

Nothing tastes better than three in the morning cream puffs filled with mousseline cream custard. Nothing is as refreshing as one am blueberry cobbler or two am chocolate chip pancakes eaten with friends while snickering over memes and unflattering selfies. At that point in the day, everything is better than sitting down to write that huge English paper that is at least a quarter of your grade and most likely due in less than 48 hours. According to the very first blog post I wrote for Sean Bottai's English 109H class back in January of 2016, "**I am a perfectionist. In everything I attempt to do, I strive to produce the very best product of which I am capable. Unfortunately, this is one of the most destructive habits I have because it causes me to have irrational fears about starting projects and burn out by the project's completion.**" ([Mohr](#)). Unfortunately, nothing much has changed from that point to now. I still have a horrendous time trying to start projects. Well, let me rephrase. At this point I would have a ridiculous amount of research done, but not a bit of the rough draft. And it is at this point when I start to stress bake at godforsaken times in the morning. Looking back, I can see quite clearly that what I wrote the first week of class has held throughout the semester, despite my attempts to change it. The desire to perfect projects causes extreme pre-production, limited usefulness of peer review and revision, and success in technical writing.

When I am awake in the wee hours of the morning, I feel like I am the only one in the world. Surprisingly, this makes me relax and I love to bake at this time of night. As I am avoiding my problems and experimenting on the newest dessert in the kitchen, I have had a lot of time to think about anything and everything. My latest early morning project, occurring two days after this self-reflection was assigned, consisted of coffee sugar cookies. As I was pulling batch after batch (I only have one cookie sheet and the DA was gone) of cookies out of the oven, I had an epiphany. Baking and writing are the exact same thing, though I enjoy one infinitely more. They are both intense, long processes that result either in mediocre results or amazing results that I want to share with all my friends. Therefore, I am going to talk about my writing process, which I have a love-hate relationship with, by relating it to what I love to do most. In both writing and baking, pre-production is the initial process.

The first step to baking in a college dorm is looking in one's refrigerator, three other locations of stashed baking ingredients and equipment, and the single secret cache of coveted chocolate chips. After this, I spend forever trying to choose a recipe based on my findings. In regards to my writing process, this is the initial research on the internet to find a suitable topic for an assignment. To me, searching for a topic takes a ridiculous amount of time. For the first project, the post-mortem controversy, I searched forever to choose the topic, going so far as to call my father to ask for his advice. Eventually, I choose the topic of the Thirty Meter Telescope. Now, once the recipe is chosen, I have to decide how to obtain the supplementary ingredients that I did not already have laying around. Now, for a college student, there are two options. One is to go to Umart to buy horrendously overpriced, yet easy to find basic ingredients. The other harder option, however, is to bike one and a half miles to the Safeway to buy fun ingredients unavailable in a college campus market. These fun ingredients like fruit, yeast or cream allow me

to create more interesting desserts with various textures and flavors. This is the option I always choose due to the pride I have in my baking as I only want to serve the very best to the people I like. This is also the option I choose with my research. I dive headfirst into research for any project and resurface two weeks later. For the post mortem controversy project, I had [95 pages of copy and pasted articles on the thirty meter telescope](#). Then, I read through and highlighted all the parts relevant to my QRG on the subject. Similarly, for the public argument I did on the state of Sexual Education in America, I used [Pinterest](#) as a way to visually organize all the potential sources I could use for my video essay as many of my sources were pictures and graphics.

According to the rules of writers, one of the writer types is a heavy planner. “**These writers ‘generally consider their ideas and plan their writing so carefully in their heads that their first drafts are often more like other writers’ second or third drafts...’**” (students guide). I think I am a heavy planner because of my desire for perfectionism and my fear of failure. I have a lot of anxiety about starting the rough draft, so “**I think a paper to death before I start writing it. I develop an argument walking to class, eating, or laying in the grass staring at the clouds. Mostly, I think while waiting to fall asleep, armed with a notepad and the streetlights outside my window**” ([Mohr](#)). Research and planning is the safety net. By doing a ridiculous amount of research and learning everything about the topic and the context surrounding the topic, I can ensure that I will report the most accurate representation of the events. Once I start writing the paper I am accountable for everything I write. I must write my paper ethically: the facts must be perfectly accurate, truthful and representative of all the different parties. The idea of being an ethical writer has been hammered into me since the beginning of high school and again in college in STEM classes. According to The Code of Ethics for Engineers published by the National Society of Professional Engineers, which we read in my Intro to Engineering class at the University of Arizona in the fall, “**Engineers shall be objective and truthful in professional reports, statements, or testimony. They shall include all relevant and pertinent information in such reports, statements, or testimony, which should bear the date indicating when it was current**”. Engineers are extremely serious about honesty because unethical behaviour could lead to the injury or even death of the people who use the engineers’ products. Of course, unintentional inaccuracies or purposeful perjury in a paper about the thirty Meter Telescope or Sex Ed in America likely would not cause the harm to life or limb that unethical engineering could. In fact, professional writers and journalists misrepresent or skew information all the time to make the headlines. However, this common practice of misrepresenting events creates a culture of misinformation and prejudice that I will never intentionally add to. Therefore, I continue on to do ridiculous amounts of research to educate myself thoroughly on the matter before I attempt to educate others on the topic. However, it takes a lot of time to learn everything pertinent to a project, so the deadlines approach and I find myself 24 hours away from a rough draft deadline without having started the paper. Therefore, just like stress baking, I pull an all nighter to write my rough draft. , which leads to limited success of peer reviews.

