Writing and Effective Time Management

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Initial Quote: Is Galbraith Right?

• “All writers know that on some golden mornings they are touched by the wand--are on intimate terms with poetry and cosmic truth. I have experienced those moments myself. Their lesson is simple: It's a total illusion. I am persuaded that most writers, like most shoemakers, are about as good one day as the next. The meaning is that one had better go to his or her typewriter every morning and stay there.”

• John Kenneth Galbraith
Social Scientists Write Many Types of Materials

- Theses and dissertations
- Grant applications
- Journal articles
- Reviews
- Books (e.g., textbooks)
- Newspapers and magazines articles, etc
- Policy pieces
- Administrative memos & documents
- Promotion and tenure portfolios
- Feedback to students
A 2005 study of more than 40,000 US academics found that

- 76% of academics write each week
- 73% have published a peer reviewed article
- 57% have published in the last two years
This Session’s Agenda

• Writing is hard; there are barriers to doing it.
• What do you want to change, to do better?
• Four steps in the writing, publishing process.
• Paul Silvia’s model of how to write a lot
• Others’ conclusions about effective strategies
• Collaborative writing
• A behaviorist’s analysis (Time permitting)
• What are you going to do?
• Resources
You Aren’t Alone: Writing is Demanding

• There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed.

• Ernest Hemingway
Writing is hard work. A clear sentence is no accident. Very few sentences come out right first time, or even the third time. Remember this in moments of despair. If you find that writing is hard, it's because it is hard. It's one of the hardest things people do.

William Zinsser
What do you see as the barriers to writing?
Dear Contributor,
Thank you for submitting your story. To save time, we are enclosing two rejection slips, one for this story and one for the next you send us.
Challenges of Scientific Writing and Publishing

• Lengthy, challenging process
• Reviewers are painfully honest and demanding
• Rejection rates for top journals are high

• So, why write for scholarly publication?
  • External factors
  • Internal factors
Peer Ratings of Success as a Function of the Quantity and Quality of Publications

Hayes, 1983

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Possible Writing Goals

• To write more
• To improve the quality of your writing
• To have more time for writing
• To get over writer’s blocks
• To finish papers
• To get what you have written accepted
• What else?
  • WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?
  • WHAT PARTS OF YOUR WRITING WOULD YOU LIKE TO CHANGE?
Four Steps in the Writing Process

• Prewriting

• Drafting

• Editing and Revising

• Publishing
Prewriting

• DEVELOP YOUR IDEAS: find your thesis, the main thrust of what you want to say
• Do background reading etc
• OUTLINE
• Consider for whom you are going to write
Drafting

• GET IT DOWN
• Put off judging text during creation
• Research articles have a well-defined structure: Know and follow it.
• I keep a record of all references used while drafting
• I used to write in a linear fashion from start to finish, now I work on parts in a less linear way
A Dynamic Process between Prewriting, Writing and Revising

• I need ideas to write
• Writing clarifies and extends my ideas
Editing and Revising

• Critically assess
• Keep in mind your audience
• Add polish and enhance coherence
• Insure your manuscript follows style requirements, check references, format properly, etc.

• Note: There are many books on grammar, how to write well (e.g., Zinsser), etc. Benefit from them!
Be Prepared to Write and Rewrite...

“During my Editorship, no article has been accepted outright with no changes.”

Robert Sternberg, Editor, Psychological Bulletin
Publishing: Which Journal?

- Prestige
- Citation Impact
- Professional association sponsorship
- Appropriateness for the work, amount of similar work previously published in Journal
- Reputation of editor and editorial process (e.g., lag times etc.)
- Odds of success
Publishing: Review and Outcomes

• Generic evaluation criteria
  • Fit with Journal
  • Novelty, contribution to field
  • Technical competence (Design, analysis, etc)
  • Expression

• Outcomes
  • Reject
  • Revise
  • Accept (Extremely rare on first submission)
How to Respond to a Revise and Resubmit Letter
Paul Silvia’s Approach

• Have scheduled times for writing
  • Eliminate distractions
• “Ruthlessly defend your writing time”
• Set larger goals (e.g., projects)
• Set subgoals and daily goals (Manageable, concrete, measurable, etc.)
• Establish priorities
• Monitor progress
• Reward yourself
The Importance of Scheduling:
Boice’s Study

Three Groups

• Avoid writing: Only do so in emergencies

• Spontaneous: Writing when you want 50 times

• Scheduled: Committed to writing at 50 scheduled times
What’s Top Priority?
What’s Bottom Priority?

• Checking page proofs
• Developing a new manuscript
• Editing and revising your own manuscript
• Editing and revising a manuscript with a coauthor
• Finishing projects with deadlines
• Miscellaneous writing (e.g., newsletter item)
• Reviewing a manuscript or grant application
• Revising a manuscript to resubmit to a journal
Silvia’s Support Groups

• Meet briefly regularly (e.g., every 1-2 weeks)
• Have each member set concrete, short-term, measurable goals
• Stick to writing goals, not general goals
• Groups should reinforce members for goal achievement but be ready to confront and intervene to help members who are consistently failing
• Have separate groups for faculty and graduate students
Different Approaches

Silvia
- “We won’t talk about insecurities…or inner mental blocks.”
- “I love writer’s blocks...for the same reasons I love tree spirits and talking woodland creatures – they’re charming and don’t exist.”
- Sees writing as hard but it is primarily poorly managed “binge writing” that is stressful

