

Writing more and better: From papers and grant proposals to blog posts



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The importance of writing for the thought process



- Writing promotes logical thinking
- Writing helps you refine your ideas
- Writing learns you to formulate arguments
- Writing stimulates posing worthwhile questions

“Writing is thinking. To write well is to think clearly. That’s why it’s so hard”
David McCullough

Writing academic papers

The hardest part of academic writing



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Question: What is the hardest part of academic writing to you?
#acwri #phdchat #phdtalk #phdforum

Vertalen uit het Engels

55% Starting the first draft



25% Writing the discussion

3% Sending it to co-authors

17% Stop editing and submit

40 stemmen • Uitslag

10:27 - 18 feb. 2018

2 retweets 1 vind-ik-leuk



3



2



1



Steps in the writing process



1. Pre-writing

- Start with pre-writing:
 - Literature searching
 - Reading
 - Talking to people
 - Brainstorming
 - Mind mapping
 - Searching possible journals
 - Writing down your hypotheses
- Collect data
- Analyze the data
- Block four hours for writing a complete first draft



2. Drafting

Spend max. 1 hour per section:

- Introduction – include only three things:
 - Why your research is important
 - What previous research found
 - What your research questions or hypotheses are
- Methods – write everything you've done
- Results – include only main findings
 - Quantitative: Make the tables and describe them in one sentence
 - Qualitative: List the main themes and describe them in one sentence
- Discussion – show your results to your supervisor, brainstorm together, make notes, and write everything down



*“Your first draft should sound like they were hastily translated from Icelandic by a non-native speaker”
Paul Silvia, 2007*

3. Revising (1)

- Choose a target journal and read the instructions
- Introduction
 - Explain that the topic is important and there is a problem
 - Introduce and review previous research in this area
 - Indicate a gap in the previous research
 - Describe any necessary info about the setting of your study
 - List research questions or hypotheses
- Methods and results
 - Checklists for your type of study, COREQ for qualitative studies, CONSORT for trials, STROBE for observational studies, and PRISMA for reviews
 - Make sure your research is described in a way that it can be replicated and the results can be used in reviews and meta-analyses
 - Describe methods and results in the same order as the research questions or hypotheses in the introduction



3. Revising (2)

- Discussion
 - State the study's major findings
 - Explain the meaning and importance of your findings
 - Consider alternative explanations of the findings
 - Compare and contrast your findings with those of other publications
 - Explain any discrepancies and unexpected findings
 - State the limitations, weaknesses, and assumptions of your study
 - State applications, recommendations, and implications
 - End with the main conclusions
- Revise the text based on feedback from co-authors
- No editing yet, just writing!

"Editing while you generate text is like drinking decaffeinated coffee in the early morning: noble idea, wrong time"

Paul Silvia, 2007

4. Editing

- Make sure you have a great abstract
 - Start early so your co-authors can comment on the abstract
 - Make sure it is understandable as a standalone piece
 - See the instruction for authors for your target journal
 - Be very brief about the background and objectives
 - Mention at least the research design, sample size, and setting
 - Spend most words on the results section of the abstract, stating the main findings and including numeric information such as means and p-values (for quantitative studies) and main themes (for qualitative studies)
 - Include the primary take-home message in the conclusions
- Improve the clarity of your paper
- Edit the text for sentence structure, spelling, and grammar
- Finalize figures, tables, appendices, and check your references
- Do something else, read your text again, and make final edits

5. Publishing

- Title page and affiliations
- Acknowledgements
- Funding statement
- Conflicts of interest
- Contribution statement
- Cover letter
- Recommended reviewers
- Check the instructions for authors for formatting guidelines
- Let all authors check the final version



..and then celebrate!



