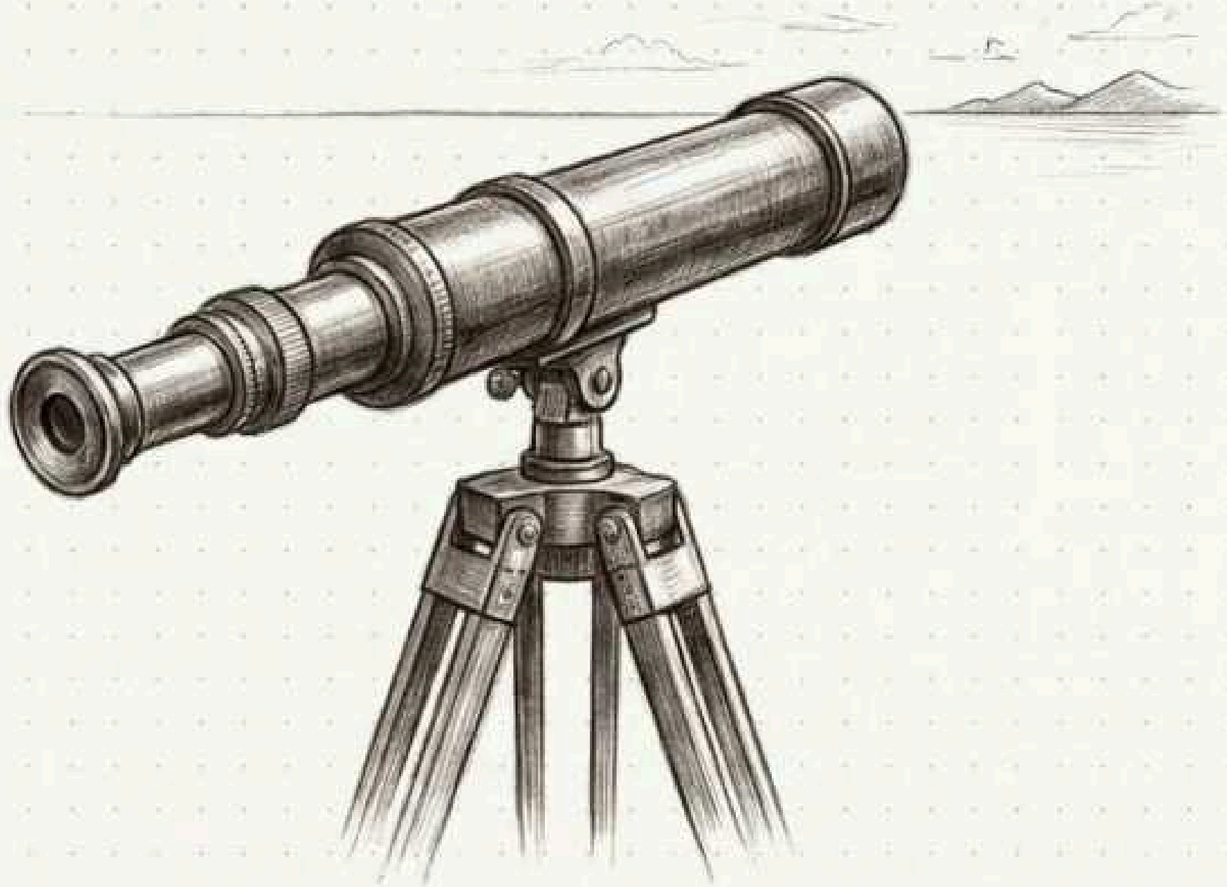
When the draft is done, stop and rest. A few hours helps; a day is better.

Distance lets you read your own work like a stranger would, noticing what is confusing or missing.

⚠ This is the strongest reason to start early, and the most commonly ignored.

Revise literally means To See Again

Revising is asking the big questions, not fixing typos.

