

The Learning Values

In addition to skills, understanding, and hard work, writing requires five values: Conviction, Realization, Expression, Direction, and Operation. The first letters of these values spell a Latin word: *CREDO*, which means “I believe.” None of these principles will do anything of themselves without being activated by a personal belief that they are sound, and that they can guide your progress. With this basis, you can determine your own philosophy of writing and expression, not simply take the teacher’s word. Test the values and see what happens in the real world.

Conviction and Realization

One writing teacher who has championed authorship and the philosophy of individual writing is influential master-teacher Peter Elbow, author of *Writing without Teachers* and *Writing with Power*. The writing values in the bridge schema above are all present in Elbow’s writing, beginning with those that relate directly to the self, conviction and realization. Of the first principle, Elbow stated, “Thinking and action is necessarily based on underived first principles and premises” (Elbow, 1968a, p. 991). In other words, realized and unrealized values or sometimes false premises form a basis for the all of the work you will do in this class.

Utilizing convictions means moving beyond stereotypes and “believing in yourself, in your work, and in the act of writing.” A student who is thusly “committed” can generate work that is worthwhile and meaningful, and create “meanings that are blended at a finer level, integrated more thoroughly. Not merely manipulated by his mind, but rather sifted through his entire self” (Elbow, 1998, p. 8). This phenomenon is called realization, and it is a primary step in many self-help, enlightenment, and learning paradigms. Likewise, it is part of your process towards authorship and the true self. Conviction and realization leads to honesty and self-awareness.

Expression and Direction

When it’s actually time to write, authors follow their “voices,” writing down what their self “says” inside their head. This isn’t just a proposal for novice writers or students – all powerful writing is voiced, or “alive in this primary sense—it contains not just propositions but a person” (Elbow, 1968b, p. 122). Expression of your voice is a major part of the connection you make with your readers. But it has to go somewhere, having some logical, moral, or artistic vision. Writers who find their voice “know that they are on their way to more than mere non-offensiveness” (Elbow, 1998, p. 303). Identifying your direction will give your writing potential.

Operation

An operation is action taken towards your objective. Once you’ve identified your direction, you must take action to finish the essay properly. If you mostly want an A, then you should edit and share, but this course encourages you to do more. Elbow said that a writer’s ability to take action relies on character, courage, and resolve: “If ethos is nothing but implied... it loses all power” (Elbow, 2000, p. 214). If authors allow their voices to emerge, they are “set free to feel more deeply, to think more cogently, and above all, to act more courageously” (Elbow, 1968a, p. 93). In your search for voice and self, writing is only the gateway to personal action.