Writer’s Workshop

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Agenda

1. Deconstructing the Journal Article

2. Strategies for Effective Writing
Part 1: The Journal Article
Many Parts Make Up the Whole

Overarching Initial Activities

Main Writing Tasks

Introduction  Methods  Results  Discussion

Minutiae

Writing, Part II
Overarching Initial Activities

Complete this sentence:
“The purpose of this article is to . . . .”

Be Clear about the Following:
• What is the story you want to tell?
• What’s the audience you want to reach?
• (what’s the urgency?)

Once you have picked a journal:
• Identify template articles, if possible (and read)
• Get (and read) author’s instructions
• Contact editor (or not)

If this is not a solo performance, complete these sentences:
“The authors of this article are . . . .”
“Author A will do X by (date) . . . .”
“The order of authors will be . . . .”
Overarching Initial Activities

Main Writing Tasks

Introduction  Methods  Results  Discussion

Minutiae

Writing, Part II
Main Writing Tasks: **Start with Results**

This is the “What” of the story you are telling

- **Tables and Figures** (I start here; they’re worth their weight in words)
  - Descriptive
  - Analytic
- **Narrative**
  - Who & When?
  - Main Findings (aim by aim)

[Diagram of data analysis]

Percent of 17-CMNH Package Elements Received / Counseled On
Results: Points to Keep in Mind

Quantitative Studies
• Descriptive materials
• Univariate analyses
• Multivariate analyses

Qualitative Studies
• Descriptive materials
• Theme-by-theme explication
✓ With textual examples
  (avoid falling in love)

Mixed Methods Studies
• Varies by **Quant**-Qual or **Qual**-Quant
• Present dominant model first
• For each, present descriptive
• Then either analyses or themes
• Triangulate

Avoid Table-Text Redundancy
Introduction: Introduce the Results

Name the Universe

Identify the Known

Identify the Unknown

State the Purpose

Generally, just a few paragraphs

Purpose matches findings
Overarching Initial Activities

Main Writing Tasks

- Introduction
- **Methods**
- Results
- Discussion

Minutiae

Writing, Part II
Methods: Crossing “t’s”; Dotting “I’s”

- Design
- Conceptual/Theoretical Framework [Figure or Diagram]*
- Sample/Recruitment
- Ethical Considerations
- Setting
- Procedures
  - Intervention(s)
  - Data-gathering
- Time frame
- Measures
- Analytic methods/statistical procedures
- Steps to assure reliability/trustworthiness

* Might be in Introduction
Discussion: What it all Means

• Summarize Main Findings
  ✓ Found what you expected
  ✓ Found something unexpected
  ✓ Didn’t find what you expected

• Place of the Findings in the Field
  ✓ What you’ve strengthened or confirmed
  ✓ What you’re contradicting or challenging

• Where this leaves things
  ✓ Next steps; additional research; directions

• Strengths and Limitations
Additional Sections – Journal-Dependent

• Summary or Conclusion

• Clinical Implications

• Implications for Nursing

• Objectives
Minutiae – The Rest of the News

• Title
• Authors’ information
• Abstract (format and limits)
• Citations (appropriately formatted)
• Acknowledgements (noting funding source)
• Submission format and method
• Cover letter, as appropriate
Revise and Resubmit

The letter that starts “We cannot accept the current version, but invite revisions . . .” is GOOD NEWS

• Map out critiques and responses
✓ parcel out, with clear timeframes
• Prepare revised text
• Prepare resubmission letter (follow directions)
• Meet specified deadline
Final Steps

After Positive Publication Decision

• Publisher’s forms (all authors)

• Review copy proofs (short timeframe)
Rejection

• Get out the second envelope

• Reboot
Strategies for Effective Writing

1. Strategies for writing journal articles

2. Quirks and idiosyncrasies

3. Writing team management issues
A Non-Linear, Asynchronous Approach to Writing a Journal Article

• Start with what you actually have:
  -- What results do you have?
  -- Work the data

• Draft a purpose statement ("The purpose of this article is . . . ")

• Work back and forth: refine the analyses and the purpose statement

• Rework the data, as needed

• Memo yourself: notes on meanings and interesting points – ideas for another article or study

• Review what the field has said; refine the purpose and re-work the data, as needed

• Use outlines throughout the process
A Non-Linear Approach to Writing, Continued

• Write the Introduction only when the story is clear

• When enough IMRD pieces are done, set them in order and see what you’ve got:
  ✓ What’s missing? (add)
  ✓ What’s extraneous? (it’s not your first-born; sacrifice it)

• Again: set the pieces in order.

• Edit – for clarity, concision, completeness and word count
Quirks and Idiosyncrasies
Quirks and Idiosyncrasies

• Do what makes sense – what works for you.
• Make the time
• Make writing appointments with yourself; schedule writing times
  ➢ Write at optimal times
  ➢ Write opportunistically
  ➢ Stop before the wall
  ➢ Manage as many writing projects as are comfortable
• Be Strategic
  ➢ Have “A,” “B,” and “C” lists of writing tasks or
Make the Time

• Shut your office door
• Set and keep office hours
• Find teaching shortcuts
  ➢ Only slightly update last years slides and/or readings
  ➢ Recycle exercises, PBLs, lectures, talks

But Do Not
• Sacrifice the balance in your life
Breaking Writing into Component Parts

“A” List Writing Tasks (> 1 hour)
- First 2-3 ¶ of Intro
- Results Narrative
- Discussion Summary
- Fit with the Field Discussion
- References
- Editing
- Revisions

“B” List Writing Tasks (30-45 minutes)
- Purpose Statement
- Methods Sections
- Strengths
- Limitations
- Abstract
- Tables & Figures
- Revision cover letter

“C” List Writing Tasks (<15 Minutes)
- Section Outlines
- Authors’ bios
- Acknowledgements
- Cover Letter
- Teaching Points
- Objectives
- Quiz

Make your own lists and create your own process maps to fit your temperament.
Quirks and Idiosyncrasies

• Set intermediate and final deadlines
• Have a scorecard and keep track
• Use the tools you like (pencils, stickies, ink pen, iPad, yellow legal pad, 3 x 5s, white board, black board, sketch pad, desktop, quill)
• Write in the place you like
• Order your [desk, room, décor, lighting, ambient music, lap dog] in whatever ways allow you to invoke your writing muse
Sometimes
the muse
can be too
fussy.

Write, already.
Eliminate
Distractions.
Optimize
Conditions.

But, please . . .
In the Event of Writer’s Block:

- Pick any small task From the list
- Do it!
- Repeat
- Get over it
A Writing Team

A. A marvelous writing strategy?

B. A boon for productivity?

C. A guarantee of conflict?

D. A sure way to lose friends?

E. All of the above?
Make a Contract Up Front

• Roles (who is good at what?)

• Responsibilities (write; compute; design; edit; compile; submit; corresponding author)

• Timelines

• Consequences (warnings; performance improvement plan; graceful withdrawal/termination)

• Conflict Resolution Strategies (who decides; who adjudicates)