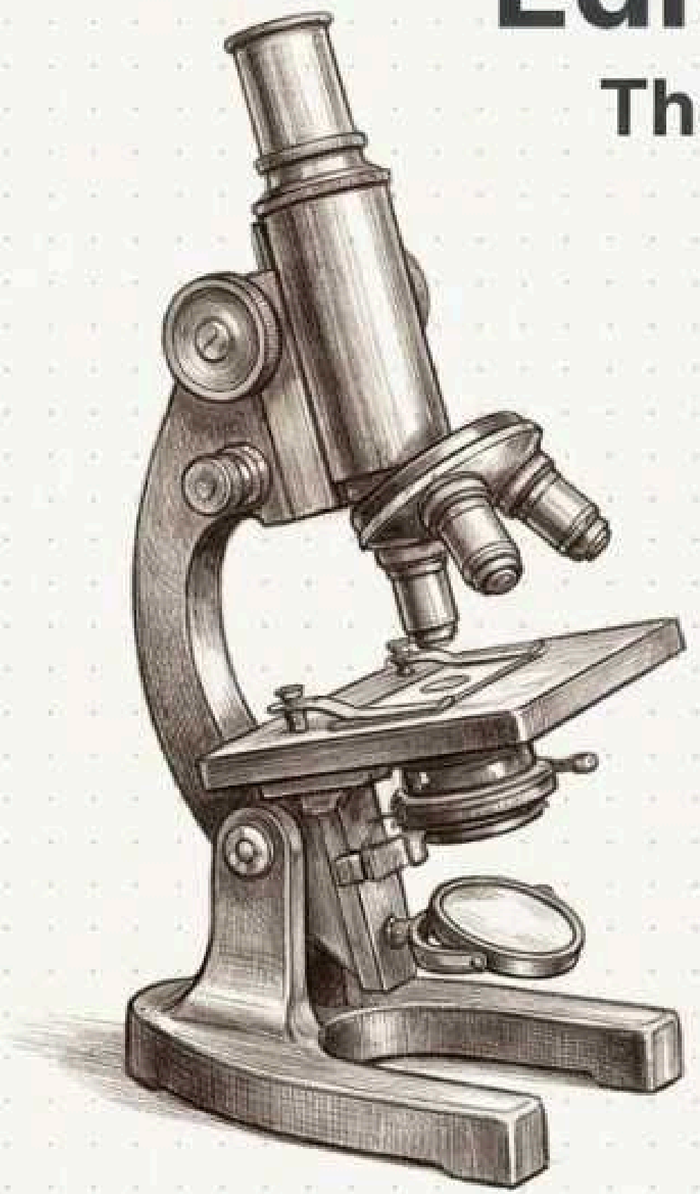


The Macro Checklist

- ☐ *Is my main point clear?*
- ☐ *Is my evidence convincing?*
- ☐ *Is the order right?*
- ☐ *What should be cut, added, or moved?*

Editing & Proofreading

These steps come *after* revising.



⚠ *There is no point in polishing a sentence you will later delete.*

Work through sentences for clarity and concision → *Proofread slowly for spelling, punctuation, and typing slips.*

Reading aloud is one of the best ways to catch errors.



