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Becoming a Productive Faculty Writer – A Summary of Best Practices

Writing is hard work AND it is a major part of the life of academics. The resources below offer useful advice on becoming a more productive faculty writer.

Twelve tips to increasing your writing productivity

1. Write Daily—Daily writing, even for 15 minutes, seems to be more productive in the long run than "binge writing". Some experts suggest writing for 15 minutes to begin and try to eventually increase this to 90 minutes daily. The key is to write regularly, and that means daily.

2. Have a Goal—Know what you are going to do each day. This could be research, working on a first draft, editing, gathering resources, preparing the final draft to send off to a journal or colleagues for their feedback. Have a goal. Have a plan for the day's activities.

3. Keep a Writing Log—Briefly note what you did each session—the amount of time you wrote, number of words you wrote, the sorts of activities in which you were engaged. Over a span of time, this can help you see how far you have come and how much you have accomplished.

4. Stop at a Good Place—When you find yourself in the zone and the writing is flowing and the ideas are being put to paper easily there can be a tendency to want to write for a long time. Fight this urge. It has been suggested that finding a good place to stop—after a certain amount of time or certain number of words –is better in the long run because it gives you an better place from which to begin the next day. If you are worried that you may lose critical ideas, jot them down where you will remember them the next day.

5. Your Workplace—Of course having an ergonomically sound chair, comfortable desk, and good lighting can assist your writing process. The reality is that none of those things will

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provide the spark to get you to write each day. So outfit yourself with the tools you need, but don't let the lack of the perfect setting keep you from your writing goals.

6. Limit Distractions—This is very, very important–possibly the most important aspect of your workplace setting. Shut the door and tune out the outside world. Turn off email notification. Turn off the TV. Shut down the internet. Some writers even suggest using a word processor that limits the bells and whistles to keep you focused on the writing, and only on the writing.

7. Learn to Like Your Writing—The more you like your writing the easier it will be to return to it each day. It will also make it easier to share with others. Faculty come from a "culture of critique" so it can be difficult to see the positives in your own work. The more you can embrace your writing, in all of its glories, the better it will be in the long run.

8. Maintain Multiple Projects—When you are working on different projects, you will be at different points in each of them, meaning each will require different levels and kinds of engagement from you. This will enable you to make choices of where to focus your energy for that particular day.

9. Always Keep a Notepad With You—Develop your own method to keep track of your brilliant ideas, resources, and other important information that you encounter every day. This can be high tech or low tech. Just figure out what works best for you.

10. Share Your Work—Getting feedback on your work is key, and it's risky, especially in the early stages of the project. The upside of early feedback is that it can help prevent you from traveling down a road that may not be productive. Better to find that out early. As you share your work, be sure to let your colleagues know how they can best help you—what exactly are you hoping to get from their reading of your work? Being a good colleague can also mean you offering to read their work in return.

11. Consider a Writing Group—For some/many faculty, writing groups have been helpful in helping provide feedback and holding them accountable. CoDaC is available to assist faculty in setting up writing groups with other colleagues.

12. Take Care of Yourself—If you are eating well, getting enough sleep, exercising, and working to be in a good place emotionally and spiritually you will be a happier person in general and your work will be better.

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Web Resources

Seven Steps for Becoming a More Productive Writer by Mano Singham (http://www.changemag.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/March-April%202008/full-seven-steps.html)

Shut Up and Write by Kerry Ann Rockquemore (https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/summer/summer2) Inside Higher Education, June 14, 2010

At Least One Small Thing a Day: The Elements of Writing Productivity by Michelle LaFrance, Ph.D.

Improving your academic writing: My top 10 tips by Raul Pacheco-Vega, PhD (http://www.raulpacheco.org/2013/02/improving-your-academic-writing-my-top-10-tips/)

Becoming a more productive writer by Helen Sword (http://www.review.mai.ac.nz/index.php/MR/article/viewFile/339/463) MAI Review, 2010, 2, Writing Workshop 10

Research-Based and Anecdotal Tips for Improving Scholarly Productivity (http://www.uww.edu/learn/resimproschact.php)

Becoming a More Productive Writer Overview (http://www.graduate-mentor.com/productive-writer-overview/)

Nine Steps to Becoming a Highly Productive Academic Writer (http://www.academiccoachingandwriting.org/categories/academicwriting/category/nine-steps-to-becoming-a-highly-productive-academic-writer/)

Becoming a more productive writer (http://www.case.edu/provost/UCITE/writing.html?nw_view=1410998892&)

Improving Writing Productivity: Issues Associated with Writing Blocks and Decreased Productivity by David Rasch, Ph.D., (https://helpcenter.stanford.edu/resources/improving-writing-productivity)August 8, 1997

How to Write Anything–Tomorrow's Professor Msg #900 (http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-

ctl/tomprof/posting.php?ID=900)

Ten Ways of Thinking that Lead to Writing Procrastination – and Rebuttals to Those Thoughts–Tomorrow's Professor Msg. #889 (http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/tomprof/posting.php?ID=889)

Write Before You're Ready: First Steps to Avoiding Writer's Block—Tomorrow's Professor Msg.#936 (http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/tomprof/posting.php?ID=936)

> *"You just sat down to write. In the back of your mind, you know what you want to say. But as you stare at the computer screen or your pad of paper, you realize that you probably haven't checked out all the literature on this subject. Furthermore, you're not really clear about some of the articles that you've read. Perhaps you wonder if you really have anything to say after all."*

The Graduate Student Writer: Tips to Make the Writing Process Work for You—Tomorrow's Professor Msg.#1137 (http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/tomprof/posting.php?ID=1137)

> *"Maybe it was all those late nights as an undergraduate struggling to fill out mandatory ten-page papers that made us think the only worthwhile writing is long and drawn out. While it's more difficult to express yourself in the simplest possible manner, it's so much more effective. More work for you means less work for your reader."*

The Practice of Writing—Tomorrow's Professor Msg.#1209 (http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/tomprof/posting.php?ID=1209)

> *"What we are suggesting is that we treat writing as a creative, life-inspiring practice. This clearly demands an attitude shift for many of us. It is not enough to wish this relationship into existence; it requires practice and work, including work on the psychological and emotional barriers that you identify in yourself."*

Books

Silvia, P. J. (2007). How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing. Washington, DC: APA.

List Servs

Productive Writer (http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/about/publications/productive-writer)

Productive Writer (http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/about/publications/productive-writer/)

- Sponsored by the Cornell Graduate School, the Productive Writer is free and open to all, especially graduate students writing papers, proposals, theses, and dissertations.
- Once you sign up, you will begin receiving messages, every other week, about managing your time for greater writing productivity, reducing distractions, staying motivated, revising and editing, binge writing, communicating with your advisor, dealing with writer's block, and managing procrastination and perfectionistic tendencies.
- It's easy to join; just click on this link. (http://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin/ea?v=0017CAV_ERFAzFItvY27y25gw%3D%3D)
- We hope you will join us to become a more productive writer.

Tomorrow's Professor Mailing List (http://web.stanford.edu/dept/CTL/Tomprof/subscribe.html)

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