

Writing Warriors University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Overview

Writing Warriors are dedicated to continuously improving their writing. As part of our group, you will learn to overcome procrastination and writer's block. As a result, you will become a more productive and skilled academic writer. You will develop good habits, such as time management, so that writing is a regular part of your life, rather than a chore. You will learn to use writing groups to increase your motivation and to exchange structured, substantive feedback. You will improve your technical skills (e.g., punctuation and grammar) and writing style (e.g., emphasis and concision). You will accomplish these goals by writing a few pages every week, exchanging feedback with other graduate students and faculty, and reading about the topics that most interest you.

“However great a man’s natural talent may be, the act of writing cannot be learned all at once.”

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Writing Groups

The purpose of the Writing Groups is to write.

Structure

1. Writing Groups will usually meet for 90-120 minutes.
2. You are encouraged to begin by talking about you will be working on today: Set specific goals for what you want to accomplish, share them with each other, and hold each other accountable.
3. After that, you will work individually on separate writing projects.
4. You are encouraged to end by congratulating yourselves on what you accomplished.

“Don’t try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say. It’s the one and only thing you have to offer.”

Barbara Kingsolver

Feedback Groups

The purpose of the Feedback Groups is to provide feedback on each others’ writing. Feedback Groups will usually meet for 60-75 minutes. You are encouraged to begin by discussing your accomplishments for the previous week and your goals for the next week. Afterwards, you are encouraged to provide each other feedback. Each writer should tell the group what kind of feedback they are looking for. One common model is to ask readers to identify the key sentence in each paragraph (aka Gray, 2010). Other common models are to ask readers to identify ways to make the writing more concise, look for coherence, and improve flow and organization.

“We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master.”

Ernest Hemingway

Structure

1. Each week, you should bring 2-3 pages of new or revised writing. Bring three hard copies of your writing, because there will usually be three people in each writing group.
2. During the writing group, participants will have 15-20 minutes to read the material and give feedback. How you divide these 15-20 minutes is up to the writer. For instance, the writer may choose to have 12 minutes of reading and 8 minutes of feedback.
3. The purpose of the writing groups is to provide feedback. As a writer, your job is to get as much feedback as you can during the writing group. Do not waste this valuable time by defending what you wrote originally or by re-writing the material during the meeting. Later, you will decide what to do with the feedback you have received.
4. We strongly encourage you to incorporate your feedback within 24 hours. After that, it's hard to remember the insights you had during the meeting, even when you consult your notes.
5. You may receive feedback on almost any academic writing. You are encouraged to bring theses, dissertations, journal articles, and conference presentations.
6. If you want feedback on a class assignment, you need written permission from the instructor. Similarly, if you want feedback on your Experimental Psychology qualifying activity, you need written permission from your academic mentor.

Email Feedback

Students often find it valuable to give each other feedback by email.

Personally, I ask for email feedback on my manuscripts regularly. It gives you a different KIND of feedback than the in-person writing groups. It's important to ask open-ended questions. Here are the questions I use:

1. What section was the hardest to read and understand?
2. Where were you lost or even just unsure about where the paper was going?
3. What jargon did I use without adequate explanation?
4. What section was the most boring to you personally?

Each of these questions will identify a section that is hard to read. Look at those sections to see if you can find any bad writing: nominalizations, passive voice, misplaced modifiers, lack of a key sentence, pronouns with unclear referents, etc. You WILL find some of them, I guarantee it. Then revise to fix the problem. Keep in mind that the problem might have occurred in an earlier section (for example, where you failed to explain a key term, or if you have sections in the wrong order).

Personally, I ask for email feedback from 4 - 6 people before I submit a paper to a journal. I ask for feedback from 2 people at a time, incorporate their feedback, and then ask another couple.

Ideally, each reader should only read a particular paper once. Therefore, knowing several people who are willing to provide this kind of whole-paper feedback is really helpful.

If you are willing to exchange feedback by email, let me know if you want me to add you to this list.

“The beautiful part of writing is that you don’t have to get it right the first time, unlike, say, brain surgery.” Robert Cormier

Recommended Books and Articles (most at UNLV library)

- American Psychological Association. (2009). *The publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. Sixth Edition. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Becker, H. S. (1986). *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article* (2nd ed). Chicago, MA: University of Chicago Press.
- Bem, D. J. (2003). Writing the empirical journal article. In J. Darley, M. Zanna, & H. Roediger, III (Eds.), *The Compleat Academic: A career guide* (2nd ed.) (pp. 185-219). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Also available at <https://psychology.yale.edu/sites/default/files/bemempirical.pdf>
- Gray, T. (2010). *Publish and flourish: Become a prolific scholar*. Las Cruces, NM: Teaching Academy, New Mexico State University.
- King, S. (2002). *On writing: A memoir of the craft*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Lamott, A. (1994). *Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing and life*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Martinez-Conde, S. M., & Macknik, S. L. (2017). Finding the plot in science storytelling in hopes of enhancing science communication. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(31), 8127-2129. Available at <https://www.pnas.org/content/114/31/8127>
- Olson, R. (2009). *Don't be such a scientist: Talking substance in an age of style*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Olson, R. (2015). *Houston, we have a narrative: Why science needs story*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Pinker, S. (2014). *The sense of style: The thinking person's guide to writing in the 21st century*. New York, NY: Viking.
- Sternberg, R. J., & Sternberg, K. (2010). *The psychologist's companion: A guide to writing scientific papers for students and researchers*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. [Available through UNLV online library.](#)
- Strunk Jr., W., & White, E. B. (1999). *The elements of style*. Fourth Edition. New York, NY: Longman.
- Sword, H. (2012). *Stylist academic writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [Available online through the library website.](#)
- Sylvia, P. (2007). *How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Truss, L. (2006). *Eats, shoots & leaves: The zero tolerance approach to punctuation*. New York, NY: Gotham Books.
- Williams, J. M. (2014). *Style: Lessons in clarity and grace* (11th ed). Pearson.

