

Writing for Academic Publication

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Presentation Overview

- Section 1: Getting Started (Writing to prompt, writing to a word limit, brainstorming/clustering/mapping)
- Section 2: Defining audience and purpose, outlining
- Section 3: Identifying publishing outlet, writing a query e-mail
- Section 4: Elements of an article
- Section 5: Writing the article – structure, style and storytelling
- Section 6: Submission
- Section 6: Books, book chapters, conferences etc
- Section 7 : Your Writing Plan

Task 1 - Getting Started

- Write for five minutes, in sentences, without stopping, using one of the following prompts
 - I am interested in writing about...
 - An area of my experience which I would like to write about is...
 - A really interesting project that I think people would be interested in reading about is...
 - I feel at my most creative when I'm writing about...

Murray, R. (2005) *Writing for Academic Journals*. Maidenhead: Open University Press (see section on writing to prompt)

Task 2 - Writing to a time and word limit

- Write for five minutes in sentences, in no more than fifty words, explaining to your department head why is it important for your unit/college that your research is made public

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On Writing

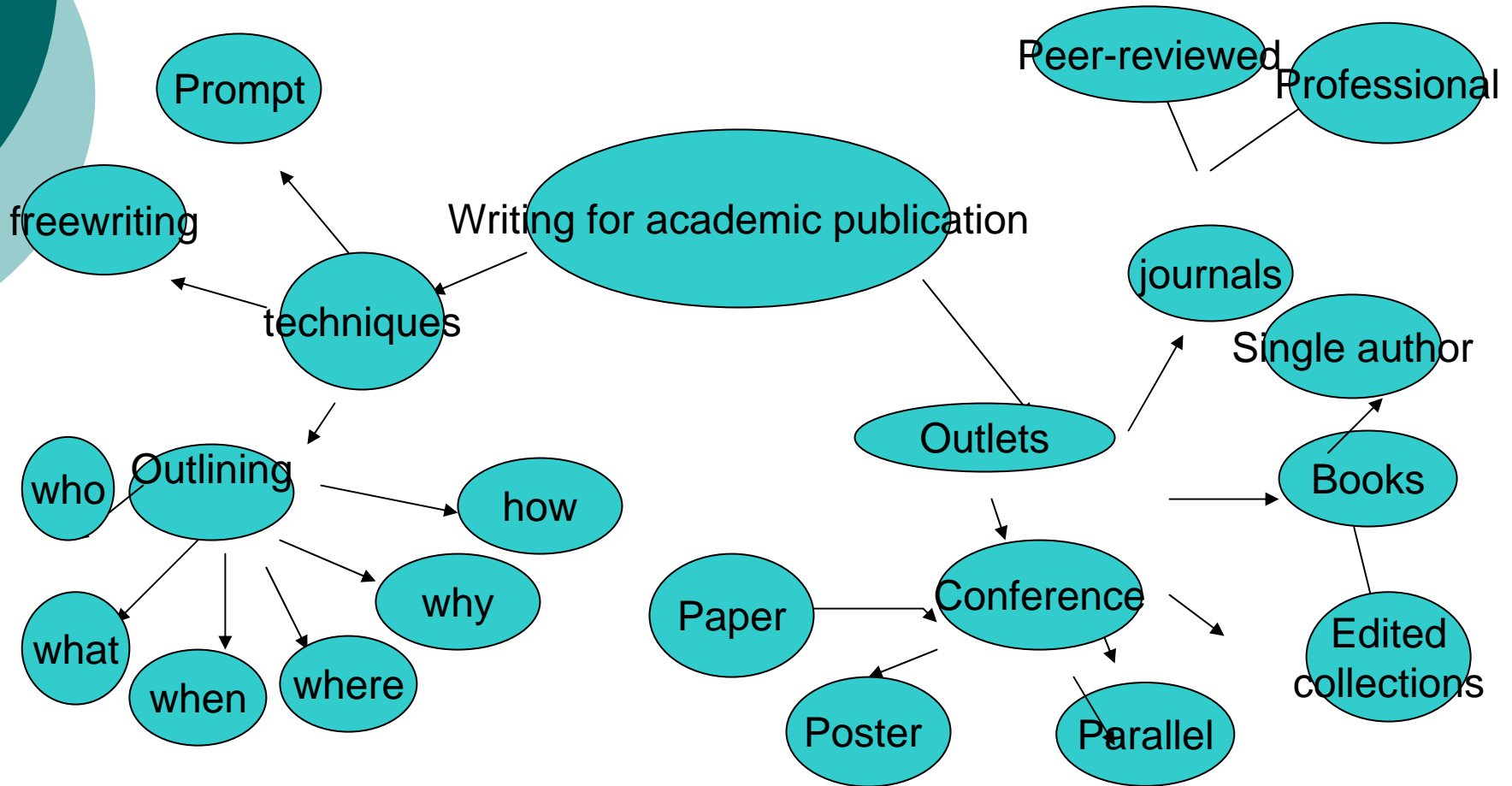
If you're clear in your mind about what you are going to paint, there is no point in painting it (Picasso)

