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17 HOURS AGO    EDIT

# Featured: Writing Productivity Strategies

## **Writing Productivity Strategies**

Heather Carter-Templeton

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Published scholarship is a crucial expectation for faculty working in colleges and universities throughout the world. And, published scientific literature is the way in which members of a discipline share their theories, research, and findings to support knowledge used in practice.<sup>1</sup> However, many academics identify perceived barriers to their lack of scholarly productivity. Lack of time to dedicate to writing as well as lack of experience in writing have been cited as obstacles to successful publication and scholarship. In addition, due to various forms of preparation to serve as a faculty member in nursing, some may not have had adequate education regarding the processes surrounding writing for scholarship.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, many schools of nursing apply strategies such as writing groups, encouraging team writing, or other tactics to support faculty in their scholarship endeavors.

A recent inquiry was made to ten productive faculty members and nurse researchers from the United States to find out more about the advice and suggestions they would offer faculty about remaining productive in their writing. Seven responded to this query and offered feedback. These scholars had varying backgrounds and research areas and most worked in academic environments. Their feedback was reviewed and organized into themes including concepts related to *being*: aware, intentional, goal-oriented, pragmatic, and persistent (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1. A Model for Writing Productivity*

## BE AWARE

Several scholars suggested to start by being aware of the appropriate journals for your idea and learning more about recent publications on the topic. Therefore, identifying the best journal for your manuscript is a crucial early step in the

writing process. While many would see this as obvious advice, it is often a step that is skipped, to an author's eventual dismay. Some writing guides such as *Manuscript Success*<sup>3</sup> and *Writing in the Digital Age*<sup>4</sup> advise authors to do their due diligence in identifying the most appropriate journal for their work. The manuscript should be matched with the topic, the type of article, and the intended audience. You should ask yourself what new ideas your work presents. Furthermore, you should review your target journal for recent publications on the topic to avoid rejection due to redundancy. On the topic of target journals, one scholar noted, "*It does matter where you publish.*" The target journal may increase visibility among certain audiences. And, finally, one scholar suggested the idea of being aware of the excitement an author's writing might bring to the body of literature. She suggested recording a reading of the final product and noted, "*If you are not excited when you listen, the reader won't be excited either.*"

## **BE INTENTIONAL**

Another identified theme was intention. Several scholars suggested protecting writing time; one even suggested finding strategies to get into "*writing mode.*" How to do this? One respondent plays the piano; another had a ritual cup of tea and sat in a specific chair. It is important to identify the time when you write best—think of this as your "A" time, the time when you are most productive and have the most energy.<sup>5</sup> Although competing demands may conflict with your best writing time, you should make every effort to protect this time without apology.

Another idea within the theme of intention was to develop an outline with realistic due dates prior to starting the writing project. Be intentional and review the author guidelines so they may be followed "*exactly*" for manuscript preparation. This activity can be used for planning and goal setting. Another scholar stated that she has developed ways, such as highlighting and making

comments in the text, to help her re-orient herself to her work. This is helpful if she has had to put a manuscript away for a time to address other work activities. Being able to do this helped her not lose time upon re-starting the writing project.

## **BE GOAL ORIENTED**

A number of strategies were shared related to the idea of goal setting. Some of these ideas varied among scholars who suggested that authors must establish patterns and workflows related to writing that work best for them. For example, some scholars noted that it was important to not procrastinate, so that goals could be met. However, there was some conflicting advice about how many articles a person (or writing team) should have under review. One scholar suggested finishing one manuscript at a time while another suggested preparing multiple manuscripts to create a “pipeline.” With a pipeline, manuscripts might be at different stages of preparation, review, and revision so it is important to have a tracking system and be organized. Having daily or weekly writing goals is important. Some suggested allocating a set number of minutes per day or week to dedicate to writing, while others advised committing to writing a specific number of words during each reserved writing time. Nevertheless, the notion of establishing a goal to accompany scheduled writing time was a constant.

## **BE PRAGMATIC**

Being practical and pragmatic with scholarship was mentioned by many by respondents. Several suggested that it is important to maximize work efforts. For example, you should commit to converting any presentation, whether podium or poster, into a publication. Another suggestion was to attempt to present and/or publish any project, not just research endeavors. An interesting idea was to flip the process—write the manuscript first, then work to prepare a speech or poster. Additional advice was offered related to expand effort on topics prepared for

presentations. One scholar suggested making each presentation unique even when the topic is similar. “Freshening” presentations forces you to stay current on the topic and keep references up-to-date, which is important when writing a manuscript. Last, use social media to promote your publications—there are a lot of articles available, competing for a reader’s attention. You should do whatever you can to make sure that yours is noticed.

## **BE PERSISTENT**

The notion of persistence was noted by several respondents. One suggested, “Write something every day,” while another suggested writing in small increments of time. It is useful to learn how to write in small blocks of time which helps with procrastination. It may be hard to set aside an 8 hour block for writing so the ability to be productive in an hour here and there is important.

The idea of persistence was not exclusively related to habitual writing practice either. Persistence in the form of determination was also mentioned. One respondent advised to resubmit any rejected manuscript after modifying based on the review and new guidelines. Another respondent stated, “*Submit in one week after a rejection.*” This strategy may also assist in avoiding further delays that may occur when new literature updates are needed if written work becomes dated. Persistence is also key when your writing plans do not always work out the way you expect, but you need to continue to plan.

## **TEAM WRITING AND GROUP WRITING**

The topic of team writing and group writing was mentioned by multiple respondents. To clarify, team writing is working with a team to complete a project, whereas group writing may be an activity or a time dedicated to writing, with authors working on various or individual projects. Respondents indicated that teams have the potential to be helpful and assist in accomplishing writing goals.

However, with a writing team, having clear communication among the members, determining authorship early on in the project, and having agreed upon deadlines are essential for success.

Writing groups were also mentioned as methods to assist in meeting writing goals. These groups may occur in different places other than the typical work environment, with many being offered as a retreat. Time intervals for meetings and due dates may vary among members of the writing group but the group may help offer accountability to authors. One responded, “*Group writing is not for everyone. Some people truly enjoy the solitude of writing...and they are always the most prolific,*” again supporting the notion that writers—you—must consider your personal styles and understand the ways in which you work best.

## **CONCLUSION**

The need to increase writing productivity throughout the nursing discipline remains a challenge. Nurse researchers and scholars are constantly bombarded with competing demands of workload, likely resulting in tension as you balance writing with other expectations. Disciplined writing habits coupled with strategies to support personal needs and obligations may assist you to establish consistent writing patterns, ultimately resulting in a positive impact on your writing productivity. While the advice and strategies shared differed among colleagues, it was clear that each of them had specific guidelines and “rules” for themselves. Many of their strategies were personal and creative. Their adherence to these personal procedures has likely contributed to their success and offers an example for others.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Heather Carter-Templeton, PhD, RN-BC, FAAN is Chairperson of the Adult Health Department and an Associate Professor at West Virginia University, School of Nursing in Morgantown, WV. She is also the ANI Connection Editor for *CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing*. Contact Heather by email at [heather.cartertempleton@hsc.wvu.edu](mailto:heather.cartertempleton@hsc.wvu.edu)

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