



WRITE STUFF

Resources to Inspire and Enhance Your Educational Scholarship

April 2020

▶ THOUGHTS ON WRITING

Easy reading is damn hard writing

Nathaniel Hawthorne

▶ LESSONS ON THE CRAFT OF SCHOLARLY READING

Adapted from *Lessons on the Craft of Scholarly Reading* by Joli Jensen.

Scholarly reading is a craft — one that academics are expected to figure out on our own. After all, it's just reading. We all know how to do that, right? Yes and no. Scholarly reading remains an obscure, self-taught process of assembling, absorbing, and strategically deploying the writing of others.

Digital technology has transformed the research process, making it faster and easier to find sources and to record and retrieve information. Like it or not, we've moved beyond card catalogs, stacks of annotated books and articles, and piles of 3x5 cards. What hasn't changed, however, is the basic way we go about reading scholarly work.

We are told to "do the reading" and "know the literature," in order to understand our field and master a particular corner of it. We do our best to absorb key sources and orient ourselves to the discipline so that we can demonstrate our mastery in preliminary exams, dissertation proposals, and literature reviews. Throughout our academic careers, that remains our mandate: Find the relevant literature, make sense of it, and then use it in our own scholarly work. But how, exactly?

Rookie scholars and established ones alike could benefit from a clearer, more detailed understanding of how to read *effectively*. The craft of scholarly reading proceeds in three phases, each with goals and pitfalls.

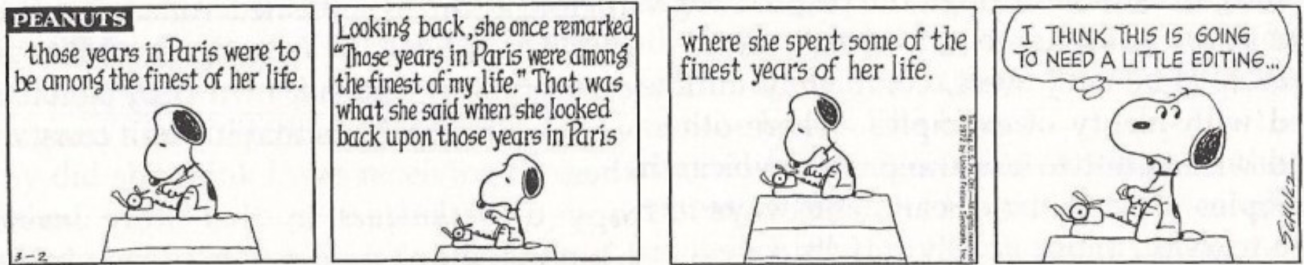
Gathering. To create a project bibliography, we need to define our chosen scholarly landscape. Where are its borders? What are its key features?

Engaging. Once we've gathered our main sources, it is time to interact with them closely and thoughtfully. That is the mark of a true scholar. Choose from your broad bibliography the specific books and articles that offer you the most interesting, surprising, disquieting, puzzling information.

Deploying. Now you must figure out how to incorporate key elements of the literature into your own writing. Find ways — digitally or on paper — to identify and retrieve crucial quotes, ideas, and points of view. You want to make the insights of others available for your own future readers, as well as to demonstrate how your work connects with the work of other scholars in your subfield and discipline.

Read the complete blog post [here](#).

▶ A SHORT BREAK



▶ EDITING YOUR WORK: STORY, STRUCTURE AND STYLE

Adapted from The Three S's of Editing: Story, Structure and Style by Chris Watling, Perspectives on Medical Education

Editing can be a fight; wrestling a meandering draft into a concise, publishable paper challenges even seasoned writers. Editing means modifying, shaping, and fine-tuning the raw materials of that imperfect draft into a strong final product. Done well, editing focuses and elevates your writing. But editing risks endless loops of revisions that can leave you wondering whether you are strengthening the work at all.

You need a plan – a systematic approach to editing. To ensure that your editing boosts the quality of your work, remember to attend to the three 'S's: story, structure, and style.

Story deserves some attention before you write a single word; structure and style considerations will naturally arise as you write your draft. Too much in-the-moment editing, however, can stifle your writing momentum. Draft something first, then use this approach to ensure you've said what you really want to say.

Your paper must tell a persuasive and compelling story. When editing for story, think about your target journal and its likely readers. Who are they, what do they care about, and what do they already know about the problem your study addresses?

Good research stories thrive on a logical flow of ideas. Paragraphs are the structural foundation of any paper, and their arrangement and composition dictates how readily readers will be able to follow your logic. Each paragraph should be a coherent unit, addressing one topic.