I have to start to write to have ideas (Françoise Sagan)

Writing is a process of discovery. Sometimes you don't know what you know. You may know it but have no idea how it fits together (Alice Walker)

Maimon, Elaine P.(2007) *A Writer's Resource: A Handbook for Writing and Research*. 2nd ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill (see section on clustering)

Task 3 - Clustering/mapping



Task 4 – Defining audience and Purpose

- Describe in one sentence the purpose of the piece you are writing
- What is the specific audience for your article?
- What do they already know about the topic?
- What kinds of things are important to this audience?
- How will they benefit from your work?
- What is the right outlet for your audience?
- What is the right level?
- Where has this topic been covered before?
- What's your angle?
- Is this topic most suited for a research article/a practice-based article or some other format?

Outlining

- Order ideas
- Sift & eliminate ideas
- Contextualise/Give framework
- View structure at a glance

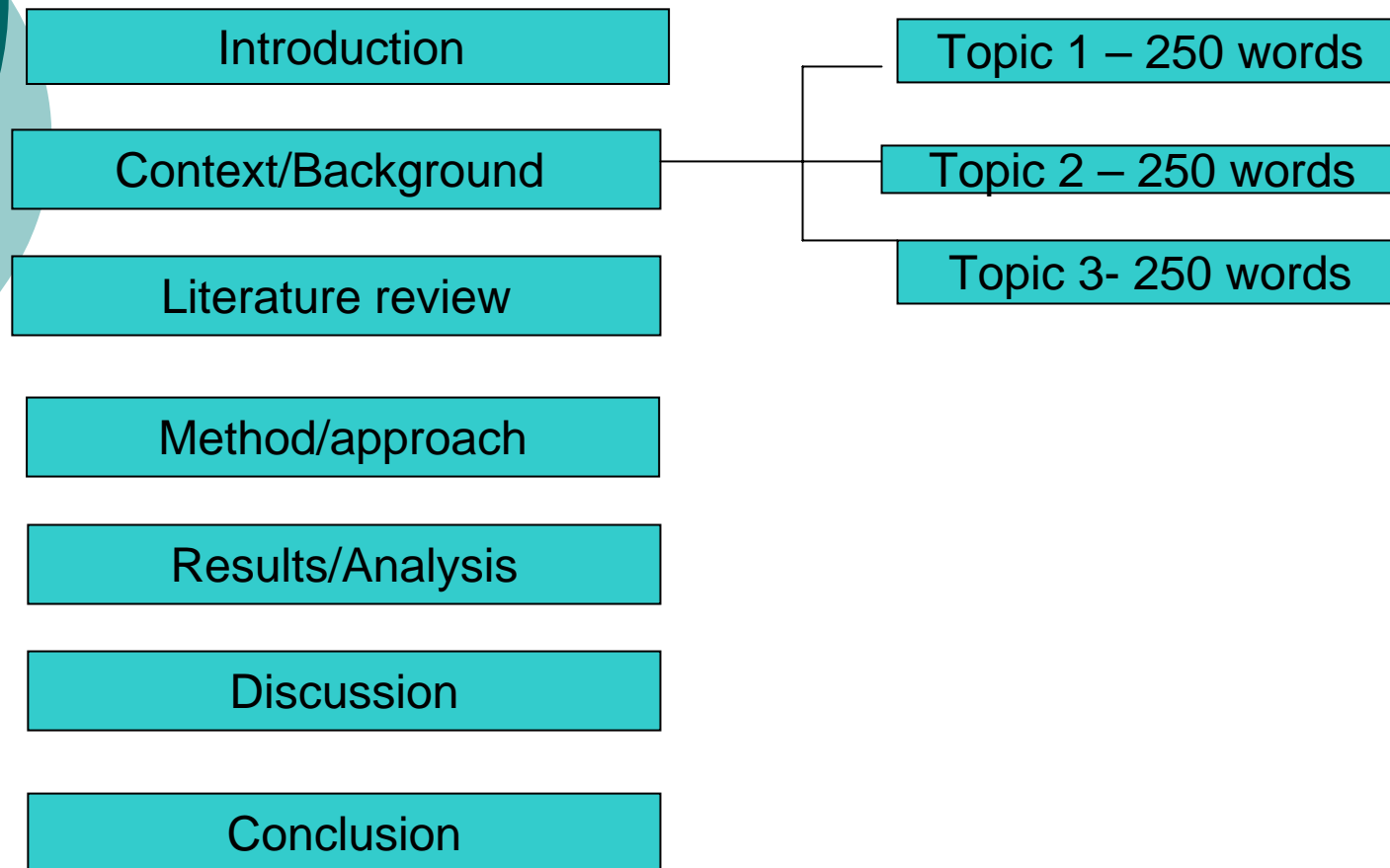
The reason many aspiring authors fail is that they throw themselves immediately into the activity of writing without realizing it is the forethought, analysis and preparation that determine the quality of the finished product

