

Chapter 2

From Unpublishable to Publishable

Abstract There are many persistent myths about writing for publication. Inexperienced authors sometimes hold on to the vain hope that there is a facile way to generate manuscripts that earn positive evaluations from reviewers and editors. It is a common misconception that successful authors generate manuscripts with ease and that their success is attributable to innate talent. Yet, as this chapter documents, highly regarded authors report that writing well is a persistent challenge that demands a considerable investment of time and mental energy. Chapter 2 explains the distinction between ordinary writing and publishable academic writing in terms of voice and style. It uses illustrative examples to clarify these important attributes and includes a variety of activities that assist authors in moving beyond the “writer’s block” stage. The chapter concludes with ethical issues in scholarship, including: intentional and accidental plagiarism, policies concerning simultaneous submissions, and the responsible conduct of research.

Practically everyone is familiar with the “publish or perish” dictum of higher education (Gray & Birch, 2001). The premise is that anyone without an extensive, impressive list of publications will be denied tenure and fired. Yet this is not an accurate portrayal of what actually occurs. Studies have found that approximately half of all doctoral program alumni publish and the majority of those who do first published to a small extent while still enrolled in doctoral studies (Mallette, 2006). In their review of the research literature on publication by faculty, McGrail, Rickard, and Jones (2006) concluded that, rather than being evenly distributed amongst the entire faculty at colleges and universities, a small minority of academics publish a great deal while others publish “just enough” or perhaps not at all. They cite a number of deterrents to publication supplied by academics for failing to write; interestingly, they are quite similar to those given for failing to write the dissertation: lack of momentum, motivation, and confidence as well as the absence of a framework or formal structures to sustain and support writing. Erkut (2002) estimated that 20 % of the faculty produced approximately 80 % of the publications.

Thus, while “publish or perish” may be accurate at major research universities, it generally is less so at many other postsecondary institutions. A more common scenario is that those who are competent in teaching and service activities will retain employment but perpetually remain at the lower ranks, so “publish or languish”

might depict the situation more accurately. Either way, the implication is that the impetus to publish resides outside the individual as proverbial rewards and punishments of “carrots and sticks”. Writing for publication is not some onerous expectation inflicted by others on unsuspecting faculty members. The truth is that some combination of teaching, service, and research is a nearly universal and widely understood job description for higher education faculty. Stated plainly, this is the job professors have signed on for and a major reason that they are not found standing in front of a class all day, Monday through Friday. Teaching well is roughly one-third of the role; the other two-thirds are scholarship and service. So, begin with this perspective if you aren’t already there: *View publication as an intrinsically motivated professional goal rather than something that is imposed upon you by others.* If your graduate program does (or did) not socialize you into the values of scholarship, then it has failed you in a fundamental way. Joining in the professional dialogue of their disciplinary specialization is an important and expected behavior of anyone who claims to be a scholar. If you never contribute your profession through writing, you are no more of a scholar than an armchair quarterback is a professional football player. It is necessary, but not sufficient, for a scholar to be conversant with others’ published work. Unless or until faculty members subject their work to critical review by peers, they have not fulfilled the role of a scholar.

This does not mean, however, that the first piece ever written while still in graduate school is expected to be a seminal work in the field and skyrocket the student to eminence in the field. In fact, having such ambitious (and generally unattainable) expectations too early on can be paralyzing. For those of us who are mere mortals, a “begin early, start small and build” strategy is more likely to be effective. However, it isn’t just the “earlier” part that makes it better, it is the diligent practice and determined attitude, as reflected in self-efficacy beliefs.

Self-efficacy refers to a person’s appraisal of her or his ability to affect outcomes. So, if I have high self-efficacy beliefs as a college instructor, I would agree with a statement such as “I can improve my teaching effectiveness through careful planning.” On the other hand, if I have low self-efficacy beliefs, I would regard teaching effectiveness as attributable to forces outside my control, such as the time of day when the course is scheduled and whether or not I happen to get a “good” group of students.

A professor who had applied for promotion and been denied twice once remarked, “I just keep sending out my manuscripts. After all, you can’t win the lottery without a ticket.” This fatalistic outlook on publishing reflects low self-efficacy beliefs about scholarly writing. Worse yet, because this faculty member attributed success entirely to luck, he did not change the manuscript based on the reviewers’ feedback, thus depriving himself of an opportunity to improve the work and eventually earn acceptance. Contrary to the perspective of this very frustrated professor, writing for publication is more of a meritocracy than a game of chance. The lives of celebrated, highly creative individuals are characterized, not as much by stunning innate talent as by huge investments in deliberate practice (Shavinina & Ferrari, 2004). It is estimated that it takes, on average, at least 17 years of training and preparation to contribute to a field (Duffy, 1998). Most readers of this book would have academic writing

experience during 4 years of undergraduate study, 2 years at the master’s level, and possibly four or more during doctoral study; they also would have some years of professional on-the-job training. Yet they still may have a way to go in terms of making published contributions to a field that earn the acceptance of their peers.