Sentence-level editing should make the incorrect correct—fixing grammatical errors—but it should also aim to make the correct better by attending to style. Effective sentencelevel editing requires us to recognize when sentences are awkward or unclear, to identify the source of that awkwardness, and to deploy a range of remedies. [Read More](#)

▶ DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS (DOAJ)

It is increasingly common for faculty to receive solicitations from journals for submissions; frequently these journals are unfamiliar and it is not always clear if the solicitation—and the journal itself—is legitimate. One way of avoiding predatory publishers is by looking up journals that issue on-line invitations in [DOAJ](#).

DOAJ is a community-curated independent online directory that indexes and provides access to high quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals. DOAJ covers more than 14,000 open access journals from 133 countries, in 74 languages, and over 300 subject areas. All journals are reviewed by our team of staff and volunteer editors to ensure they meet a set of quality standards. DOAJ is used by many organizations worldwide as a guide to quality open access journals. DOAJ is tackling the problems of unethical practice head on. DOAJ is fully engaged and committed to combatting questionable publishers and questionable publishing practices, helping to protect researchers from becoming trapped by these journals. Inclusion of your journal in DOAJ shows that it meets a range of ethical and quality standards. [DOAJ](#) is searchable for both journals and individual articles.

DOAJ's mission is to increase the visibility, accessibility, reputation, usage and impact of quality, peer-reviewed, open access scholarly research journals globally, regardless of discipline, geography or language. DOAJ will work with editors, publishers and journal owners to help them understand the value of best practice publishing and standards and apply those to their own operations. DOAJ is committed to being 100% independent and maintaining all of its services and metadata as free to use or reuse for everyone.

Click [here](#) to go to the DOAJ website for more information or to access resources available through the site.

▶ WHERE DO YOU WRITE?

"I do not believe in words, no matter if strung together by the most skillful man: I believe in language, which is something beyond words, something which words give only an adequate illusion of." — **Henry Miller**, [Henry Miller on Writing](#)



▶ WHAT DO REVIEWERS LOOK FOR IN MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSIONS?

Academic Medicine provides training for new reviewers and among the resources they have created is a two-page [Checklist of Review Criteria](#). This checklist provides a structured approach to reviewing your own scholarly writing in terms of both content and structure. The checklist addresses 54 items divided into 12 sections covering all parts of a manuscript. For those interested in learning more about the specific criteria used for review, the document **Review Criteria for Research Manuscripts** can be downloaded free-of-charge from the Academic Medicine site. To download this monograph, [click here](#). This is the second edition of this resource, which was published in 2015.

▶ 20-20-20 TO PREVENT DIGITAL EYE STRAIN

Adapted from the American Optometric Association and the Canadian Association of Optometrists

With so many of us spending time in front of digital devices every day, it's no surprise that research is showing a rise in the detection of visual problems. Even people with perfect vision may experience symptoms such as blurred vision, eyestrain and headaches with prolonged computer use.

20/20/20

TO PREVENT DIGITAL EYE STRAIN



TAKE A
20
SECOND
BREAK



EVERY
20
MINUTES



LOOK AT
SOMETHING
20
FEET
AWAY

Visit www.aoa.org for more tips on how to protect your eye health and to find a doctor of optometry near you for your annual comprehensive eye exam.

 AMERICAN OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION

To help reduce the risk of digital eye strain, consider the following tips:

- Position your screen about an arm's length from your eyes and 20 degrees below eye level.
- Set color and contrast tones to suit your eyes, and match the brightness of your screen with your surroundings.
- Minimize reflected glare on your screen by dimming the lights in the room if possible and consider using a protective anti-glare screen cover. Also consider positioning your screen so that it sits perpendicular to windows and other bright light sources. If you are having trouble locating the source of the glare, turn off your monitor to reveal a darkened screen, and tilt/swivel your monitor until the reflection disappears.
- Keep your screen free of fingerprints and dust, as both can reduce visual clarity.
- If you alternate between looking at your screen and paperwork, consider obtaining a clipboard that attaches alongside your monitor so that the two are at the same working distance.
- Some optometrists recommend the use of the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes take a 20 second break and focus your eyes on something at least 20 feet away.

Remember to blink! Did you know that on average we blink 12 times per minute, but when we're on the computer, we only blink 5 times per minute? That can add up to dry eyes. Relieve the discomfort by using artificial tears (eye drops) or gels and remembering to blink.

For more information, [click here](#).

FREE TUTORIAL FOR NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS

English is the language scientists from all countries use to communicate with each other and 80% of journals indexed in the Scopus database publish articles written entirely in English. **Publishing in English allows you to reach the broadest possible audience** and will help you achieve the goal that led you to publish in the first place; to add to our understanding of the world by informing other scientists about your research.

For many scientists, English is not their first language, and writing and publishing may be a challenge. Springer Publishing has designed this tutorial to help non-native English speakers avoid some of the common errors that occur when writing for scientific publication. Once complete you should understand the importance of good writing, be aware of common mistakes and know how to avoid them.

To access this free on-line tutorial, [click here](#).