“You need to trust yourself, especially on a first draft.... Don't look at your feet to see if you are doing it right. Just dance.” Anne Lamott

Recommended Websites

Writing Groups

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/idr/writing-groups>

Writing Help and Tips:

UNC: Writing Center Handouts
<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/>

OWL: Online Writing Lab
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

WSU: Common Errors in English Usage
<http://public.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/errors.html#errors>

APS: Twelve Tips for Authors
<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2007/june-july-07/twelve-tips-for-authors.html>

Sarnecka Lab Blog: On writing and life in a cognitive science lab
<https://sarneckalab.blogspot.com/2018/07/writing-workshop-table-of-contents.html>

Needless Complexity
<http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/10/complex-academic-writing/412255/>

The Writer's Diet: "Is Your Writing Flabby or Fit?"
http://writersdiet.com/?page_id=4

SGG: Study Guides and Strategies
<http://www.studygs.net/writing/index.htm>

APA Format

APA: General Help
<http://www.apastyle.org/apa-style-help.aspx>

Avoiding Bias in Language for APA Style
https://www.uml.edu/Images/Avoiding%20Bias%20in%20Language_tcm18-117647.pptx

Choose Your Words: Avoiding Biased Language
https://college.cengage.com/english/raimes/digitalkeys/keyshtml/choose_7.htm

The Publication Process

Taylor & Francis Author Services
<http://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/>
<https://www.elsevier.com/reviewers/how-to-conduct-a-review>
http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/45598_Empirical_Peer_Review_Guidelines.pdf

Bruce Thompson's Advice on Writing for Publication
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emL_SsxiPBg

"Easy reading is damned hard writing."

Anonymous.

"There's a good reason why a pencil
has an eraser on one end."

Steven D. Price

Additional Resources by Topic

Habits

Motivation: Silvia, Ch. 3
Time management: [Gray, Ch. 1](#)
Productivity: [Gray, Ch. 2-3](#)
Stress management: [SGG website](#)

Process

Procrastination: Silvia Ch. 2; [UNC website](#)
Writer's block: Lamott, p. 176; [UNC website](#)
Perfectionism: Lamott, p. 28; Becker, Ch. 7
Brainstorming: [UNC website](#)
Organization/Outlining: [Gray, Ch. 6-7](#); [UNC website](#)
Shitty first drafts: Lamott, p. 21
Writing groups: Lamott, p. 151, Silvia Ch. 4; [UNC website](#)
Feedback: Lamott, p. 162, [Gray, Ch. 8-10](#); [UNC website](#)
Revising: [Gray, Ch. 6-7](#); Becker, Ch. 1, 2, 4; Sternberg & Sternberg, Ch. 13
Reorganizing drafts: [UNC website](#)
Reading aloud: [UNC Website](#); [Gray, c=Ch. 11](#)

Publication

Selecting journals: [Gray, Ch. 6](#); Sternberg & Sternberg, Ch. 12; Taylor & Francis website
Submitting to a journal: [APA Manual](#), pp. 225-228; Taylor & Francis website
How to respond to reviewers: [Bem, pp. 18-20](#); Sternberg & Sternberg, Ch. 12

Content

Writing journal articles: [Bem, pp. 2-11](#); Silvia, Ch. 6; Sternberg & Sternberg, Ch. 4-5, 17
Presenting data: Sternberg & Sternberg, Ch. 9
Thesis statements: [Gray, Ch. 4](#); [UNC website](#)
Introductions: [UNC website](#)
Conclusions: [UNC website](#)
Argument: [UNC website](#)

Mechanics

APA format: [APA Manual](#); Sternberg & Sternberg, Ch. 8
Punctuation: [OWL website](#); Truss; Pinker, Ch. 6; Strunk & White, Sect. 1; [UNC website](#)
Grammar: Pinker, ch. 4 & 6; Williams, Ch. 10
Passive voice: [OWL website](#); Strunk & White, Sect. 2, Ch. 14
Word choice: Strunk & White, Ch. 4; [WSU website](#); [Bem, p. 18](#); Sternberg & Sternberg, Ch. 7; [SGG website](#)
Avoiding biased language: [APA Manual](#), pp. 70-76; [Bem, pp. 16-18](#)
Concision: Williams, ch. 7; [Bem, pp. 13-14](#); Strunk & White, Sect. 2, Ch. 17
Flow: [UNC website](#); Williams, Ch. 9
Key sentences: [Gray, Ch. 7, 8](#)
Style: Sword; [Bem, pp. 13-18](#); King; Pinker; Silvia, Ch. 5; Strunk & White, Sect. 5; [Needless Complexity](#); Williams; Olson 2009, 2015

“Writing is about hypnotizing yourself into believing in yourself, getting some work done, then unhypnotizing yourself and going over the material coldly.”
Anne Lamott

“Good writers are those who keep the language efficient. That is to say, keep it accurate, keep it clear.”
Ezra Pound

“When I see a paragraph shrinking under my eyes like a strip of bacon in a skillet, I know I’m on the right track.”
Peter De Vries