University of Vermont Graduate Writing Center
Tips from Paul Silvia's *How to Write A Lot: A Practical Guide to Academic Writing*

Allot Time for Writing

Instead of *finding* time to write, *allot* time to write

- We allot time—clearly marked on a calendar and adhered to—for teaching, advisor/committee meetings, office hours etc. Writing time needs the same kind marking and respect!
- Put your writing time on your calendar and—just as you would say, "No, I can't meet at that time because I'm teaching"—practice saying, "No, I can't meet at that time because I'll be writing."

The secret in *allotting* time is not the number of days or hours but the *regularity*

- Binge-writing isn't as conducive to writing productivity as a regular and dedicated writing routine—even if that routine is 30 minutes every weekday morning and/or 20 minutes every Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday between class and meeting breaks.

Any action that is instrumental in completing a writing project counts as writing

- Taking revision and editing notes in the margins of a draft = writing
- Using PowerPoint or index cards to "storyboard" the major themes or points to make = writing
- Writing a memo to yourself about where you are in a project and what your next steps may be = writing
- Reducing the number of words to match with a target journal's requirements = writing
- All of the above and more = writing *if they help you to complete a writing project*.

Set Goals, Monitor Progress, and Plan Your Next Writing Session

- List your writing project goals–every writing project you want to accomplish in the next few months—and then categorize and prioritize those goals, making sure the short-term demands (a course syllabus, a letter of recommendation) don't continually crowd out research writing.
- Set a concrete goal for each writing session, such as write 200 words, reread two chapter drafts, brainstorm and make an outline for a new manuscript, etc.
- You might monitor your progress as Silvia does by tracking accomplishments via a statistical spreadsheet. Other writers keep a chart (e.g., To Do, In Progress, Completed) to track each project or parts of project from inception to completion.
- Consider ending each writing session by writing yourself a short memo: what you did, where you left off, what you think you need to take up or return to next time. The memo will make it easier for you to get back into writing the next time you sit down!

Start Your Own (Overcoming) Agraphia Group

Agraphia = the pathological loss of the ability to write.

To stave off or overcome agraphia: Form a group for people who want to write faster and better

Successful groups have 5 components:

- Concrete, short-term goals and monitoring of the group's progress
- Stick to writing goals, not other professional goals
- Big carrots (rewards!)
- Different groups for different writer types (graduate students in the same field or in different fields but at common points in their academic journey)
- Coffee, tea, or other focusing beverage

In forming a writing group, do you and other members want

- Accountability? i.e., a group that meets with every member reporting in on what they accomplished since the last group meeting and set further goals
- Feedback? i.e., a group where members bring short pieces of writing/sections of project to share or where one group member each meeting distributes in advance a longer piece/full chapter or article draft for the group to "workshop"
- Writing time? i.e., a group whose members meet "retreat style" for extended, independent writing in the quiet company other writers
- To meet face-to-face or virtually? i.e., using Skype, Zoom, or similar program to bring members together across geographic distances. (One UVM academic meets biweekly with a writing partner via Skype: Once connected, each works on their writing for the allotted time, knowing their companion is doing the same!)

For more see Silvia, How to Write A Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing (APA, 2d edition, 2018).

For support and coaching in forming a writing group, contact the Graduate Writing Center at gradwriting@uvm.edu.