



WRITE STUFF

Resources to Inspire and Enhance Your Educational Scholarship

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▶ THOUGHTS ON WRITING

Writing is like driving a car at night. You can only see as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way

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▶ WHAT DO YOU NEED?

Adapted from *Shut up and Write* by Kerry Ann Rockquemore, PhD, Founder, National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity

Faculty development researchers have demonstrated that accountability and support increase writing productivity among new faculty members. Many new faculty are essentially advised to *shut up and write*, because shaming moves people into action, at least for a week or two. Alternatively, embracing your needs will help you to develop a support system that will move you from occasional shame-induced writing binges towards a healthy, consistent, and sustainable writing routine.

It is OK to have needs. In fact, if you wait until you are perfectly motivated, flawlessly self-disciplined, free from anxiety, utterly fearless, intellectually energized, and emotionally resolved before you start writing this summer, you may never begin! So, the question is... *what do you need?*

Academic writers have lots of different needs. For example, some need to physically share space with others while writing, while some need accountability to a stern authority figure. Some people need solitude and silent support; others need regular cheerleading from peers. The possible needs are legion: quantitative progress metrics, substantive feedback, therapy, external rewards, perhaps an occasional exorcism from the demons of bad academic socialization.

Once you have identified your basic needs, start to imagine the best way to get them met. Writing groups have been found to be effective for many faculty, and there are different types of groups based on varying needs. Traditional writing groups often form in the summer for regular face-to-face meetings to read and provide substantive feedback of each other's work. If your primary need is commitment, then writing accountability groups may be worth trying. Other types of writing groups: write-on-site groups, for someone who needs to be around others when writing and online writing groups, both formal and informal. The National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity has [curriculum](#), monthly challenges and a [14 day writing challenge](#). Writing coaches might be the solution if your schedule doesn't allow you to join a group or if you aren't really sure what you need and want to work with someone to figure it out. Another option are bootcamps, which provide structured, intensive, professionally facilitated groups filled with people who have made a commitment by investment. This high level of commitment, structure, and accountability combined with the attention of a dedicated coach tend to result in tremendous transformations in productivity. That said, bootcamps are not for everyone because they require a willingness to experiment with new writing behaviors, continually question

your beliefs about writing, and force you to explore the fears and anxiety that underlie your resistance to writing.

Over the years I have come to accept the fact that I need community, support, and accountability, and instead of judging myself negatively for having those needs, I embrace them, create mechanisms to meet them, and find that participating in these types of supportive systems brings me increased productivity and tremendous joy. You may have different or fewer needs, but the key to having a productive, fulfilling, and enjoyable summer is to ask yourself: What do I need, and what kind of writing group will best support my needs? [Click to read the complete post from *Tomorrow's Professor*](#)

▶ A SHORT BREAK



▶ WRITERS CRAFT: TUNING YOUR WRITING

Adapted from Tuning Your Writing by Chris Watling, Perspectives on Medical Education

Perhaps you have winced, on occasion, while re-reading something you have written, thinking something just doesn't sound right. You have considered the usual suspects—clumsy sentence construction, faulty grammar, unnecessary words—but that doesn't seem to be the problem. The problem may lie in two more elusive elements of writing: tone and voice. These qualities impact how readers think and feel about your subject matter, and perhaps how they think about you. Gaining control of tone and voice will enhance your versatility as a writer, enable you to more effectively join conversations, and allow you to provoke, challenge, or inspire your readers.

Tone

Tone reflects your stance toward your subject. Your tone can range from devoted to dismissive, from collaborative to confrontational. We often assume that scientific writing demands a neutral tone, but the best scientific writers skillfully modulate tone to craft more powerful research stories. Tone pervades a paper's introduction and literature review, conveyed by the words and phrases used to map gaps in the existing literature and to carve a place for the study to be described. Verbs set the tone; used carelessly, they can send the wrong message. Consider the following:

*Researchers exploring how individuals respond to feedback
have consistently failed to account for the influence of context,
compared to:*

*Researchers have advanced our understanding of how individuals
respond to feedback; we now must explore how context shapes this dynamic.*

In the first sentence, the tone is judgmental, the verb 'failed' serving to criticize existing research as deficient. In the second sentence, the tone is diplomatic, acknowledging that others 'have advanced'

the knowledge, while still making the case that context deserves exploration. The focus on what the author plans to add, rather than on what others have failed to do, builds a tone of collaboration rather than antagonism. Both are defensible, but suggest different intentions by the authors.

