
Writer's Statement about "Work Habits: A Self Study"

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My very first class in Composition I was overwhelming. This was an entirely new way to learn about writing. Analyzing writing and writing about it was completely foreign to me. The new concepts and terminology I had never heard before made the first few weeks rough. When the first paper came around I was terrified. The directions made absolutely no sense to me, and to top it all off the assignment was a research paper. Not just any research paper, but a research paper about myself.

When I began my actual research and started collecting data on my writing habits, I had to be very careful. It was very important that I constantly had a copy of my writing log on me at all times. Most importantly I had to remember to log the work I was doing and the data that went along with that activity immediately. If I happened to forget and try to "fill in the gaps" later, my data would become invalid and could even ruin my research. For the entire week of my research, I had to be extremely cautious. My ability to collect valid, detailed, and relevant data would make or break my essay.

During this process I ran into two major challenges. When I had collected all the data from my research and sat down to analyze and make sense of it all, I was overwhelmed with pages upon pages of charts. There was no way I was ever going to be able to decode these pages of data into useful information that I could write my paper on. Without a reading assignment from class I never would have been able to discover the patterns and work habits that I wrote about in my paper. Converting eleven pages of charts into one concise page of codes was a daunting task, but it was a necessity for the success of my paper.

Overall, the biggest challenge I faced was actually the construction of my paper. We had gone over in class how to reference credited works, and how to put together a proper introduction, and method section, but still this type of writing was entirely new for me. I felt like I was constantly guessing, and that everything I was doing was completely wrong. Workshops in class made my fear of failure even worse. All the papers I read and edited with my peers were completely different than mine. I continued to second-guess my work and I feared the worse. I went back to authors from my textbook as a reference on how to construct a research essay. This became my saving grace. On turn in day, I was still terrified that my paper was going to be a disaster. I worried for an entire week while Professor Wolcott was grading my essay. The day finally came when papers were being returned and my stomach was in knots. My hands were sweaty and I just wanted my name to be called so it would all be over with. I'd get my grade and I could finally relax. I waited, and waited, as all names but mine were being called. Ms. Wolcott dismissed the class and I still didn't get my paper back. She finally called me up and she could tell how nervous I was. I even told her that I thought the paper was horrible and that I was expecting a low grade. She couldn't believe what I was saying. "Actually, I thought your paper was very good, and I wanted to ask you if you would consider entering your paper into the Knights Write Showcase." I could not believe what I was hearing! I worked so hard, and all that work actually paid off!

This has been an amazing experience and I learned so much from Professor Wolcott's ENC 1101 class. This paper has taught me so much about myself as a writer, and I encourage all lost or scared freshman to do a self-study on themselves. All the benefits that come from the research far outweigh the time and dedication it took.