

BS.-ING. FUDGING. Padding. You know what I'm talking about--how to fill up ten to fifteen pages on a topic you know nothing about. Yeah, that's right. Bullshit. Now, let it be clearly

understood that there is an art to b.s.-ing your way through a paper. You can b.s. the paper, but you can't b.s. the b.s. Since most of the university community are presently up to their unmentionables in papers, I thought now would be the appropriate time to present some do's and don't's on b.s.-ing those essays and term papers. While the mood of this article is somewhat lighthearted, the advice herein is both completely serious, and totally valid. Following this advice will raise your marks substantially, assuming you don't do something else completely stupid that I didn't discuss here.

PART 1: BABBLING ON

Let's face it. You'll get lots of assignments to write 3000 words on a topic on which there is only 1000 words worth of stuff to say. So write your 1000 words. Then what? First of all, DO NOT, under any circumstances, repeat what you've already said three times more and hand it in. It's time to pad the essay, and it's time to call upon all your reserves of finesse and subtlety. There are three good techniques for filling out a paper to the required length.

Filler #1) JARGON AND DEFINITION. Clarify, explain, and clarify some more. This is a great way to fill space, and it's an intelligent one as well. No well-written paper should be an inscrutable fog of jargon. (Civil service documents are not well-written papers.) If you were taught special terms or phrases in the course, though, you should be able to toss them around in your writing on the course topic. So, you start talking about the widgetry of sixteenth-century Bavarian literature. Groovy. Define it. Distinguish it from wuzzlery. Explain the background of the term 'widgetry'. Whatever.

Even if you didn't get much in the way of specialized jargon in your course, fear not! Actually, it's even better that way. (If you were taught the jargon in class, your prof has his or her own idea of what the term means.) What you do now is get REALLY intense about defining the terms you use. It doesn't matter if they're quite ordinary words that a child of two knows. You're producing something original as the synapses in your brain collide, and vomiting it out into this essay. Therefore, you should clarify everything you say. Besides, you can fill a complete, double-spaced page defining what you mean by education in your particular context!

Filler #2) WRITE LIKE PETER GZOWSKI TALKS. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the host of CBC Radio's *Morningside* program, Mr. Gzowski is in the habit of doing very long commentaries full of qualifiers and interjections. It runs something like this: "This morning, scant moments after

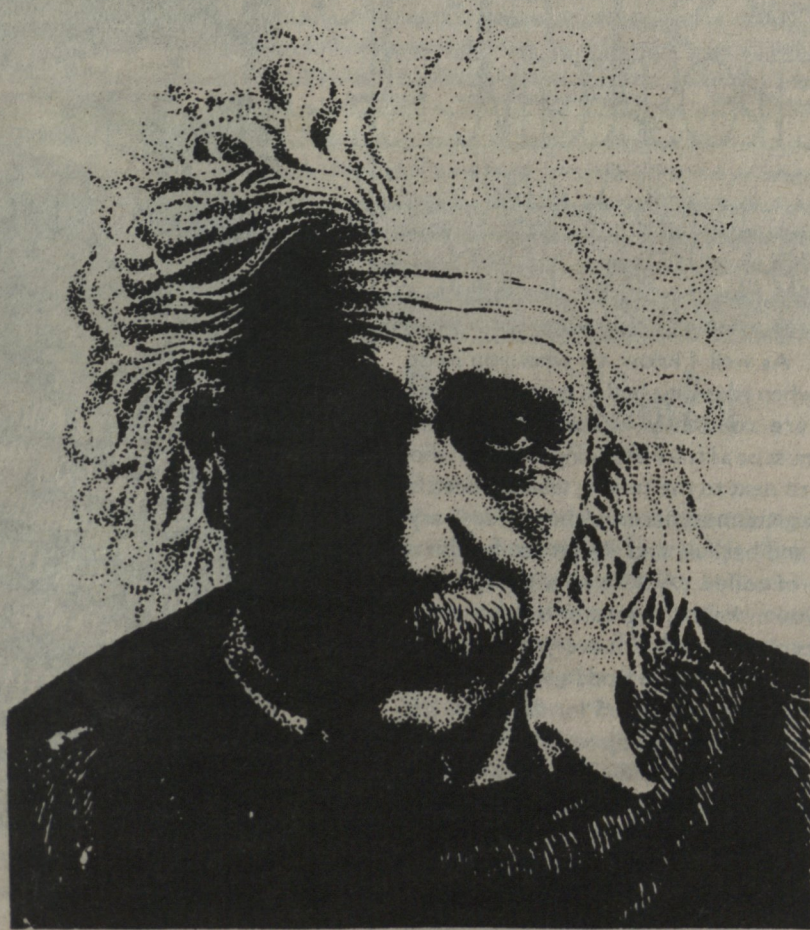
GETTING YOUR DEGREE IN B.S.

