WRITE STUFF
Resources to Inspire and Enhance Your Educational Scholarship

September 2019

THOUGHTS ON WRITING

A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged;
it is the skin of a living thought and
may vary greatly in color and content
according to the circumstances
and time in which it is used.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr

WRITING MYTHS: THE MYTH OF THE MUSE

The myth of the muse, one of the most common writing myths, refers to the false belief that writing is shrouded in mystery.   The muse myth is the idea that there is a twinkly writing fairy who showers us with pixie dust and it is that dust that gives us the motivation, opportunity and clarity of thought to write. Like magic, the words begin to flow. But that is simply wrong… there is no muse… there is no twinkly writing fairy.

This myth is most commonly expressed as "*I can't write because I am not in the mood*," and all of its variations: "*I'm tired.*" "*I really need to get to my emails.*" "*I don't feel inspired.*" "*My leg hurts.*" There are many excuses for not writing; we are more likely to use them for writing than for teaching, meetings with students or committee work. Many of us put off writing or at best, it lives near the bottom on our To Do list. Why is this so? Because writing is hard. There for very few people for whom writing is easy. And like everything else, practice helps. The other thing to keep in mind is that for most of us, writing is a part of our job. Academia is about inquiry and discovery, and unless you publish it, all your inquiry and discovery goes nowhere. It is an expectation that faculty write, just as it is that faculty teach and serve on committees. Writing is part of the job.

How to be a successful writer:
- Practice it—schedule it…. Block off time in your schedule
- Establish a routine… regular time is ideal but not necessary; a writing group is a good way to start
- Start on time and stop on time… Once it is part of your schedule, stick to your schedule
- Have a writing agenda: don't put "writing time" on your schedule, instead put the specific writing task for the session such as "revise Methods section," "finish table 2," or "pull references together"
- Consider using SMART goals: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound

Adapted from Chapter 1: The Myth of the Muse,
in *WAG Your Work: Writing Accountability Groups*.
Kimberly A. Skarupski, PhD MPH. (2018).
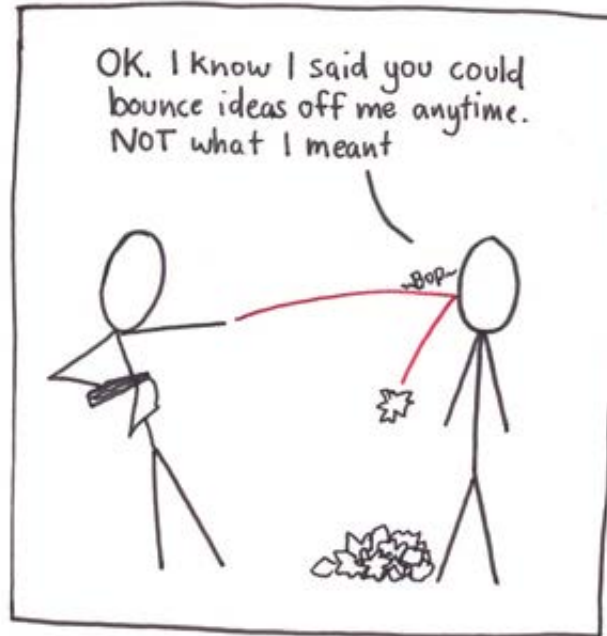
JOINING A CONVERSATION: THE PROBLEM/GAP/HOOK HEURISTIC

We tend to think that journals exist to publish scholarly manuscripts. But they don't. They do publish scholarly manuscripts, yes, but that's done in service of a higher purpose: they exist to promote scholarly conversations. The journal-as-conversation metaphor is a powerful conceptual shift because it leads writers to think of their work not as another manuscript, but as the next turn in a conversation.

Imagine yourself joining a conversation at a social event. After you hang about eavesdropping to get the drift of what's being said (the conversational equivalent of the literature review), you join the conversation with a contribution that signals your shared interest in the topic, your knowledge of what's already been said, and your intention to add something new that will matter. When you violate any of those expectations, backs turn or eyes roll, or both.

The conversation metaphor changes our customary notion of what the Introduction of a scholarly paper is meant to accomplish. To position your work as a compelling conversational turn, your Introduction must do three things: (1) Identify a problem in the world that people are talking about, (2) Establish a gap in the current knowledge or thinking about the problem, and (3) Articulate a hook that convinces readers that this gap is of consequence. Ideally, these three elements appear in the first paragraph or two. **READ MORE**

WRITING RESOURCE

Annotated Bibliography of Journals for Educational Scholarship (July 2017)
This document was created by a team of librarians and educators from multiple medical schools. It provides information for over 70 journals that publish health professions scholarship and lists both print and electronic journals including reputable open access publications. For each entry, the bibliography provides a description of the journal, topics covered in the publication, the types of manuscripts accepted and the audience. There also is information about two peer-reviewed repositories for educational resources: CES4Health and MedEdPortal.

This bibliography is free of charge from the Association of American Medical Colleges Group on Educational Affairs (GEA). To download this PDF document, **click here**.

It starts with this: put your desk in the corner, and every time you sit down there to write, remind yourself why it isn't in the middle of the room. Life isn't a support system for art. It's the other way around." -- Stephen King, *On Writing.*

The Top-Cited Articles in Medical Education: A Bibliometric Analysis

Purpose: To identify and examine the characteristics of the 50 top-cited articles in medical education.

Method: Two searches were conducted in the Web of Knowledge database in March 2014: a search of medical education journals in the category "Education, Scientific Discipline" (List A) and a keyword search across all journals (List B). Articles identified were reviewed for citation count, country of origin, article type, journal, authors, and publication year.

Results: Both lists included 56 articles, not 50, because articles with the same absolute number of citations shared the same rank. The majority of List A articles were published in *Academic Medicine* (34; 60.7%) and *Medical Education* (16; 28.6%). In List B, 27 articles (48.2%) were published in medical education journals, 19 (33.9%) in general medicine and surgery journals, and 10 (17.9%) in higher education and educational psychology journals. Twenty-six articles were included in both lists, with different rankings. Reviews and articles constituted the majority of articles; there were only 8 research papers in List A and 13 in List B. Articles mainly originated from the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. The majority were published from 1979 to 2007. There was no correlation between year and citation count.

Conclusions: The finding that over half of List B articles were published in nonmedical education journals is consistent with medical education's integrated nature and subspecialty breadth. Twenty of these articles were among their respective non-medical education journals' 50 top-cited papers, showing that medical education articles can compete with subject-based articles. **Read More**