Interestingly, even academic authors who have succeeded in publishing their work will sometimes attribute that outcome to good fortune rather than their deliberate effort. They will diminish their work with statements such as, “Just lucky, I guess.” “They must have really needed something on that topic,” or “I really didn’t do that much, my dissertation chair did all of the work.” Part of becoming an academic author is to be realistic about time, effort, expertise, and the nature of the contributions made.

When people inquire about how someone became a writer, they typically are referring to the achievement rather than the process that was used to get there. They don’t want to hear about waking up every day at 4 a.m. to make time to write or that a short editorial was revised significantly 20 times. Accept the fact that, just as the person who wants to see the world devotes far more time to grappling with all of the annoyances associated with travel than to arriving at exotic destinations, academic authors devote much more time in transit to publication than in gathering up accolades for a published work. The celebrated novelist, James Michener, once said “Many people who want to be writers don’t really want to be writers. They want to *have been* writers. They wish they had a book in print.”

“Fast, Easy and Brilliant” Versus “Clearly and Warmly and Well”

As faculty members who have worked with doctoral students for decades, we sometimes meet prospective students who are eager to begin proposing dissertation ideas. They evidently have heard that getting stalled at the “all-but-dissertation” stage is a common problem or heard a failed doctoral candidate opine that the solution is to start on the dissertation sooner. They are under the misapprehension that merely talking about dissertations—even before they are admitted to the program and have completed a single course—will somehow accelerate the process. These students are walking examples of what Boice (1990) concluded from his longitudinal interview study of academic authors. He dubbed it as “the unsuccessful writer’s motto” and it was: “I want my writing to be fast, easy, and brilliant.” Published writing that earns the respect of peers is none of the above. Rather than being “fast”, the reality is that highly respected authors probably invest more time in and attention on their writing than many other writers. Instead of being easy, acclaimed authors are those who wrestle with collections of ideas and shape them into keen insights. Being brilliant is entirely incompatible with fast and easy because brilliance is the brainchild of being steeped in the literature, not some fortuitous event. As a doctoral student once put it, just as a chef needs a pantry of ingredients, a scholar needs a “well stocked mind” as a starting point—and getting there is neither fast nor easy. Very

little of what is written is brilliant from the start; in fact, this is so much the case that writer William Stafford advises authors to “Lower your standards and write” (Christensen, 2000, p. 72).

As Pamela Richards (2007) notes:

For a long time I worked under the burden of thinking that writing was an all-or-nothing proposition. What got written had to be priceless literary pearls or unmitigated garbage. Not so. It’s just a bunch of stuff, more or less sorted into an argument. Some of it’s good, some of it isn’t. (p. 120)

Rather than expecting immediate brilliance, expect that first drafts will make a poor showing but can be rewritten many times and reviewed by others until they are forged into well-wrought ideas. One advantage of writing is that it is malleable and can be shaped to the author’s purpose with time and effort. Accept that the fast/easy/brilliant dream is just about as likely as winning a multi-million dollar lottery. Replace that fantasy with a more humble-sounding, yet surprisingly difficult challenge, the one proposed by editor William Zinsser (2016) in his classic book on writing for publication. He recommends that every author aspire to write (1) clearly, (2) warmly, and (3) well.

Online Tool Read Ten Simple Rules for Getting Published (Bourne & Chalupa, 2006) at <http://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.0010057>

“Clearly” is the opposite of what is sometimes seen in the literature; too often, the writing is difficult to wade through. Yet, as Casanave and Vandrick (2003) have questioned, who is academic writing for? It is for the authors to showcase their facility with language or, is it to communicate a message to the readers? Writing expert Ken Macrorie (1984) answers that question through the title of his book, *Writing to Be Read*. We should write in a way that makes it accessible to other scholars rather than trying to impress; we definitely should not succumb to puffery and present simple ideas in convoluted prose so that they seem more profound. One editor’s favorite example of simple language was “To be or not to be, that is the question” because each word in that phrase is part of everyday language and only the final word is more than one syllable. Nevertheless, the message conveyed is profound.

Some scholars might take issue with the notion of academic writing being “warm”; after all, we are supposed to be unbiased, scientific, and let the data speak for themselves. As one widely published researcher explained, however, she thinks about not only the “hard facts” (i.e., statistical analysis) but also some “soft effects” (i.e., the people in the process): “in order for publication to fulfill the promise of affecting the field, we have to look at both the statistical significance and the practical significance. In other words, both statistics and the human factors are important” (Jalongo, 2013b, p. 70). The warmth comes, not from emotionally-charged rhetoric or “all about me” ruminations, but from a sincere effort to make a contribution to the field each scholar represents.

Unlike journalists who are “on assignment”, academic authors have the luxury of pursuing their interests and investigating topics about which they are truly passionate. So, while the empirical study is rigorous, there is a warm undercurrent of what prompted the study in the first place. A good example of this was a program evaluation that included a questionnaire completed by adults enrolled in literacy courses. All of the participants had faced one of their worst fears—being labeled as unintelligent and failing as readers—to undertake a huge self-improvement project: earning the General Education Diploma, or GED. The evaluation report was written and presented to various stakeholders, yet many years later, what remains in memory was a comment from one participant. In response to the question “What is the one, best thing that learning to read has done for you?” the person wrote, “It really helps with the medicine bottles for the kids.” There’s the “warmth”—to be reminded, so cogently, that literacy is much more than a set of skills, a score on a test, or a personal goal. Being able to read can support people in caring responsibly for others. Literacy can, quite literally, be a matter of life and death.

