Tackling the Writing Process

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What we will cover

• Planning the writing process
• Using order and comfort when writing
• Avoiding and overcoming writer’s block
Plan your writing process

• Discuss the project with your co-authors
  – Saves time
  – Prevents frustration
  – Helps you meet deadlines

• List the decisions you’ll have to make and when you’ll have to make them
Talk to your co-authors

- Identify authors and roles
- Choose a target journal
- Agree on the key message
Discourage the project with your PI

• Are my hypothesis/purpose statement and conclusion accurate?
• Should I write the article for this target audience?
• What are the authors’ writing responsibilities?
• Do I need more/less material?
• When is the first draft due?
Gather and organize materials

- Lab notes
- Tables and figures
- Author/applicant instructions
Create your writing schedule

• Estimate and multiply your time

• Set a submission date and work backward

• Write one portion at a time
Use order and comfort when writing

- Create a comfortable environment
- Use a routine or ritual
- Create and use an outline
Create a comfortable environment

- Find a spot conducive to writing
- Ensure access to all necessary materials
- Take regular breaks
Use a routine or ritual

• Set aside dedicated time for writing
• Create a ritual to ensure consistency
• Have a specific goal in mind when writing
• Take notes after writing sessions
Create and use an outline

- Write down all elements
- Write down short descriptive phrases
- Write notes to yourself
- Don’t worry about the format
Outline example #1

Title of article

Introduction
- Known fact about the topic
- Background fact #1 (references)
- Background fact #2 (references)
- Hypothesis

Materials and Methods
- Sources of materials
- Lab/clinical procedures
- Particularly important method used
- Statistical analysis

Results
- Figures that will be used
- Tables that will be used
- Best findings

Discussion
- Conclusion
- How the present study differed from those cited above
- Possible clinical implications
- Limitations
- Future directions
Other outlining suggestions

• Write the title or topic at the top of the page

• Write down all ideas

• Keep writing until you’re out of ideas

• Read the ideas you wrote down

• Analyze your ideas and write notes
Introduction
- Known fact about the topic
- Background fact #1 (references)
- Background fact #2 (references)
- Hypothesis

Materials and Methods
- Sources of materials
- Lab/clinical procedures
- Particularly important methods used
- Statistical analysis

Gap in knowledge

Results
- Figures that will be used
- Tables that will be used
- Key findings

Discussion
- Conclusion
- How the present study differed from those cited above
- Possible clinical implications
- Limitations
- Future directions
Writing the first draft

• Just write

• Expand upon your outline

• Don’t wait until your research is done/materials are collected

• Begin with the easiest section to write
Making initial revisions

• Ask co-authors for revisions/feedback
• Focus on the content
• Check for anything omitted/extraneous
• Check the word count
• Make sure sections are in the correct order
• Re-evaluate the title
Making final revisions

• Wait
• Read it out loud
• Have co-authors review and approve it
• Take the reader’s view
• Don’t restart your drafts
Avoid and overcome writer’s block

*How does writer’s block happen?*

- Too much time between writing sessions
- Overthinking
- Trying to be perfect
- Running out of writing topics
Before you write

• Set frequent, separate deadlines
• Budget your time correctly
• Read for inspiration
While you write

• Write parts of the project early
• Just start writing
• Use templates
• Dictate what you want to write
• Vary writing times/locations
While you write

• “Never a day without a line”
• Change your writing tools
• Talk with a trusted colleague
• Free-write
• Write a letter
• Write the ending/conclusion first
After you complete writing

• Review your writing process
• Determine what did/did not work
• Apply your knowledge in the future
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