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ENC 1101

Major Project 2: Profile of a Writer

6 October 2026

Learning About My Friend's Writing Process

Something that I found interesting about my friend was how similar his writing process is to how he codes. He's a student who's majoring in computer science and does game development in his free time, meaning his writing includes writing school papers and communicating with others in projects. Before I interviewed him, I wanted to understand the difference in his writing between school and development, if there were any. In order to learn more, I had the chance to interview him as well as take a look at two pieces of his writing to gain an understanding of how he writes. The first interview comprised of learning about who he was and what he did, with the follow-up interview focusing more on the main questions I had on his writing process and the writing he had done. One piece of writing was a research paper about Tavernlight Games as a possible employer for him ("Workplace Culture"). The other was a group document which explained how his club's points and prizes distribution system should work (Lancaster et al. 3). From the interviews and examples, it helped me to see how he was able to write for different scenarios and his process in doing so.

The two assignments helped me understand how he gets started with different kinds of writing. For Tavernlight, he said that he had to research the company first because he hadn't heard of it before the assignment. With his club project, he was coming up with an idea that

could help with something he already knew about. In our first interview, he explained that keeping track of the club's points had become difficult, which gave him a reason to create the system ("Interview 1"). In the follow-up, he said he enjoyed the freedom to design it, but explaining how it would work was still challenging ("Interview 2"). I found that interesting because having an idea and explaining it clearly are different parts of the process. He could know what he wanted to make while still needing to figure out details as he wrote and talked about it with his teammates.

During our first interview, he talked about making minimum viable products, a term in game development where you make a basic working version of a project before expanding on it further. This is a common idea in the space, and he follows a similar approach with writing by getting his ideas down before revising and improving them. He talked about this further in the follow-up and stated how, "Instead of trying to perfect my work on the first pass, I take it in waves" ("Interview 2"). This ideology relates to Anne Lamott's "Shitty First Drafts," where she explains that an imperfect first draft lets a writer find ideas first and develop them later (Lamott). His experience with development gives him a familiar way to understand why writing a rough draft is useful.

Even though he understands the benefits of doing so, he sometimes tends to spend too much time revising his first draft to make it good. In our first interview, he mentioned working around 12 hours straight at one point on his rough draft because he was worried about the criticism he'd get if it wasn't well written ("Interview 1"). This stood out as I tend to spend too much time revising my initial drafts as well. A writing teacher eventually helped him to be more comfortable with having mistakes and getting feedback. He said that his teacher got him to understand that criticism could improve his writing and that his drafts did not need to be perfect

("Interview 1"). Deborah Brandt's discussion of literacy sponsors helped me understand this influence. I see his teacher as a sponsor because the advice guided how he approached writing (Brandt). This advice ended up sticking with him and helped him improve his writing more.

When he starts revising, his changes can ultimately affect the structure of the entire paper. In the follow-up interview, he said, "The final draft is typically a lot different than my rough draft because my opinions and thoughts usually have changed" ("Interview 2"). Nancy Sommers explains this concept on how writers revise to develop their meaning and consider how a reader will understand the whole piece (Sommers). In this case, my friend's description is like the experienced writers because his ideas change as he revises instead of simple fixes in words and phrases. This is a good reminder as the first draft helps you to explore all your options, and revision allows writers to hone in on their ideas when done properly.

The club document gave me a clearer example of what these changes could involve. It has requirements for the system and use cases, which explain what should happen when someone uses a feature. For example, the prize redemption section describes checking a member's points, subtracting the cost, and updating the record when a prize is claimed (Lancaster et al. 8). That kind of writing needs to explain the steps clearly enough for someone else to build or test them. In the follow-up, he said that his diagram changed as he developed the idea further and realized more needed to be included ("Interview 2"). This helped me understand what he meant about his thoughts changing during revision. He was figuring out how the parts worked together while explaining them. It also gave his teammates something specific to discuss instead of everyone working from a different understanding of the same general idea.

He also spoke on receiving feedback, and how other readers help to figure out what he should change in his writing. For his Tavernlight assignment, he felt that something was wrong,

but he didn't know what, and so he got his mother to help by reviewing it ("Interview 1"). For the club project, everyone worked in the same document and revised each other's sections. He described a teammate misunderstanding how the login system should work, which they clarified needed to use a club authentication code ("Interview 2"). These examples show why feedback matters to him, and how they help to improve his and others' writing.

He also talked about the tools he uses to help with his writing. He uses ChatGPT to find sources related to information he wants to discuss, then reads through those sources and decides which ones are useful. He said that he uses it to point out sections that need work before making the changes himself ("Interview 1"). For his assignments, he used an example paper to help format the Tavernlight research and a teammate's template for the club document ("Interview 2"). These examples helped me see how his process includes support from both people and tools. He still has to choose what information fits and whether the writing explains his ideas properly. A template can help him organize the paper, but it doesn't decide what he wants to say. This relates to the feedback he gets because each gives him another way to notice something he could improve or explain differently.

Overall, the interviews helped me to understand how my friend uses a similar drafting and revising process across the different kinds of work he does. His assignments need different information and formats, but he still uses his same process as a draft before improving it through revisions. Feedback helps him notice problems he might miss on his own. It's interesting to see how his writing lines up with the articles read in class, and how they help to explain how his writing process is. I could also relate to his troubles with spending too much time on rough drafts. For my own writing, I think it would help to get my ideas down before spending so much time fixing them, while remembering that I will have another chance to revise.

Works Cited

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