Zinsner’s (2006) third criterion, writing well, is another consideration. Students sometimes overlook a very powerful influence on what they write: what they choose to read and the other types of writing they have produced (Bazerman & Prior, 2004). In order to write anything—from a children’s picture book to an entry in an encyclopedia of research—authors need to immerse themselves in examples of that genre. While academic authors may not realize it, they arrive with distinctive writing habits they have “absorbed” from what they read. To illustrate, a group of master’s degree students enrolled in a principal’s program wrote in ways similar to what they had internalized from reading about school and community events in the media. Another group of students—social workers—reflected some of the stylistic features of case reports that they needed to read and to write. Just as the old adage “you are what you eat” applies to health, “you are what you read” applies to writing.

If you doubt that this is true, try this. Suppose that you are starting a writers’ group and want to advertise through a memo, posters, or on social media. What has to be included? Somewhere along the way, you have learned that publicizing the event needs to include who the event is for, what the event is, how it will be delivered, when it will occur, where it will be held, and why someone would benefit from participation. While your fifth grade teacher may have taught a lesson about this long ago, you really came to understand it by reading—and composing—examples of the who/what/when/where/why/how format. So, if you are attempting to write research as a dissertation or an article, you must first read many, many examples of the genre. Those who, in the interest of saving time, skipped over the research methods and procedures to get to the results and discussion section surely will find themselves at a loss for words when attempting to “write research”. This happens because they have not internalized the structures and mentally catalogued many examples that they can draw upon when attempting to write. Stated plainly, you cannot write research unless you have studied research—not just as content memorized for a test, but as a genre of writing. I suspect that much of the so-called “writer’s block” associated with dissertation writing has less to do with the absence of inspiration from the Muse and more to do with an insufficient collection of examples, cases, and

models absorbed from the literature. Thus, achieving writing and publication goals calls upon scholars, first and foremost, to form appropriate expectations for the purpose, structure, and language of scholarship (Richards & Miller, 2005).

Purposes of Nonfiction Written for Professionals

There is a useful distinction between writing about (a topic) and writing for (an audience). Writing *about* is like making the menu; writing *for* is more like preparing and serving the meal. In their classic studies of composition, Flower and Hayes (1981) found that the degree of audience awareness was a critical variable that differentiated effective and ineffective writers. Kenneth Henson (2007) has been interviewing editors for decades and reported, “I always ask the editors to tell me the most common, serious mistake that their contributors make that leads to rejection, and they always say that it is their contributors’ failure to know their readers” (pp. 781–782). Effective writers answer the question, Why bring this specific audience and material together? Respond to the questions in Activity 2.1 as a way to identify some general characteristics of the audience for scholarly publications.

Activity 2.1: Readers of the Professional Literature

Imagine that you are looking through the latest issue of a professional journal. Are there some authors whose writing you admire so much that you would read just about anything with their name on it, even if it were well outside your area of interest? What characteristics of writing would cause you to:

- Stop and read the entire article?
- Become annoyed and move on to something else?
- Request permission to duplicate the article and use it in your work?
- Write a letter to the editor?

Compare these thoughts with Table 2.1, major reasons to read the professional literature.

Argument in Academic Writing

Over the years, some of our undergraduates enrolled in writing courses have been confused by the word “argument” because they define the word as a contentious disagreement. Gradually, they come to realize that “argument,” as it is used in scholarly writing, refers to a logical progression of ideas supported by evidence. In general, scholarly writing relies on a logical argument that depends on an “assert, then support” style (Rhodes, 1995). Wallace and Wray (2011, p. 47) use the following equation to explain argument in scholarly writing:

Argument = Conclusion (containing claims) + Warranting (based on evidence)

Table 2.1 The purposes of professional literature

| Reason to read the professional literature | Implications for writers |
|--|---|
| To keep current in the field | References need to be up-to-date (e.g., most references published within the past 5 years and a few classic sources) |
| | Sources need to be authoritative and primary; for example, textbooks are considered to be secondary sources |
| | Review of the literature is thorough, yet selective |
| To use in work (e.g., teaching, research, service) | Resources are critically evaluated and relevant to the audience |
| | Practices that are endorsed are supported by theory and research |
| | Recommendations are clear, concise, and accessible to practitioners in the field at various levels of training (e.g., avoid excessive jargon) |
| To stimulate thinking and have something to talk about | Writing reflects originality and advances the conversation on the subject |
| | Manuscript presents a logical argument |
| | Resources are critically evaluated and synthesized for the reader |
| | The focus of the manuscript is matched to the readership of the outlet |

They go on to say that readers will want to know such things as:

- Why do you think that? How do you know?
- So what? What do these different pieces of evidence together imply?
- Does this reasoning add up? Aren't there other, more plausible conclusions?
- What causal relationship between the factors are you suggesting?
- Is the evidence adequate to justify the extent of the claim? Is the evidence appropriately interpreted? (Wallace & Wray, 2011, p. 52)

The argument is what distinguishes scholarly writing from other forms of written composition. Fulwiler (2002) identifies these key attributes of scholarly writing:

Beliefs and persuasion Writers must believe in what they write and persuade readers that it is true through a series of assertions that form a logical argument. The argument is supported by such things as professional experience, observation, experimentation, statistics, or interviews as well as a careful account of where the information was found.