THE FINE ART OF THE COMPOSITIONAL SNOWJOB By Teresa Cassidy

the breaking of what I like to call--although many will disagree with me on this, some circles anyway, moot point--the dawning of a new day, I and my, if I may say, life partner or significant other, not quite arose but more laid still for the most part unconscious from our warm, but yet not entirely comfortable slumber into a partially somnambulist state." (Translation: My wife and I got up early this morning.) Be VERY careful if you're trying this method. You can get yourself so tangled up in subordinate clauses and misplaced modifiers that you won't know where you are going; but qualifying things doubles as a filler and an

attempt to be excruciatingly accurate-- and what's wrong with being accurate? So don't just say "The boys went to the store." Say "The majority of the boys who live on the east side of the old line road went on foot to the catalogue outlet of Sears Canada." Just make sure the sentence makes sense. If you can't say it aloud, don't write it.

Filler #3) SIDE RESEARCH. It can be appropriate to fill out your information that is directly related on the topic at hand with some extra stuff. This extra stuff MUST clearly relate to the topic of your essay. This technique is good for throwing in some technical



information or some contrasting opinions. For instance, if you're writing about the artistic impact of the painting in the Sistine Chapel, it could work well if you smoothly worked in a section of technical information on how Michelangelo prepared his frescoes, and how he kept the paint from dripping off the ceiling into his eyes. Remember, the key word here is "smoothly". It shouldn't look like a completely different topic zinged in from a space mission and landed in the middle of your paper. In the example above, you might work it in by suggesting that besides being a darn impressive-looking painting, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel also introduced important techniques that other artists have found useful. (Maybe I don't know. I don't study fine arts, but you get the idea.)

Contrasting opinions can be good too--when used carefully. For instance, if the prof wants you to read and do a book review, but not spend time researching all sorts of dense academic opinions, that's groovy. You can do it that way. You can also slip in the info that the staff reviewer of the *Daily Hornblower* thinks that this book sucks donkeys. (Naturally you would phrase that in the most polite and intellectual manner possible.)

PART 2: THE HOME STRETCH

Ok. So those are some of the best ways of filling out a paper. Remember, be smooth about it. Subtlety is your watch word!! It doesn't matter if you don't really have anything to say. You're in university, and you're supposed to be using your brain. It's just as important to use your brain to be devious as it is to learn the course material.

So now that you've padded out the paper with some not necessarily vital, yet not completely extraneous material, how do you make sure you don't completely blow it? No matter how clever your bullshitting, you won't get through if you commit one or more of these major, tacky boo-boos. If you do these things, the person marking your paper will be so disgusted, they won't give your text a fair reading. Therefore, memorize this list of

WAYS TO MAKE YOURSELF LOOK LIKE A COMPLETE IDIOT IN 10 WORDS OR LESS

1) Get the name and number of the course wrong on the title page of the essay. Actually, you could even get away with screwing up the number of the course, but if you write that on the paper you're handing in to your English prof on the topic he assigned, is for Anthropology 391, all your credibility is blown. Misspelling the prof's name doesn't help, either.

2) Screw around with the margins on your word processor in an obvious fashion. Move your margins and the line spacers around. It's been a refuge of the desperate for as long as students have been typing papers. Everybody knows about it, and everybody has been reduced to doing it at one time or another. But the