Word Processing

**Learn to type**. The ultimate limitation of any word processor is the speed at which you enter data; hence, the ability to type quickly is invaluable. Learning how to type is far from an insurmountable problem, especially with the availability of computer-based typing programs. As little as a half hour a day for a couple of weeks will have you up to speed, and if you do any significant amount of writing at all, the investment will pay off many times.

Write now, but edit later. You write a sentence, then change it, and change it again, and one hour later, you have produced a single paragraph. It happens to the best of writers - you stare at a blank screen and flashing cursor and are unable to write. The best solution is to brainstorm and write down anything that pops into your head, and to keep on writing. Do not worry about typos or spelling errors because you can fix them later. Above all, resist the temptation to edit continually the few words you have written because over-editing will drain the life out of what you are writing. The important thing is to get your ideas on paper.

Delete with caution. It’s all too easy to delete a paragraph, and then realize five minutes later that you need it back. Hence, instead of deleting a large block of text, move it to the end of a document or writing it to another file, so that you can restore the text if you change your mind. A related practice is to remain in the insert mode (as opposed to the replacement mode) to prevent inadvertent deletion of text as new ideas are added.

Save often. A loss of power, whether it is your fault or the power company's, can destroy a creative masterpiece. The best insurance is to save your work constantly and, in addition, to save your work whenever you are interrupted by a phone call, the doorbell, etc.

Keep duplicate copies of important files. It is critical to maintain duplicate copies of important files, on a separate disk stored away from the computer. Eventually, you will accidentally erase a file or suffer a similar misfortune; better safe than sorry and one day you will thank us. In addition, print each new document at the end of every session, saving the document before printing it (power failures happen when least expected, for example, during the print operation). Hard copy is not as good as a duplicate disk, but it is better than nothing.

Take a break. The computer quickly becomes addictive, and we can almost guarantee that you will find yourself in front of the machine much longer than you expect. A quick five-minute change somehow stretches into ten minutes, then a half-hour. Periodic breaks will keep you refreshed and help to sustain your creativity.

Impose a time limit. A word processor is supposed to save time and make you more productive. It will do exactly that provided you use the word processor for its primary purpose — writing and editing. It is all too easy; however, to lose sight of that objective and spend inordinate amounts of time on formatting which is often counter-productive. Concentrate on the content of your document rather than its appearance. Impose a time limit on the amount of time spent on formatting and end the session when that time limit has expired.