Unfortunately, there is a common trend for opening posts of my rough drafts for peer reviewers on the Post-mortem ([Mohr](#)), Rhetorical investigation ([Mohr](#)), and public argument ([Mohr](#)). I am unable to just crank out rough drafts. Going back to the definition of a heavy planner, heavy planners tend to have rough drafts that are as polished as other writers' second or third drafts. In my case, this is true because I am too much of a perfectionist to show my work to anyone when it is of lesser quality than I could achieve at that point in time. Therefore, I posted my rough drafts for all three of these projects on Sunday after I was satisfied with their quality. Of course, Sunday is also when the peer reviews are due, so oftentimes other people do not have a chance to peer review my work. This is analogous to setting a timer and putting the cake under the heat of an oven to cook. Oftentimes, the timer is set too short for my peers to roast my essay, so peer reviews are generally not helpful. However, lucky for me, **I have a really good friend who goes to school back in Phoenix. Ever since high school we have bounced ideas off of each other and peer review each other's work at any hour of the day. I completely trust her to say outright, "Erica, your paper is rubbish". When, not if, Julia has major criticisms of my paper, I globally revise my essay completely. A common practice in cake decorating, that few people actually trouble themselves to do, is applying a crumb coat. A crumb coat is a very thin layer of frosting applied on the outside of the cake that traps the crumbs and allows the final coat of frosting to be flawless. However, it takes a lot of time when you just want to get the final coat on and decorations started.**

The crumb coat of writing is global revision. Without global revision, there are imperfections in the final draft that could have been avoided. **Especially with project one, the post mortem controversy on TMT, I did a lot of editing. I managed to meet all the deadlines and complete all the blog posts. This allowed me to do a lot of revision and polishing of my QRG on the Thirty Meter Telescope controversy. However, with the second project, the rhetorical investigation, I got really sick and slept for an entire week straight. I slept through all my morning classes all week, only peeling myself out of bed to go to my two lab sessions and to go to English, of all classes. I lost my voice when I was supposed to record a podcast, with which a voice is as important a tool as the new voice editing technology I had to learn. So, even though I had my rough draft in on time, I did not have enough time to apply a crumb coat to my podcast. I turned in a minimally revised podcast a week late which was definitely a blow to my ego. I have never turned a final paper in late in my entire life. I went to a liberal arts high school that was majorly writing based, even in some of the science classes. There were a lot of papers, that I never turned in late. Then I turned in a paper late and got a C on a calculus test which again I have never ever done. This put me in a really bad position when starting the third project. Already, I was a week late on the blog posts but I was stressed about my STEM classes. I decided English, which is not part of my major, should not be my priority at that point. So, for the remainder of that week and the next week, I worked solely on my STEM classes and the mere thought of English stressed me out to the point where I would complete the lab reports for both of my labs early to avoid English. Obviously, this was a terrible idea. Even though my**

grades in my STEM classes increased, I was just digging myself into a hole with English process work. Eventually, I turned in my video essay on sex ed in America but the the grade I received reflected the terrible process for this essay as it was the lowest grade of the three projects. But, I can really have few regrets with my perfectionist writing process. This process is self-destructive with essays and papers but integral to the success of technical writing, which is the type of writing in my chosen field of study in optical engineering.

The thing that makes writing and baking so similar is that in order to have a successful paper, all the basics have to be met- all the systematic and technical processes to create uniform, good results each time. However, with technical writing it stops here. Technical writing is comforting in its predictability, specificity and uniformity (the writing is, even if the data is far from that). Technical writing is merely reporting definite empirical data and interpreting the trends and derivations. One does not have to question the validity of the sources or fact check data with further research. With this lack of uncertainty, a perfectionist nature creates impeccable lab reports because here is no fear of starting and the consequential falling behind. However, the writing for this course is similar to the goods of an advanced baker. Now that one knows the technical process to get to a good base product, one has to be creative and experiment with the recipe and decorations. This is always the exhausting part of writing more creative to technical lab reports. One can finally try things that other people may not commonly try to make intricate masterpieces.

By no means am I claiming my projects on the TMT, rhetorical investigation or the sex ed in America are masterpieces of writing. No, you have to practice for years and pour your heart into it for years and years to consistently create masterpieces. However, I did go to a liberal arts high school where the stress was on poetry and analytical essays on greek philosophy, mathematical philosophy, classical literature, and European literature. So, I have had time to practice and hone my writing. This class though is the last English class I will ever have to take for my major which is both sad and a relief to me. It means I cannot become a master of the type of writing required for this course. However, the good news is that my perfectionist writing style is perfect for my chosen field of study. I regret nothing.