Day, A. (2007) *How to Get Research Published in Journals*. Burlington, VT.:
Ashgate. P. 9

what, who, when, where, why, how

Outlining

Murray, R. (2005) *Writing for Academic Journals*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill/Open University Press, p. 9



Brown's 8 questions for writing a research article

- Who are the intended readers?
- What did you do? (limit 50 words)
- Why did you do it? (limit 50 words)
- What happened? (limit 50 words)
- What do the results mean in theory?(limit 50 words)
- What do the results mean in practice? (limit 50 words)
- What is the key benefit for readers? (limit 25 words)
- What remains unresolved (to be done)? (no word limit)

Brown, R. (1994), *Write right first time*, Literati Newslite, Special issue, p. 1-8

Task 5 - Outlining

- Draw up an outline for an article for a journal using *what, who, when, where, why & how*
(max words 300)

OR

- Draw up an outline for an article using *Brown's 8 questions for drafting a research article*
(max words 300)

OR

- Write your article as a story with a beginning, middle and end (max words 400)

Task 6 – Audience and purpose

- Answer the following questions in single sentences
 - Who is the audience for your writing?
 - What is the purpose of your writing?

Which outlet is best for your work?

- Journal – professional journal e.g. SCONUL Focus, An Leabharlann
- Journal – peer reviewed e.g. Library Review, Library Management, Journal of Academic Librarianship, AISHE-J: The Journal of the All Ireland Society for Higher Education
- Conference/Seminar paper/poster – AISHE, NAIRTL, IUISC, LIR, UKSG
- Newsletter – in-house or other
- Popular Media – newspapers, radio, magazines
- Blog/Wiki/podcast
- Book chapter – calls for chapters
- Book – usually commissioned – see proposal form in package
- Other

Blogs & Wikis -librarians as academic writers

- The Mortimore-Singh Guide to Publication in Library and Information Science
- <http://www.uncg.edu/lis/PublicationGuide>
- LIS Publications Wikki
- http://slisapps.sjsu.edu/wikis/faculty/putnam/index.php/LIS_Publications_Wiki
- Publishing and Speaking: Library Success Wiki
- http://slisapps.sjsu.edu/wikis/faculty/putnam/index.php/LIS_Publications_Wiki
- Academic Writing Blog (libraries)
- Anltcwriters.blogspot.com
- A Library Writer's Blog
- <http://librarywriting.blogspot.com/>
- Beyond the Job
- <http://librarywriting.blogspot.com/>
- Bibliography in package

Journal analysis

- Who is the publisher?
- Who is the editor/on the editorial board?
- Is the journal national or international?
- What do the guidelines for contributions stipulate?
- Is some or all of the content peer-reviewed?
- How many issues are there per year and how many of these are themed?
- What types of material are published?
- Are articles illustrated?
- How many references do typical papers include?
- How long is the average article?

