POWER Writing and Principles

P.O.W.E.R. “Promoting Outstanding Writing for Excellence in Research”

Principle #1: Write regularly

- Schedule your writing time. Writing is a craft.
- Practice in small, regular chunks. Creativity can be sustained for only short periods of time. Writing at the same time every day helps your brain create recurring pathways.
- There are two things required for motor behavior: repetition and sleep.
- Start writing TODAY, even if you do not know how or where to start.
- Dump your thoughts. Write everything on your mind as if it is a stream of consciousness. However, remember to write deliberately.
- Writing early and regularly gives you more time to edit your work.
- Examine your schedule and decide when you do your best writing. Most people write better in the morning.

Principle #2: Use a timer

- Time your writing. Even if you do not want to stop writing when the timer goes off, do it anyway. You will come back the next day feeling excited to pick up where you left off.
- Remember to leave notes when you stop writing so you can easily pick back up on your thoughts from the day before.
- Timing your writing gives you a perspective of time as well as risk management.

Principle #3: Break down large projects

- Write a purpose statement (2 to 3 sentences).
- Write what your project is about in different ways.

Principle #4: Plan your next session

- After you finish writing for the day, plan out your next writing session. Make notes to yourself about where you left off and what you plan on doing next time.
- Don’t get caught up with editing! Get all of your ideas out first before you start retracing your steps.

Principle #5: Warm-up

- Warm-up idea #1: Dumping. Your mind can be distracting. Take 3 to 5 minutes to write down everything that is on your mind.
- Warm-up idea #2: Copying. Find a well-written article in your field and copy the first paragraph only. Copy the paragraph slowly, paying attention to every letter or word. This will help your brain absorb the syntax and grammar. Essentially, you learn by studying the writing method, not the specific words, to avoid plagiarism. Remember that you learn through repetition.
- Warm-up idea #3: Read about writing. There are tons of great books that offer tips on how to write effectively and efficiently.
Principle #6: **Separate generating and editing**

- When you are generating, you need to get all of your ideas out. Generating is a creative process. Do not get caught up with typos or formatting. When you do this, you are automatically criticizing your work, which stifles creativity. Capture your ideas first.

Principle #7: **Write fast, edit slowly**

- Don’t be a perfectionist until your ideas are out.
- Create a trash file. Copy and paste all of the writing you don’t want to use into a file just in case you need to reference an idea later.
- Generating is creative. Editing is critical.

Principle #8: **Write to clarify your thinking**

- Writing is a tool for learning and for thinking.
- Paraphrase your notes. Don’t scribble on the margins! It won’t be easy to find later.
- Think of a collection of articles/information as one common body of knowledge. Take all of your notes in the same document instead of making notes separately. It will help you consider all of the information at the same time, adding cohesion to your thought process.

Principle #9: **Learn to accept initial messy drafts**

- 9,000 out of 10,000 words you write will be discarded. Don’t include your cognitive processes in your writing.
- Don’t write your introduction first.
- Be ok with a messy start. You can always go back and organize later.

Principle #10: **Find support and feedback**

- Don’t write in isolation. Find an accountability partner!
- Ask your accountability partner to read your drafts and provide feedback. Then, ask your Faculty Advisor to read it. This saves the harshest criticism for the end and you’re more prepared to accept the criticism!
- Ask for specific feedback from those helping you.

**Recommended reading**: *Becoming an Academic Writer: 50 Exercises for Paced, Productive, and Powerful Writing*, by Dr. Patricia Goodson; *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*, by Paul Silvia; *It Was the Best of Sentences, It Was the Worst of Sentences: A Writer’s Guide to Crafting Killer Sentences*, by June Casagrande

**P.O.W.E.R.** power.tamu.edu

- Power Hour: Will help you with organization, clarity and big picture ideas. Bring 3 to 5 pages and they will give you feedback on what they feel are patterns of mistakes in your writing. Email power@hlkn.tamu.edu to schedule an appointment. Please note: They are not an editing service.