Voice

In this context, ‘voice’ refers to the writer’s voice and how it comes through in their written work. Voice ‘creates the illusion that the writer is speaking directly to the reader from the page.’ For academic writers, establishing a distinctive voice can be challenging. For one thing, authorship is typically shared; writing as ‘we’ rather than as ‘I’ may stifle an individual’s voice. For another, the genres in which we write can confine us, seeming to leave little room for unique voices. But if you think of the academic writers whose work you most admire, you can likely find in their words something individual and original. Even within the constraints of the research paper genre, you can make your voice heard. Your voice will emerge most naturally when you write with a goal of engaging your reader. Don’t be afraid, even in a research paper, to choose verbal and grammatical strategies that captivate and persuade, particularly at key moments in your argument. Mix up sentence length and structure, choosing simple sentences to emphasize key points. Consider the following:

*While validity is undoubtedly important in assessment,
reliability must also be taken into account;
when the stakes of an assessment event are high,
both qualities deserve careful consideration,
compared to:
Validity and reliability share the assessment stage.
For high-stakes assessment, both matter.*

In the first example, the idea is expressed through a compound-complex sentence. In the second, two simple sentences are used instead, along with a metaphor (sharing the stage). Both are correct; what differs is voice. The first approach is more typical of academic writing, but the second is arguably more conversational and engaging. What’s more, the reader is more apt to remember the key message. While the research paper format affords limited opportunities for voice to emerge, other genres offer more flexibility for researchers, educators, and academics. Commentaries, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, blogs, methodological guides, etc., provide great opportunities to play with voice, as they are less rule-bound. In these settings, writers often aim for a conversational voice, and several strategies can help. The use of first- or second-person pronouns fosters the sense that the author is speaking directly to the reader. [Read More](#).

TWELVE TIPS TO GETTING YOUR MANUSCRIPT PUBLISHED

Adapted from Twelve Tips for Getting Your manuscripts Published by David Cook, Medical Teacher

The author shares twelve practical tips on how to navigate the process of getting a manuscript published. These tips, which apply to all fields of academic writing, advise that during the initial preparation phase authors should: (1) plan early to get it out the door;(2) address authorship and writing group expectations up front; (3) maintain control of the writing; (4) ensure complete reporting;(5) use electronic reference management software; (6) polish carefully before they submit; (7) select the right journal; and (8)follow journal instructions precisely. Rejection after the first submission is likely, and when this occurs authors should (9) get it back out the door quickly, but first (10) take seriously all reviewer and editor suggestions. Finally, when the invitation comes to revise and resubmit, authors should (11) respond carefully to every reviewer suggestion, even if they disagree,

and (12) get input from others as they revise. The author also shares detailed suggestions on the creation of effective tables and figures, and on how to respond to reviewer critiques. [Read More](#).

RUDE PAPER REVIEWS ARE PERVASIVE AND SOMETIMES HARMFUL

Adapted from Rude Paper Reviews are Pervasive and Sometimes Harmful by Christie Wilcox, published in Science, December 2019.

There's a running joke in academia about Reviewer 2. That's the reviewer that doesn't bother to read the manuscript a journal has sent out for evaluation for possible publication, offers condescending or outright offensive comments, and—of course—urges the irrelevant citation of their own work. Such unprofessional conduct is so pervasive there's even a whole Facebook group, more than 25,000 members strong, named "Reviewer 2 Must Be Stopped!" But it is no laughing matter, concludes a new study that finds boorish reviewer comments can have serious negative impacts, especially on authors belonging to marginalized groups.

Peer reviewers are supposed to ensure that journals publish high-quality science by evaluating manuscripts and offering suggestions for improvement. But often, referee comments stray far from that mission, found the new [PeerJ study](#), which surveyed 1106 scientists from 46 countries and 14 disciplines. More than half of the respondents—who were promised anonymity—reported receiving at least one "unprofessional" review, and a majority of those said they had received multiple problematic comments.

Those comments tended to personally target a scientist, lack constructive criticism, or were just unnecessarily harsh or cruel, the authors report. "It wasn't like it was just a certain group receiving these comments—everybody was getting them," says ecologist Amber Stubler of Occidental College in Los Angeles, California, a co-lead author of the study. "That is really very disturbing in and of itself."

What wasn't equal was the toll these reviews took on the respondents. White men reported being "the least impacted by the unprofessional peer reviews," says co-lead author Nyssa Silbiger, an ecologist at California State University in Northridge. But women, nonbinary individuals, and people of color all were more likely to report that unprofessional reviews increased feelings of self-doubt and harmed their scientific productivity. People of color were also more likely to say the reviews delayed their career advancement.

Those reports are not surprising, psychologist Denise Sekaquaptewa of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor wrote to *ScienceInsider* in an email. They line up with a lot of findings in the psychological literature on stereotype threat—the psychological harm caused by pervasive negative stereotypes. Essentially, because there are stereotypes that women or people of color are less intelligent or scientifically minded, receiving a review that reinforces such stereotypes—no matter how inaccurate—can create psychological distress. That distress, in turn, can result in self-doubt, impaired performance, and delayed career advancement. [Read More](#)

WHERE DO YOU WRITE?

