

Chapter 25: Speech, Invention, and Reflection: The Composing Process of Soundwriting

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3. Alphabetic Process Note #5 (out of 9) by Carolynn

After a few weeks of non-stop work with the start of the school year, I returned to my project, now with some (motivating?) panic that I pushed it off. In the interim, I've gotten some distance from my move, and I've returned to the footage I took.

Listening to footage was both boring and embarrassing. I don't love the sound of my own voice. But more importantly, so many of my recordings are happening as people move around: voices come and go, there are unidentifiable background sounds, and (worst of all) there are long pauses or inaudible dialogs. The ability to see spikes in volume in audacity and scroll ahead certainly saves time, but unfortunately, I am still not sure how much footage is usable.

I am realizing that a "footage first" approach, while initially appealing, means a ton of work on the back end to create a sense of coherence or meaning. I gathered lots of footage, but not what I needed. The sheer volume of recorded minutes implied that there was more to work with than there actually is. In the future, I would certainly record with more of a plan.

After feeling stymied, I finally turned to tactics that have served me well in other modes of composing: brainstorming, outlining, and background research. I created the following (bare) outline:

INTRODUCTION:

- About thirty-six million people do it each year in the U.S.
- That's one in nine.
- And this year, I was one of them!

THE DECISION: Six months out

- emails . . . moving in together

THE HUNT: Two months out

- the nightly craigslist routine . . .
- Jodi's ad

THE ANTICIPATION: Two weeks out

- Sasha's survey

PACKING: Three days out

- still not packed
- leaving to get the keys

STILL PACKING: One night out

- seven years in one place
- preemptively nostalgic
- where my mother slept the night before I was born!

THE BIG DAY: Day of

- Facts about moving: how many boxes per year in the U.S.?

THE CHAOS: Day after

- post-its mixed in with my socks and my underwear no where to be found

HOME, AGAIN: Two months after

My main reflection now is that I am daunted by composing in sound. Perhaps only because I am more comfortable in alphabetic text, I think I prefer it. I am glad that I've finally decided to turn to what I know how to do in order to get going on something that feels far less familiar. The adage "write what you know" has taken a twist for me into: "compose how you know." For the moment, that's with keyboard.