The research imperative The expectation of the academic community is that even practical advice is based on research. For example, when doctoral candidates in education are first interviewed, most of them are classroom teachers seeking to become university faculty members. They tend to support their assertions with “In my school district, we ...”. As they pursue doctoral study, they grow in the ability to identify authoritative support for their ideas in the literature and, by the time that they defend a dissertation, they are conversant with specific studies and their findings.

Objectivity Academic authors need to be impartial, particularly when conducting research. This is one reason that the personal pronoun “I” is seldom used in academic writing. Even though there is extensive “between-the-lines information” about the author in a manuscript (Fulwiler, 2002, p. 6), the tradition of academic authorship is to distance oneself from the material to some extent. Instead of invoking personal opinion as their claim to authority, academic authors rely on evidence from the discipline to support their claims.

Balance Even though authors believe something, this does not mean that they limit their literature review to sources that validate their position only. Rather, in the interest of achieving a balanced argument, they briefly acknowledge these opposing opinions and explain why they respectfully disagree. By offering the reader an examination of alternative points of view or opposing interpretations, writers demonstrate that they have examined a topic from different perspectives.

Relativity Academic authors avoid absolute statements (e.g., “As everyone knows ...”), partly because generalizations lead to challenges to the argument and partly because scholars acknowledge that they could be wrong. The habit of qualifying assertions makes statements more supportable, for example, stating “The results suggest...” rather than “This study proves that...”

Activity 2.2: Basic Composition vs. Academic Writing

To illustrate the difference between ordinary writing and writing with a more academic tone, consider the following two paragraphs. The first is an ordinary type of writing that you might find in a student paper and the second, the same basic assertions in a more academic style. In both examples, the purpose is to persuade the reader that women who commit crimes should be viewed in a different way. The ordinary writing example attempts to achieve this by appealing to emotions. The second example is an illustration of how that same message could be communicated in a more authoritative voice and identifies places where evidence is needed.

| Ordinary writing | Academic writing |
|--|---|
| <p>According to popular wisdom, only bad women go to prison and deserve harsh punishment. If they are mothers their children will be better off without them. In actual practice many women who go to prison are poor, undereducated, unemployed and have been battered or abused. Many inmates are mothers of dependent children and most are single parents. Many have committed non-violent crimes in an effort to support their children</p> | <p>The Bureau of Justice reported that, by year’s end in 2012, approximately one in every 35 adults in the United States was under some form of correctional supervision (Glaze & Herberman, 2013). Approximately ___% of this population is male and ___% is female. National data gathered by the Bureau of Justice concluded that _____% of women who go to prison are poor, undereducated, and unemployed (CITE) and nearly 75% are single mothers of dependent children. Furthermore, it is estimated that ___% of female prison inmates have a history of being battered or abused before entering the correctional system (CITE). While popular opinion may depict incarcerated mothers as indifferent, neglectful, abusive, and a negative influence on their children, statistics collected by ___ reveal that _____% of female prisoners have committed non-violent crimes in an effort to support their child or children. As these data suggest, many female inmates with children were victims before they became perpetrators of crimes</p> |

In their book about the basic structure of academic writing, Graff and Bernstein (2010) suggest that academic argumentation follows a “they say/I say” strategy. For example, when discussing a perennial controversy, a “script” in academic writing might go something such as the following:

A persistent debate in _____ has been _____. Some contend that _____. From this stance, _____. In the words of a leading advocate of this approach, _____. Others argue that _____. According to this perspective _____ is the major influence. X supports this position when he writes, “_____”. To summarize, the issue is whether _____ or _____.

For more examples of scholarly writing see Clark & Murray (2012). Table 2.2 identifies some of the common phrases that are used when presenting a logical argument.

Voice in Academic Writing

Professional writing should not be dull, dreary, and dry. It should not imitate the style of the most boring textbook ever published or the most abstruse scholarly publication that was assigned reading during graduate study. Authors would do well to produce “reader friendly scholarly writing” because “The best scholarly writing communicates complex ideas in a straightforward, clear and elegant manner” (Holland & Watson, 2012, p. 14). A major, yet frequently overlooked, task in scholarly writing is acquiring an author’s voice that reflects knowledge of the discursive practices of the academic community (Kamler & Thomson, 2006).

Voice refers to the way we reveal ourselves to others when we write (Natriello, 1996; Richards & Miller, 2005). It is that place where, like a singing voice, you can sing comfortably without straining to hit the high notes or bottoming out on the low notes. Also, like a vocal range for a singer, a writer’s voice can be extended with coaching and practice. Just as singers become more confident, stay on pitch better, develop technique, and acquire performance skills through guided practice with accomplished vocalists, scholars can advance as writers through feedback from published authors. Both for a singing voice and a writer’s voice, no one else can do the work for you; it is something that you need to initiate, sustain, and strive to improve. Both in writing and in singing, however, there is something more. Superlative performance in each realm rests on the power of the performance to engage the audience. “Writing well means engaging the voices of others and letting them in turn engage us” (Graff & Bernstein, 2010, p. xvi). This does not necessitate, however, the use of the first person.

