Establishing a Writing Habit

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So what is a writing habit?

A writing habit, sometimes referred to as a writing practice, is a set time or amount of time for writing every day.
Why does it matter?

- Establishing a writing practice allows you to tackle large projects in achievable intervals.
- It lessens stress around writing.
- It will help you to remember the importance of writing for the development and advancement of your career.
- For those of us hoping for a career in academia, publishing is one of the largest facets of receiving tenure, so writing is a necessity.
- As your career progresses and you take on more tasks and responsibilities, you need to practice how to make time for specific repeated tasks.
How To Establish a Writing Habit: Two Ways

Build a Habit Gradually Over a Month

Step 1: Start writing on a specific goal for 15 minutes a day.

Step 2: Repeat 15 minutes

Step 3: Continue until you have completed a week of 15 minutes a day.

Step 4: Move to 30 minutes a day for a week.

Step 5: Move to 45 minutes a day for a week.

Step 6: Move to 60 minutes a day for a week.

Step 7: Don’t Stop Writing Once a day!!!

Track Your Writing

Step 1: Track your writing for a week.
- Write down when you write.
- Note when you are least productive.
- Note when you are most productive.
- List the distractions to your writing.
- List where you write.
- Consider how long it takes you to write a 1 page.

Step 2: Rank when you are most productive.

Step 3: Decide which time of day you are most productive and have the time to dedicate to writing.

Step 4: Set aside time to write everyday during that period.
ONE DOES NOT SIMPLY

THINK OF AN OPENING SENTENCE FOR AN ESSAY
How can I write everyday?

1. Free write on a blank page.
2. Write a list.
3. Line-edit a piece of writing.
4. Reorganize a paper you have written or are writing.
5. Take a piece from an older piece of writing and expand it.
6. Take pieces from older pieces of writing to create a new paper.
7. Check references, endnotes, and/or footnotes accuracy and clarity.
8. Outline or mind-map a new piece of writing.
9. Summarize or take notes on relevant piece of writing.
10. Write a response to a piece of scholarship you feel strongly about.
11. Make a revision plan for a rejected article or a revise and submit.
12. Revise an article for resubmission.
13. Write an outline on a paper you have already written (Reverse-outline).
14. Make tables, figures, graphs, or images to represent visually concepts or trends in a paper.
The Problem/s:

- You have no idea where to start.
- You have ideas but are not sure how they relate to one another.
- You dislike writing.
- You cannot seem to stay on task.
- You do not have the time.
- You have anxiety around writing.
- You are afraid of feedback.
- You fear your writing is not good enough.
- You feel as though you do not have the words.
- You procrastinate.
- You do not think of yourself as a writer.
- You do not have the space to write.
- You are bombarded by distractions.
- You cannot seem to stay on task.
- You do not have the time.

Stop Gaps

Environmental
- You do not have the space to write.
- You are bombarded by distractions.

Behavioral
- You procrastinate.
- You cannot seem to stay on task.
- You do not have the time.

Mental
- You do not think of yourself as a writer.
- You dislike writing.
- You have anxiety around writing.
- You are afraid of feedback.
- You fear your writing is not good enough.
The Triangle of Writing Despair

Time: You never have enough of it.

Task: Your task is overwhelming or is not feasible to do in the time period you have allotted.

Accountability: There is a problem with holding yourself accountable.
Schedule

- When will you complete basic life tasks?
  - Eat
  - Sleep
  - Bathe
  - Exercise

- When will you spend time with your children, partner, friends, or family?

- Do you have other obligations? What are their time limitations?
  - Volunteering?
  - Participation in a faith community?

- What about graduate student life?
  - Class?
  - Lab?
  - Recitations?
  - Grading?
  - Travel to and from campus?
  - Doctors appointments?
  - Conferences?
  - Workshops?
  - Presentations?
  - Meetings?
  - Clubs?

* Think about how you can fit writing into your life. Not how you fit life around your writing!
S.M.A.R.T. Goals

- **Specific**—clearly defined and identified
- **Measurable**—quantifiable, either in paragraphs, sections, pages, and/or time
- **Attainable**—able to be achieved and realistic
- **Relevant**—appropriate for your goals for the semester
- **Time-bound**—a target date
Accountability

The ideal: Your advisor or a person on your committee helps you create hard deadlines.

- Find a person in your life who you will hold you accountable.
- Create a working writing group and place your writing on the schedule.
- Make appointments with a Writing Center Coach or an Academic Coach in the Learning Center.
- Use coursework to make a draft deadline.
- Use applications to make deadlines:
  - Apply for conferences.
  - Apply for workshops.
  - Apply for fellowships or grant funding.
  - Volunteer to make a presentation in your community or with an organization that you are passionate about or connected to your work.
- Ask to guest lecture for a course.

The Goal:
Make Soft Deadlines into Hard Deadlines.
Three Types of Writing Groups

**Working Group**—a group that gets together and writes together

- This type of group helps with establishing a writing practice.
- They help create productivity because of positive peer pressure.
- They allow you to make time dedicated to the practice of writing.

**Reading Group**—a group that gets together and reads the work of a member each week

- This type of group helps with normalizing receiving feedback on writing.
- They help think through the process of editing a paper.
- They allow you to practice providing feedback.
- They help you think about how to use and receive feedback.

**Hybrid Group**—a group that writes together and reads the work of its members

**All Groups:**

- Normalize an ongoing scholarly community.
- Normalize understanding diverse opinions.
- Help you construct an audience of readers for your writing.
- Anticipate reader reactions.
- Cultivate proper scholarly discourse.
Some Resources To Consider

- UNC Writing Center
  (https://writingcenter.unc.edu/)
- UNC Learning Center
  (https://learningcenter.unc.edu/)
- IME Writing Group
- National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity
  (https://www.facultydiversity.org/)
- Departmental Writing Groups
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Answer Two Questions:

1. What would you like me to know about you as a writer?
2. What topic would you like to learn more about this semester?