Journal analysis

- Are articles written in the first, third or other person?
- Is the tone formal or informal?
- What type of style is used? Are sentences short or long? What length typically are paragraphs? How many headings/sub-headings are there per article?
- Has your topic been covered in this journal before?
- Do you have a new angle?
- Why would this journal be interested in your topic?
- Before writing scan at least three recent issues of the journal

Task 7 - Drafting a query e-mail

- Before writing/submitting
- Editor
- Single sentences
 - I am writing an article on...
 - My experience is this area...
 - I think that readers of your journal would be interested in... because...
- Calls for papers (blogs etc.)

Elements of an article– title and abstract

Title

Stimulate reader's interest

Working title/final title

Attract and inform the reader

Stand out

Be accurate

Facilitate indexing

For more on titles consult

Hartley, J. (2008) *Academic Writing and Publishing: A practical handbook*.
London: Routledge, p. 23-27

Abstract

- Synopsis
- Details essence
- Length determined by journal
- Generally around 100 words
- informative or structured

Informative Abstract

- By **surveying** reference practitioners on their perceptions of chat reference training, this study **presents** effective training techniques that **could enhance** the professional preparation for chat reference personnel. Results **indicate** that the most effective training techniques involve hands-on practice among trainees and easy access...

- Study abstracts in your target journal. What verbs do they use?

Addresses, argues, asks, concludes, covers, demonstrates, describes, discusses, elucidates, enhances, evaluates, examines, expands, explains, explores, identifies, maps, outlines, presents, proposes, reports, reviews, shows, suggests, summarises, surveys, synthesizes, touches on

Structured Abstract

- **Purpose**
- This article **explores** the benefits of a writing support programme in developing the skills and motivation of librarians to write for academic publication.
- **Design/methodology/approach**
- A brief review of the literature **is presented**. The model developed and implemented by this author is outlined. Findings from a survey of participants are **discussed**.
- **Research limitations/implications**
- The formal programme commenced in 2007. The publication process takes time, particularly in the case of peer-reviewed journals. This is exploratory work. It will take time to build up a body of information and a community of librarians writing for publication. Initial evidence indicates there is significant value to the programme.
- **Practical implications**
- The model is transferable and **could help** in building skills and confidence in academic writing. In addition academic writing **could serve** as a bridge between lecturing and library staff, **addressing** issues of common concern across the academy.
- **Originality/value**
- This is the first formal writing support programme for librarians in Irish universities. Models exist in the US. A similar model is used in the UK and Ireland to support lecturing staff writing for publication.
- **Paper Type**
- Case Study
- **Keywords**
- Librarians, publication, academic writing, writing intervention

Task 8 – Title, Keywords and abstract

- Give your article a working title
- Allocate three keywords which you would expect people would use to retrieve your article
- Write an abstract for your article
 - Informative (80 word max)
 - Structured – as per slide

Elements of an article – introduction

- Introduces the substantive content of the paper
- Sets the scene
- Brings the reader in and gives a flavour of what is to come
- States the purpose
- States the scope
- States how issue is addressed
- Usually starts from the general and progresses to the specific
- In general the introduction should be quite brief and certainly no more than a sixth of the total article length
- May include context/background or this may follow introduction

Elements of an article – literature review

- Tells what others have found on topic
- Provides a context from which to illustrate how the work documented in the rest of the paper extends or advances understanding and knowledge
- Demonstrates that the author is familiar with past and present thinking on a topic and understands where their work fits
- Highly selective and specific, referring to other pieces of work most relevant to the argument being made

Elements of an article– methodology & analysis/outcomes/results

- Methodology details how the research was carried out
- The analysis should state clearly and unambiguously what the findings are and how they are being interpreted
- Where required it should supplement the argument made with analytic evidence e.g. statistics, tables, charts, maps, or quotes

Elements of an article - Discussion & Conclusion

Discussion

Folds together the previous sections, linking the findings to the literature review and makes the case for the argument developed

Conclusion

Brings key points together
Summarises rationale and findings

Reaffirming how the research advances understanding and knowledge

Outlining how future studies could build on and extend the research and argument reported

Try to link with introduction

Elements of an article – References and keywords

References

- Follow journal guidelines
- Complete
- Accurate

Keywords

- Indexing terms
- The way your article will be retrieved by databases/search engines etc.