Many a graduate student has written a paper using me/my/I only to have it corrected by the professor. The voice of academic writing versus ordinary writing is as different as a book review published in a professional journal and an elementary school child’s book report. In the first case, the review is based on knowledge of the field and critical assessment; in the second, it is based on personal preferences (e.g., “I liked the book.”). Scholars reduce, address or—at the very least—acknowledge personal biases and avoid parochialism in their work.

Table 2.2 Phrases commonly used in scholarly writing

| |
|--|
| <i>Discussing areas of disagreement</i> |
| On the one hand.... On the other hand |
| Some would argue that... Others contend that.... Still others take the position that |
| The argument that _____ is weakened by _____ |
| One persistent debate in _____ is whether _____ or _____ is |
| While it is true that _____, it could be argued that _____ |
| At first glance, it may appear that _____; on closer inspection, however _____ |
| _____ theory emphasizes the role of _____ in _____. Conversely, _____ theory emphasizes the role of _____ in _____ |
| Although _____ is a widely accepted professional practice, _____ have called into question the ... |
| <i>Acknowledging widely held assumptions</i> |
| According to conventional wisdom, |
| Many people assume that... |
| The prevailing point of view in the field is that _____ |
| If _____, then _____ |
| The dominant paradigm in _____ is _____ |
| <i>Combining and synthesizing ideas</i> |
| Not only.... but also... |
| Findings concerning _____ have been mixed. |
| Early research in _____ tended to emphasize _____ |
| Many recent studies have suggested that... |
| While many of these studies have concluded _____, a few have investigated _____ from a _____ point of view |
| In addition... Furthermore.... Along similar lines.... Likewise ... |
| <i>Supplying examples</i> |
| Consider the situation in which |
| For example |
| A case in point is |
| One illustration of this |
| A legal precedent that many _____ professionals in the field are familiar with is _____ |
| <i>Wrapping up the discussion</i> |
| Thus... |
| To summarize, |
| In conclusion, |
| It follows, then |
| Consequently |
| Overall, these findings challenge |

Although it is a frequently debated topic, several things are evident about the acceptability of using the first person in scholarly writing.

- *It is context dependent.* Some of those who advocate using “I” and “me” are from an English literature background in which personal narrative is more highly valued. The best advice is to study the intended outlet for the work and compare/contrast it to the type of material you are seeking to publish. Even within the same publication, the editorial may be written in first person while the articles are not. Shape your writing to the specific context.
- *It may be status-linked.* After scholars are widely known leaders in the field, you may see examples of the first person in their published work. Relative newcomers, however, should be cautious about imitating the most prominent authors in their field. To some extent, freedom to use first person is linked to having “paid your dues” professionally. It may be the case that your personal/professional opinion is sought only after you have demonstrated expertise and wisdom in other venues.
- *The use of “I” can clutter up writing.* First person can make it difficult to share an example without including too much extraneous information. To illustrate, read this cogent example written by Laurie Nicholson:

Yet how does a caring and committed early childhood practitioner negotiate meaningful literacy activities simultaneously with John, who is a native English speaker from a middle class home filled with books; Maya, a recently immigrated Serbian child, whose parents’ English is halting at best; and Trevor, a child who is being raised by his functionally literate grandmother after his mother’s incarceration for drug use? (Jalongo, Fennimore, & Stamp, 2004, p. 64)

If this had been written in first person, it would have been something such as: “When I was teaching preschool in North Carolina, one of my students... and “As a supervisor of student teachers, I observed a child who...” While all of these children represent her actual teaching experiences, the material is condensed considerably by writing for the reader rather than about herself. Strive to “Negotiate a voice that is appropriate to the genre and the situation but also lively, unique, and engaging to readers. Writers can project a strong personal voice without using the first person and they can write in the first person without writing personally” (Lee, 2011, p. 112).

Unpublishable Writing

It is a basic principle of cognitive psychology that, when developing a concept, learners need to see not only examples of the concept but also examples of what the concept is not. These “noninstances” of a concept are important in learning about publishable writing as well. One fear that may lurk in the minds of authors is, “What if my writing is really awful, I don’t know that it is, and others are laughing at me behind my back?” Scholarly authors are in a double bind where writing is concerned because once you depart from the view of writing as a collection of tools and rules.

Now, instead of a sprinkling of minor mistakes, it is a downpour of faulty logic. This is even more unnerving.