Heppner and Heppner
- “You can hear the struggle in ...students voices as they talk about the barriers they are encountering...Some of these barriers are tangible like finding the space to actually do the work. Most of them, however, are emotional or have an emotional basis.”
Strategies of Professional Writers

Zimmerman 1998

- Schedule daily writing
- Set daily word or page goals
- Use imagery
- Say aloud what will be written
- Put off judging text during creation
- Keep records of production
- Reward goal achievement
- Control writing setting and conditions
- Obtain advice and feedback
Five Habits of Successful Writer
(Boice, 1990)

- Write regularly
- Set realistic goals
- Start writing before they are ready
- Seek help on early drafts
- Spend time on revision

• Anthony Trollope:
  Wrote 3 hrs per day before working in a Post Office. Wrote 63 books
Collaborative writing

**Pro**
- Many hands make light work
- May produce better quality papers
- Is cited more frequently
- People bring different skills
- Socializes new authors
- YOUR BEST EXPERIENCE

**Con**
- Conflicts, non-productive differences of opinion
- Coordination problems, delays
- Authors who don’t do their tasks
- YOUR WORST EXPERIENCE
Irving Wallace, Novelist
1916-1990

Irving Wallace

- Best selling author
- Wrote 33 books, fiction & non-fiction
- Hollywood screen writer
- Some of his books were made into movies
Irving Wallace The Prize
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBURaByY8wU
Wallace Kept Records of His Writing


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would be considered eccentric or untidy. But through the years, I have learned that their usage has not been uncommon among well-known novelists of the past. Anthony Trollope, author of more than fifty popular novels including *Barchester Towers*, was perhaps the greatest record-keeper known to literature. In his *Autobiography*, published in 1893, Trollope wrote:

![Table](image)

**Fig. 1.** A sheet from one of Irving Wallan’s work charts. The sheet, which is Page II of the chart, shows the daily number of pages written for the first draft of The Fun Club from December 17, 1972, until the completion of that draft on January 23, 1973.
Pear Analyzed the Records
Behavioral Help for Writers

- Obtain stimulus control: Select a setting
- Schedule periods for engaging in behavior
- Define measureable units of the behavior
- Reinforce contingent upon completing X units in Y time (i.e., fixed-ratio reinforcement)
- Fixed ratio: reinforcement given after a specific number of responses have occurred
Writing as a Fixed Ratio Activity

• Responding starts fairly low,
• Immediately after reinforcement, there tends to be a pause in behavior
• Then behavior resumes and increases in rate
• Wallace writing illustrated this: after finishing chapters, he usually took a break and as he got close to finishing novels, he wrote a great deal (but tapered at the very end)
What are you going to do to achieve your goals?
SPSSI Sponsored
Outstanding Single Source

• Includes
• Daryl Bem’s classic article on writing journal article
• Taylor and Martin’s “The Academic Marathon: Controlling One's Career” with time management tips
• Wk 1  Designing your plan for writing
• Wk 2  Starting your article
• Wk 3  Advancing your argument
• Wk 4  Selecting your journal
• Wk 5  Reviewing the related literature
• Wk 6  Strengthening your structure
• Wk 7  Presenting your evidence
• Wk 8  Opening and concluding your article
• Wk 9  Giving, getting and using feedback
• Wk 10 Editing your sentences
• Wk 11 Wrapping up your article
• Wk 12 Submitting your article
• Wk X Responding to journal decisions
10-Volume Sage Series:
Survival Skills for Scholars

- Successful publishing in scholarly journals
- Getting your book published
- Improving your classroom teaching
- Tips for improving testing and grading
- Coping with faculty stress
- Getting tenure


You don’t need special traits, special genes, or special motivation to write a lot. Productive writing involves harnessing the power of habit, and habits come from repetition.

Paul Silvia

Successful academic writers do not wait for inspiration. They do not wait until the last minute. They do not wait for big blocks of time. They make a plan for writing every day and stick to it.

Wendy Belcher
Have a great first day at school, you two!

I'm worried about Mom. We had such a great summer vacation that I think she's really going to miss us.

Yeah. What is she going to DO all day without us around to keep her company?!?

Happy sigh...
Best Wishes with the Flowering of Your Writing
External Reasons for Scholarly Writing

Tenure & Promotion
Intrinsic Reasons for Scholarly Writing

• It is an enjoyable activity
• Desire to disseminate ideas
• Have one’s views recognized as correct
• Sense of personal accomplishment
• Power, competitive motives (e.g., want one’s views to dominate, beat odds)
• Help humanity: improve practice, etc.
• Self-perpetuating
Responding to the Reviews

• Don’t take it personally
  • Rejection rates are high (e.g., often 80%+)
• Be polite and non defensive
• Thank editors and reviewers
• Identify what they want changed
• Go through point by point
  • Highlight changes
  • If you don’t change, explain why
How Silvia Sets His Priorities

• Checking page proofs
• Finishing projects with deadlines
• Revising a manuscript to resubmit to a journal
• Editing and revising a manuscript with a coauthor
• Editing and revising your own manuscript
• Reviewing a manuscript or grant application
• Developing a new manuscript
• Miscellaneous writing (e.g., newsletter item)
What are you going to do to achieve your goals?

Things to consider:

• Ways of overcoming barriers?
• Will scheduling work for you? How are you going to do it?
• Techniques for getting and efficiently using scheduled time
• Do you need to work on inner issues?
• How might you use social support (from other writers and/or your personal network)?
• Go back to the goals you noted at the beginning. Are your commitments to change addressing them? If not should you add extra changes in you behavior?