Maintain a writing routine

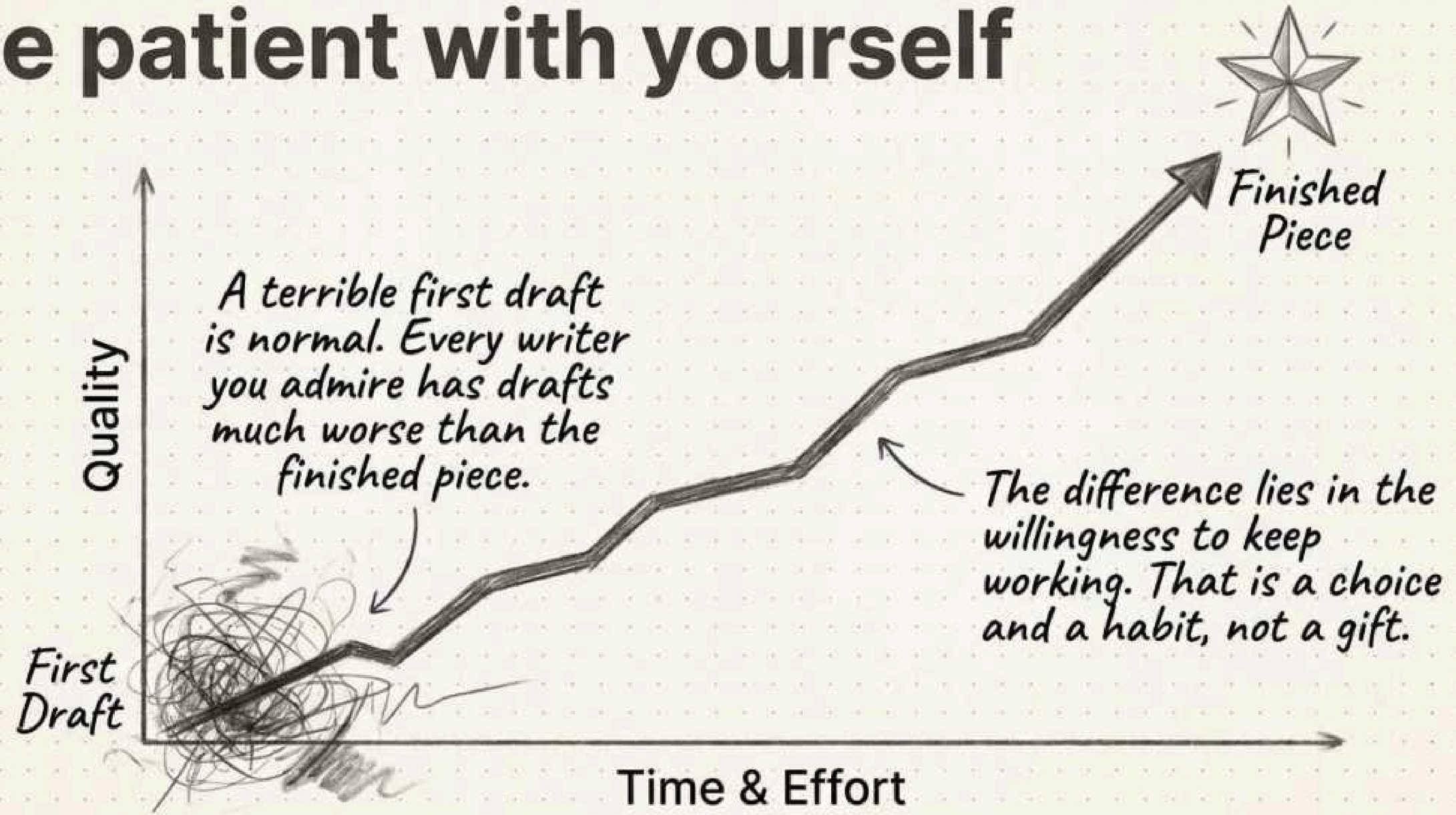
Habit > Inspiration



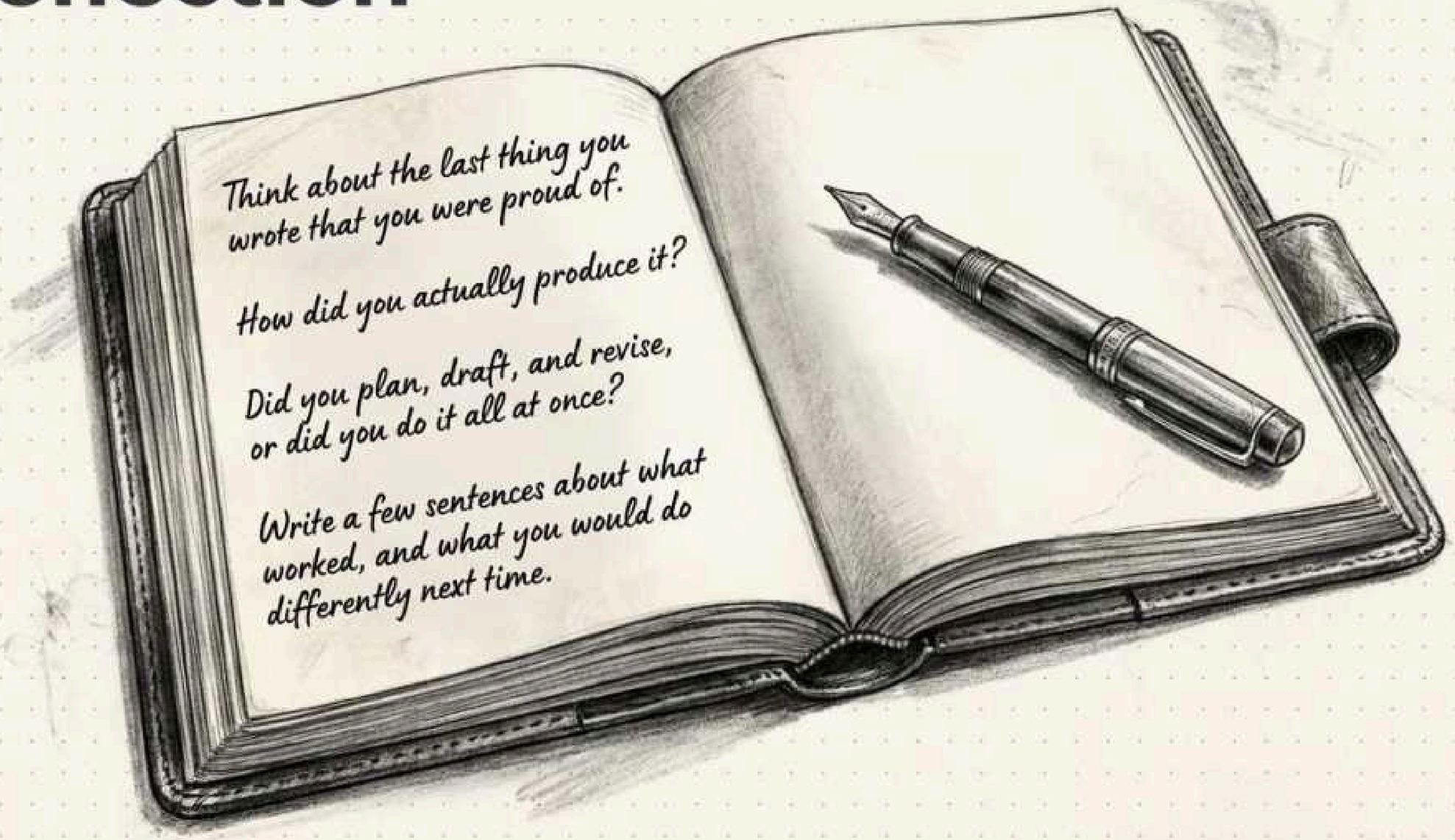
- Pick a regular time and place.
- Begin with a small, easy task (like rereading yesterday's work).

Professional writers rarely wait for inspiration. They sit down at the same time every day, because the habit itself produces the work.

Be patient with yourself



Reflection


Think about the last thing you wrote that you were proud of.
How did you actually produce it?
Did you plan, draft, and revise, or did you do it all at once?
Write a few sentences about what worked, and what you would do differently next time.

Looking Ahead: Lecture 2