In self-defense, scholars sometimes adopt a pompous tone, make bold assertions, use as much jargon as possible, or choose words that will send readers to the dictionary. The following excerpt was written by an anonymous professor and published in Macrorie's (1984) book as an example of what *not* to do. As you read it, identify the problems in this introduction to a book about the textbook:

Unquestionably the textbook has played a very important role in the development of American schools—and I believe it will continue to play an important role. The need for textbooks has been established through many experiments. It is not necessary to consider these experiments but, in general, they have shown that when instruction without textbooks has been tried by schools, the virtually unanimous result has been to go back to the use of textbooks. I believe too, that there is considerable evidence to indicate that the textbook has been, and is, a major factor in guiding teachers' instruction and in determining the curriculum. And I don't think that either role for the textbook is necessarily bad.

What problems did you notice? It is clear that the evidence base is lacking (e.g., there are "many experiments" but they are dismissed; there is "considerable evidence" but nothing is mentioned). Sweeping generalizations are another flaw in this sample with words such as "unquestionably" and "virtually unanimous". In addition, the voice vacillates; it begins with a pompous tone and concludes with the very informal sentence "And I don't think that either role for the textbook is necessarily bad." While it may seem mean-spirited to look at examples of bad writing (including our own), it is worthwhile to collect a few to help ourselves avoid these pitfalls.

The following is another anonymous author, writing about involving young children in organized sports. This is the introduction to the manuscript. How would you characterize the problems here?

By painful experience we have learned that national educational approaches do not suffice to solve the problems of our youth sport programs. Painful and penetrating sports medicine research and keen psychological work have revealed tragic implications for youth sports, producing, on the one hand experiences which have liberated youth from the tedium of the classroom, making childhood fuller and richer.

Yet, on the other hand, such has introduced a grave restlessness into childhood, making youth a slave to the athletic establishment. However, most catastrophic of all, is the created means for the mass destruction of integrative academic and fruitful opportunities of childhood and youth. This, indeed, is a tragedy of overwhelming poignancy—a secular, distorted perspective during the developmental years of childhood and adolescence.

You no doubt noted the sensationalistic language: "tragic", "grave", "catastrophic", "overwhelming", and "painful and penetrating". The author is railing against something without supplying evidence. This writing also neglects to consider the readers and their purposes. The manuscript goes on in this way belaboring the problem yet offering no ways of addressing it.

As these examples illustrate, writing to impress can go terribly awry:

The personal can become an emotion-led diatribe—making statements of self and personal views that are unsupported and essentially meaningless to anyone other than the person making them. The formal can be essentially correct but so boring that it is hard to progress

beyond the first page, right through to unclear argument and chaotic structure, errors of grammar and word use, unclear ownership and attribution, culminating in a failed attempt to impress. (Lee 2011, p. 106)

Presumably, your writing is much better to start with than either of these examples, so you have risen above terrible writing already. Even if your first draft inexplicably reads somewhat like the examples, you can always make it better by following these guidelines:

- Persuade readers that this matters rather than pontificate
- Be respectful of readers rather than subjecting them to a harangue
- Rely on evidence rather than emotional appeals and sensationalistic prose
- Offer a balanced view rather than rail against something in anger or frustration
- Go beyond merely identifying or harping on a problem to suggest a course of action
- Strive to be informative and helpful rather than treating readers as if they were the enemy
- Present possibilities rather than “oversell” your idea as the end-all/be-all solution

To illustrate effective scholarly writing, consider this excerpt from *The Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (Reschly & Christenson, 2012):

There are essentially three schools of thought on student engagement: one arising from the dropout prevention theory and intervention area, another from a more general school reform perspective (i.e., National Research Council, 2004), and a third arriving out of the motivational literature (e.g., Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kinderman, 2008; Skinner, Kinderman, & Furrer, 2009). (p. 11)

Note how it synthesizes the literature in a concise fashion and uses the “assert then support” style of logical argument expected in scholarly work. Learning the differences between most papers written in graduate school to fulfill course requirements and publishable manuscripts is a key transition for academic authors, as the next section will explain.

Publishable Scholarly Writing

Saad, an international doctoral student, had experience as a lecturer at a university in Saudi Arabia. During the first class meeting, he explained that he enrolled in the doctoral seminar writing for publication as an elective because, in order to retain his position and advance professionally, he would need to publish “at least a book”. To that end, he worked hard at mastering the style preferred by editors and reviewers for scholarly journals in the United States. As the class came to a close, he confided in the instructor that, in addition to the class assignments, he had revisited and revised two short articles that had been rejected previously. To his surprise, both articles were accepted for publication in respected online journals in his field—an

outcome he attributed to learning the “secrets” of writing. In response, Saad’s instructor said, “We have an idiomatic expression in the U.S.—‘There’s a method to my madness’—it means that, although what is being advocated or done may seem strange or counterintuitive, the recommended course of action makes sense and gets the intended result.” There are important distinctions between the typical graduate student paper and a publishable journal article.

To illustrate, journal editors commonly receive batches of manuscripts that obviously were written as a class assignment. Evidently, some misguided (and probably unpublished) professor has decided that this will be the capstone project for a group of graduate students. Unfortunately, they are not publishable because, while they may have been very good student papers, they are not journal articles. There are major differences between the two. So, what changes did Saad make to his articles that converted them from rejections to publications? He transformed them from student papers to articles by attending to the advice in Table 2.3.