Other types of academic writing

- Grant proposals
- Blog posts

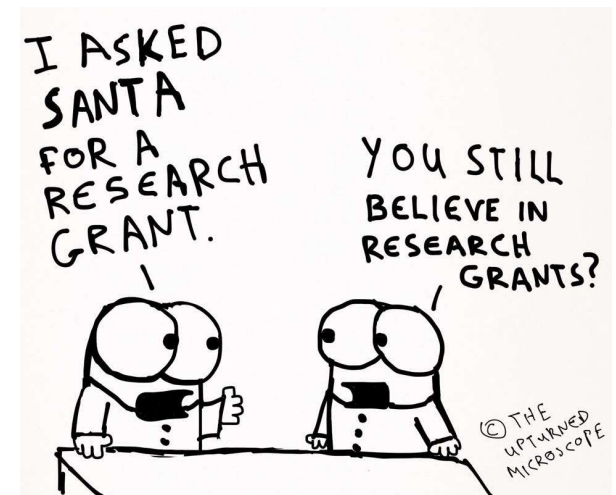
Writing grant proposals: why?



- To collect more data
- To secure a contract renewal
- To visit another research group (abroad)
- To visit a conference
- To organize a symposium
- To improve your resume

Writing grant proposals: how?

- Know your audience (commission, experts , patients, all of them)
- Know the grant (guidelines, examples of others)
- Write persuasively ('We will unravel for the very first time...')
- Importance of the title, abstract, and start
- The rest may not be read, so visualize
- Striking the balance between feasible and risky/exciting
- Make clear how society will use your results
- Don't be modest about your CV and expertise
- Ask experts to join your research team
- Ask many people to proofread
- Ask your finance department for help with the budget



Writing blog posts

Purpose of blogs: communicate your research/ideas to a wider audience

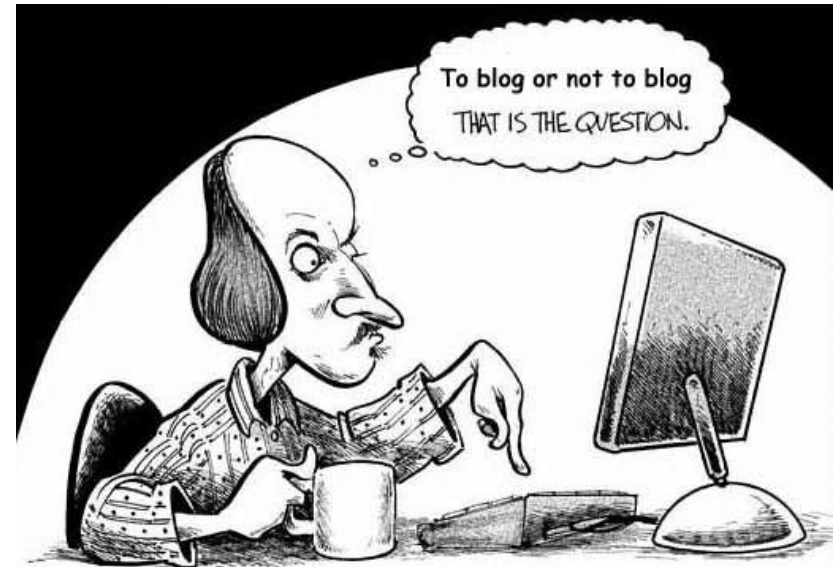
Additional benefits:

- Blogging gives you more practice with writing without the lengthy process of multiple revision rounds and co-authors
- Sometimes, blogging helps you to understand the implications of your research better
- It requires you to be concise (which helps with presenting, interviewing, writing summaries)
- Your network may expand due to responses on your blog



Start blogging

- Only if you like doing it
- Only if you will have the time to do it regularly
- You can also contribute to other peoples' blogs
- Read many other blogs first
- What style do you like?
- Do you need permission?
- Make sure your blog is read (use social media!)



What to blog about?



For example about:

- **How to do research**
- **Your own publications**
- **Conference reports**
- **Comment on news**

My most read blog posts (geranagelhout.wordpress.com):

1. Three things you should do to prepare for your PhD defence > **how to do research**
2. My PhD defence about smokefree laws > **your own publications**
3. The co-author who doesn't have time to read your paper > **how to do research**
4. Report from the ECToH conference in Istanbul > **conference reports**
5. How to write papers with many co-authors > **how to do research**
6. Should non-native speakers publish in English? > **how to do research**
7. Why the tobacco industry wants lower cigarette taxes > **comment on news**
8. Social denormalization of smoking needed in the Netherlands > **comment on news**
9. Planning for during your PhD project and after > **how to do research**
10. How to work with SPSS syntax and why > **how to do research**

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Thank you for your attention!

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