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New Directions in Writing

Wiki Analysis

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How to Make a Paracord Dog Leash

When creating on online article, as a writer, I automatically begin thinking of all the possible people who may find my piece and read it. Of course, this can be exhausting as anyone anywhere can read a public online document. Creating a *WikiHow* article was somewhat different than thinking of the audience for, say, a blog post or a Tweet; the audience of a *WikiHow* article is somewhat more specific, which makes this type of online document somewhat easier to create. Unfortunately, like most things, this article also came with its fair share of difficulties in its composition. The piece had to be functional and easy to follow, but also specific enough to deter others from feeling the need to edit my work, all while still writing to a general Internet audience that was focused, in my mind, to dog owners who wish to create a leash of their own.

Thinking of the challenges of creating this Wiki article continually brought up my own fear surrounding the idea that anyone could edit my work. As a writer, I am used to thinking of my work as my own, not as a collaboration with others that I have never met. For this reason, I attempted to include every possible step, disclaimer, and photo that one could need when creating a dog leash. In my mind, this would deter others from needing to "fix" anything. So of course I was humbled when only a few minutes after posting the article "LeahLovesGod" changed the phrase, "Check out *my* YouTube video for more help with

some of the steps!" to, "Check out *this* YouTube video…" Leah's edit took away the only piece of ownership that was implied throughout the entire article, and, of course, she was correct. My habitual thinking that writing is my own does not at all translate to writing for a *WikiHow* page. The premise of the site is to be communal, so naturally my instinct to include the personal pronoun does not belong.

Pronoun use is not the only rhetoric that needed to be remembered in the article's creation. Since I was writing a "how-to" article for a specific audience, I had to keep my language use functional and easy to follow. The steps had to be detailed so the user could understand exactly what to do, but they also had to be simple enough for someone of any skill level (or reading level) to understand. To achieve this goal, I went through several drafts of writing the steps. First, I wrote down what was happening on a piece of paper while actually creating the leash. Then, I took those notes and created a more formal word document with full sentences. After going through the writing guidelines for creating a *WikiHow* article, I learned it was best to begin each sentence with a verb, so I reformatted several of my steps to match this suggestion. Last, I added and edited my photos to go along with each step.

When composing the steps, I had to remain critical of my own wording, while also being sure to delete unnecessary phrases that could be understood better with a photograph. As I went on, I learned that perhaps video was a better means at expressing some of the steps (such as the actual weave itself) so I created a short video that spliced together video representation of 3 of the most complicated, in my mind, steps.

Looking at the finished article on *WikiHow*, I am pleased with the final results. While I'm sure that community members will continue to edit and change my piece, I have to

remain confident that those people will be making changes for the better so that others can better understand the project. The unique compilation of words, pictures, and video was an interesting way to compose a piece, but with all three elements, I think that the product is able to remain functional while also being creative. Those reading my piece can now be critical of my work and make changes that they feel are the most relevant to the project., while still ensuring that the piece is easy to follow and detailed.