Writing

All writing is rewriting

Allow yourself to write badly

Don't look for perfection, just write

Good writing is bad writing, ferociously self-revised

Plotnik, A. (2006) *Straight Answers from Arthur Plotnik* American Librarian, May 2006, p. 20

I just put down any sort of rubbish," a celebrated critic once remarked about his first attempts. And putting down rubbish is good advice...the truth is that once a sentence is lying on the page, it is often shatteringly clear what is right and what is wrong with it. Put it down, and go on putting more of it down. Everything can be mended later

Watson, George (1987) *Writing a thesis: a guide to long essays and dissertations*. London: Longman, p. 39

Structuring

Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone.

“But which is the stone that supports the bridge?” Kublai Khan asks.

The bridge is not supported by one stone on another,” Marco answers, “but by the line of the arch that they form.”

Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds: “Why do you speak to me of the stones? It is only the arch that matters to me.”

Polo answers: “Without the stones there is no arch.”

Calvino, I. (1997) *Invisible Cities*. London: Vintage, p. 82)



Learning how to structure

- Read
- Read first for story then for structure
- Model articles on other articles that work well (template)
- Different structures can achieve the same end in different ways
- Be aware of your audience

Elements of Structure

- Multifaceted
- Signposts

Headings & subheadings (official)

Endings of sections that hark back to what went before,
announce what comes next (unofficial)

- Sentence length
- Paragraphs
- Transitions
- Coherence/clarity

In a real sense it is better to create a text that says only a little, but says it clearly in a well-organized way, than to say something that says a lot but is so badly written, and so badly structured, that no one who reads it can understand what it is about

- Canter and Fairbairn, p. 74

Style

- House style (journal style)
- First, second or third person
- Active or passive voice
- Tense
- Movement
- Coherence/clarity
- Irrelevant information/Irrelevant words

Writing as Storytelling

- Writing as storytelling
- Beginning, middle and end (not necessarily in that order)
- What makes a story interesting?
- A story has a theme
- A story has movement
- A story has a flow
- Something happens/changes
- Try to write your piece from start to finish before beginning editing

Drafting and Revising

- Draft and redraft
- Number and date drafts
- Refer back to your audience & purpose statement
- Ask a critical colleague to read
- Revise title, abstract & article
- When finished put aside for at least a week
- Reread
- Spell check
- Recheck submission guidelines
- File preprint
- Let go

What makes a manuscript immediately appealing to an editor?

- Professional appearance: how it looks
- New/Novel treatment of the subject
- Thorough
- Author guidelines followed
- Good writing clarity and style
- Relevance of subject
- Title of manuscript
- High quality abstract
- Seminal piece of work/research
- A controversial subject

Why editors reject manuscripts

- Author guidelines not followed
- Not thorough
- Bad writing (lack of clarity and style)
- Subject of no interest to readers
- Poor statistics, tables, figures
- Old subject
- Unprofessional appearance
- Title
- Too simple – reporting
- Written at the wrong level

Submission

- Professional Journal – editor
 - Academic Journal – peer-reviewers
 - Referees
 - Accept as is
 - Accept with revisions
 - Revise and resubmit
 - Reject
 - Make changes as quickly as possible
 - Reread
 - Resubmit
 - Keep postprint
- www.sherpa.ac.uk

Presenting a paper at a conference

- Audience
- Context
- Precursor to publishing elsewhere
- Target library and other conferences
- Comments/questions/feedback
- Further development
- Connections

Book Review/Edited book/Book

- Book Review – see guidelines in package
- Call for chapters
- Invited contributions
- Editor
- Brief
- Content and style
- Audience
- Time deadline
- Honorarium
- A book is usually commissioned – see handout in package
- Royalties

Moving on with your writing

- Set realistic goals
- Write (Describe, reflect and evaluate)
- Read (angle?)
- Collect potentially useful data
- Participate in writing blogs
- Notebook/Journal – snack & sandwich writing
- Talk to colleagues
- Collaborate with librarians/with academic staff
- Give and look for peer support
- Celebrate success



Task 9 - Your Writing Plan

- Draw up a writing plan
 - Smart goals
 - timeline