As this figure suggests, there are many substantive differences between homework in graduate school and publishable work. Sometimes, students and faculty are very frustrated by this. “Why didn’t they have me write for publication, right from the start?” or “If I had written all of my class papers that way, I’d have lots of

Table 2.3 Making the transition from graduate student writing to published writing

| Characteristic | Graduate student papers | Published writing |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Audience | A professor (or thesis/dissertation committee) obligated to read and willing to offer guidance | A diverse readership who are free to choose reading material and under no obligation to lend support |
| Voice | The author’s voice is somewhat obscured by homage to leaders in the field | An authoritative voice that presents a logical argument and advances thinking |
| Focus | Papers that tackle broad topics rather superficially | A precise focus on dimensions of a topic that can be treated adequately in a short manuscript |
| Title | A “generic” title that describes a domain of interest | A specific title that conveys not only the content but also the purpose and audience |
| Organization | Page after page of unbroken text, often loosely organized | Clear organization, signaled by headings, subheadings, and visual materials that guide readers through a logical argument |
| Format | Beginner’s mistakes in format and referencing style | A manuscript that follows the specific outlet’s requirements to the letter |
| Readability | “Wastes words” and lacks transitions when shifting topics | Revised until it is concise and flows smoothly from one section to the next |
| Introductions and conclusions | Absent, formulaic, or repetitive (e.g., an abstract that repeats the introduction) | Carefully crafted like “bookends” that give a satisfying sense of having come full circle |

Sources: Jalongo (2002) and Jalongo (2013a, b)

publishable material” are some common complaints. The answer is that the purpose for the writing was quite different. At first, writing is used to demonstrate that you have learned your way around your field. However, when the purpose becomes to make a contribution and advance thinking in the field, the rules change. Accept that “You can’t improve your writing unless you put out words differently from the way you put them out now” and some of these new ways are going to “feel embarrassing, terrible, or frightening.” (Elbow, 1973, p. 79, 80). Unless you have a solid history of successful publication in your field, the type of writing that served you well in the past is no longer good enough and, even if you have experienced success, each new writing challenge requires a readjustment.

Still, it may be possible, during advanced graduate study, to make what is written more like a journal article or book from the beginning (Pollard, 2005). The best course of action is to discuss it with the specific instructor and thesis or dissertation committee. Increasingly, doctoral programs are allowing students to forego the traditional dissertation and to meet that requirement through publication. A doctoral candidate might be permitted, for example, to publish three articles in peer-reviewed outlets as evidence of her or his ability to conduct independent research (Badley, 2009; European University Association, 2005; Francis, Mills, Chapman, & Birks, 2009). Even if this is not an option, professors for graduate courses often are receptive to papers written more in the format of a journal article and preparing an assignment in this way could lead to later collaboration with the instructor as well. The next section describes appropriate uses of others’ work in your writing.

Preventing Plagiarism

Where writing for publication is concerned three main considerations are plagiarism, copyright, and responsible conduct of research. One of the most egregious ethical issues in writing for publication is plagiarism, defined as theft of ideas; the word originates from a Latin verb that means “to kidnap.” The United States Office of Research Integrity (ORI) “considers plagiarism to include be the theft and misappropriation of intellectual property and the substantial unattributed textual copying of another’s work” (Roig, 2013).

While it is true that scholars, as Sir Isaac Newton noted, “stand on the shoulders of giants” and rely on the work of others, giving appropriate credit to sources is essential. Even graduate students can be unaware of what constitutes plagiarism in the United States or come from a culture with different ideas about intellectual property (Osman-Gani & Poell, 2011). Based on national, longitudinal survey of graduate students (www.plagiarism.org) conducted by James McCabe, approximately 24 % of graduate students admitted to paraphrasing/copying a few sentences from an internet source (e.g., Wikipedia) or a print source without referencing it There is an expectation that any ideas that did not originate with you are accompanied by a reference to

the source. This pertains, not only to direct quotations, but also to ideas that are paraphrased into your own words.

Online Tools Learn more about plagiarism and academic integrity at Facts & Stats <http://www.plagiarism.org/resources/facts-and-stats/> and the International Center for Academic Integrity <http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/home.php>

Activity 2.3: Attributing Sources Correctly

Read the following quotation and the excerpts from four student papers that follow. Which are plagiarized? Which are not? Why?

Quotation

Being educated means being skillful with language—able to control language instead of being controlled by it, confident that you can speak or write effectively instead of feeling terrified. When successful people explain how they rose to the top, they often emphasize their skills as communicators ... Writing, private or public, ... is really about you, about the richness of your life lived in language, about the fullness of your participation in your community and in your culture, about the effectiveness of your efforts to achieve change. The person attuned to the infinite creativity of language leads a richer life. So can you. (Gardner & Barefoot, 2014, p. 175)

| Student paper 1 | Student paper 2 | Student paper 3 | Student paper 4 |
|---|---|---|--|
| Skill with language, both spoken and written, is one characteristic of an educated person. Many people attribute their success to their skills as communicators | Educated people are skillful communicators. They use their knowledge of language, both spoken and written, to help them in their personal and professional lives (Gardner & Barefoot, 2014) | The term <i>educated</i> , as defined by Gardner and Barefoot (2014), means efficiency in using the communication skills of speaking and writing to foster growth and change in both the public and private sectors of life | One can either control language or be controlled by it. Educated people continually strive to improve their skills as communicators so that they can control language and become more successful at it |

If you answered that plagiarism occurs in papers 1 and 4, you were correct. Paper 1 is an example of paraphrasing, of putting someone else's ideas into your own words. It requires in-text citation, like this: (Gardner & Barefoot, 2014). Why? Because those ideas did not originate with you. Papers 2 and 3 are *not* plagiarized because both of them cite the source of the ideas in the paper. Paper 4 is even more blatant example of plagiarism because it is even closer to the original quotation than Paper 1. It too could be corrected by simply including the name and date for the source that was used.

