

# 11.1

## When to Stop Writing

There are some people who wrap up their assignments and hand them in without any trouble. If you are one of those, you don't need to read this. Some people cannot stop tinkering, and don't know when to let it go. If you are one of these, then please read on.

### The sensible version

An assignment is like a painting. There comes a point when adding touches here and there does more harm than good.

The advice in Chapters 3 and 11 is based around writing a first and second draft. After that comes some topping and tailing (spell check, completing references and editing). After that comes the final draft.

We recommend putting the assignment aside and then rereading and editing it for the final draft, but this should entail no more than minor tweaks. As a very rough rule of thumb, if the time you spend tweaking at the end gets to be more than a tenth of the time you've spent on actually writing the two main drafts, then it's time to stop. It won't be perfect. It never will be. But you've reached the best you can do for now, and there's plenty more to move on to.

### Other versions

When you run out of chocolate biscuits.

When you've been staring at the page without the words making any more sense than they did half an hour ago.

When you realize you've spent more time writing it than reading the material you used in it.

When doing the washing up/listening to Jedward/visiting the dentist suddenly seem like attractive prospects.

When the body count is getting too high.

When you recognize the symptoms of analysis paralysis.

When your last creative thought was over 24 hours ago.

When you start to feel sorry for your tutor.

Now.

When you've made your point.

When you start worrying more about the word count than the content. (For one tutor's view of word count, see 'The Tao of Word Count' at <http://reallyusefulknowledge.blogspot.com/2009/10/tao-of-word-count.html>.)

When it's done. (You'll get to know that better with experience.)