"You have to finish things — that's what you learn from, you learn by finishing things."

-Neil Gaiman



HARVESTING LOW HANGING FRUIT: PUBLISHING INNOVATIONS

Adapted from Harvest the Low Hanging Fruit: Strategies for Submitting Educational Innovations for Publication by Blanchard et al. (2015) in the Journal of Graduate Medical Education

The field of medical education, including graduate medical education (GME), is fertile ground for creativity. With more outlets for medical education scholarship than ever before, the national discourse should be flush with descriptions of educational innovations.

Innovations can take many forms, including curricula, assessment tools, or faculty development programs, and they are usually initiated to solve an existing problem or to improve education. A group might identify new tools or creative opportunities to help residents meet the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education's scholarly activity requirements. An institution might report on a new assessment strategy for interns' encounters with standardized patients, or a novel leadership curriculum for chief residents.

Published innovations benefit all stakeholders in medical education. Learners benefit from new and creative educational approaches; institutions benefit from gaining access to potential solutions for their local problems; and faculty benefit, first, from peer discussion and review of their work, and second, from the record of scholarship and associated professional recognition. Also, for innovations to have a broader positive impact on education, they require replication, publication, and additional study before they can be adopted as mature interventions.

One characteristic of innovations is that they can be described in many different ways and for many different dissemination outlets (table below). In sifting through these options, consider the audience most likely to value this innovation, such as undergraduate or graduate medical educators, specialty-specific educators, or nursing educators. If the innovation is a curriculum for residents, faculty might find more value from being able to immediately access and implement the curriculum, rather than from reading an article that describes an early evaluation of the curriculum. At the same time, if the innovation is a disruption or change in process, an article that provides a full examination of the innovation and its development may be beneficial to readers.

Sometimes faculty members do not recognize the value of their innovation, and may not consider their work worthy of publication. Other faculty members may not know how to organize the writing of their innovation in a way that is meaningful to a scholarly audience. To address this challenge, Kanter's editorial is a useful resource for faculty. However, writing about innovation often presents additional barriers, such as initiation of the novel intervention before outcomes have been considered, use of volunteer subjects in the first iterations of the intervention, small numbers of participants, and limitations in study design such as lack of a comparison group to demonstrate that differences are due to the intervention.

Suggested Strategies

- Find a mentor
- Organize a writing team or community of education scholars
- Approach all scholarly activities in a scholarly manner
- Plan your schedule for writing
- Stay current
- Celebrate successes

Educational innovations are being continuously developed by undergraduate and graduate medical educators to address important problems, create efficiencies, and improve curriculum. These innovations have the capacity to improve the quality of experiences for everyone—if they are shared. For readers, published educational innovations provide a fresh perspective and often represent an opportunity to improve education at their own institutions. For those who create educational innovations, the publication process can be intimidating.

Feature Title	Journal	Word Limit	Description
Educational Innovation	<i>Journal of Graduate Medical Education</i>	2000	A description of a new approach or strategy in GME that has been implemented and assessed at a minimum with feasibility and acceptability
Perspectives	<i>Journal of Graduate Medical Education</i>	1200	Evidence-based opinion that can describe an innovative GME educational approach
New Ideas	<i>Journal of Graduate Medical Education</i>	650	Novel GME approach that has been implemented at least once and appears to be successful; numbers of participants may be small and outcomes may be preliminary; annual call and publication
Insights	<i>Clinical Teacher</i>	800	Structured reflection
How We . . .	<i>Medical Teacher</i>	2500	A description of an idea or topic in medical education that's been implemented, and a reflection on that process
12 Tips	<i>Medical Teacher</i>	3200	Practical tips or advice, potentially as the result of an innovation
Really Good Stuff	<i>Medical Education</i>	500	Lessons learned through innovation in medical education; annual call and publication
Short Reports	<i>Journal of Interprofessional Care</i>	1000	Innovation or research in progress that affects interprofessional education or practice
Last Page	<i>Academic Medicine</i>	1-page	Visual display of a concept, idea, theory, or process
Developments	<i>Teaching and Learning in Medicine</i>	2000	Innovation or development in medical education
N/A	<i>MedEdPORTAL</i> (from the Association of American Medical Colleges)	N/A	Curricula, workshops, courses, and tools, with an instructor guide
N/A	<i>MedEdWorld</i> (from the Association for Medical Education in Europe)	N/A	Curricula, workshops, courses, tools, and research papers

Abbreviations: GME, graduate medical education; N/A, not applicable.

To read the complete paper, [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](#).