Sources: Gardner & Barefoot, 2014; Jalongo, Twiest, & Gerlach, 1999.

Table 2.4 Guidelines for avoiding plagiarism

Use the scholar’s tools. Record information from your sources carefully and accurately throughout the process; do not wait until the final proofs to begin checking details. Stop what you are doing and type the information in while you have it in front of you. Otherwise, time can be wasted searching for a lost reference and errors will creep in

Devise a strategy to differentiate. Distinguish your ideas from those taken from outside sources, for example, use the highlighting tool on your ideas. Review any paraphrased or summarized material to make certain that it is either in your own words or that any words and phrases from the original are quoted

Master the basics of referencing style. Do not rely on your memory; learn the basics and look up the rest. You will be using a referencing style for a long, long time so the investment in it will pay off in the long run. Remember that you must supply the page number for any direct quotation

Provide a citation for paraphrased material. Everyone knows to document direct quotations; however, even master’s degree students sometimes do not know that paraphrased material, facts that are open to dispute or are not common knowledge, and other authors’ opinions or conclusions need to be cited, even though they are not direct quotations (Kirszner & Mandell, 2010). Any figures, tables, graphs, and charts taken from a source all require a citation and, if you plan to publish them, you’ll need permission and probably will have to pay to use them

Any time that you quote, you’ll need the exact page number. Take the time to put it in when the book is right in front of you rather than waiting until after it was returned to the library or the person who loaned it to you. Any time that the idea did not originate with you—even if you rewrote it into your own words—it still needs a citation. Remember also that you’ll need the inclusive page numbers for journal articles or for chapters in books; the latter can be particularly difficult to track down after the fact.

Scholars sometimes express concern about unintentional plagiarism. In other words, an idea pops into mind and may seem original when actually, it is something they read previously bubbling up to the surface. Careful and appropriate citation is the best solution. As you write, use a clear system of differentiating your thoughts from the ones you have read; for example, you might use the highlighting tool or type, in capital letters MY IDEA:. Notes should be as complete as possible; you need to stop and type in the source as you are working, not expect to return to it much later and keep everything sorted out. Another way to prevent unintentional plagiarism is to avoid procrastinating. Mistakes are more apt to occur if the author is racing to finish the work or taking notes on a large stack of sources all at one sitting.

When people deliberately copy (or purchase) someone else’s work and present it as their own, it frequently is an act of desperation. More often than not, they have waited until the last minute and resort to pirating (or purchasing) someone else’s work rather than submitting nothing at all. Most of the time, this breach of academic integrity will be exposed when professors, the, graduate school personnel who approve dissertations, and editors use search engines that will check for similarity between the manuscript submitted and other papers or published sources. One that is used by faculty members, Turnitin (2015), checks student papers against a huge

data base of other student papers to identify “highly unoriginal content.” iThenticate (2016) is commonly used by graduate school personnel to check dissertations or publishers to check manuscripts submitted to journals. But, even before these tools were available, well-read faculty members and reviewers of manuscripts often detected the signs of plagiarism, such as a sudden and dramatic improvement in the writing style or the sense that the material was somehow familiar. In any case, the punishments for a documented case of plagiarism typically are severe, such as dismissal from the university for a student or denial of tenure for a faculty member.

Where copyright is concerned, it isn’t strictly the number of words. For example, if an entire scholarly publication hinges on a diagram that explains the theory, that diagram would be protected by copyright because it is the essence of the work. Thus, you must include written permission to use surveys, instruments, tables and figures. Many a textbook author has begun by flagging sections from other books that are already published, assuming that the authors will be eager to have their work recognized in this way. Actually, the author probably does not own the copyright—the publisher does—and payment probably will be required to use the material. Even book publishing contracts frequently contain a “noncompeting works” clause, requiring authors to agree that they will not publish another book on the same topic for a specified period of time. On the other hand, if you present a paper at a conference and it is “published” as an ERIC document, that does not prevent you from pursuing publication because authors do not transfer the copyright; conference proceedings often fall into the same category because they usually are not copyrighted and, if so, a statement noting that the paper was first presented at that conference would be sufficient. Intellectual property is a complicated topic. Practically any question you might have is addressed by the U. S. Copyright Office at <http://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/>.

Responsible Conduct of Research

Yet another ethical issue in writing has to do with ethical, principled behavior in research. Fundamental to this goal is adherence to the principles of informed consent when working with human subjects and obtaining approval to proceed with the research from an Institutional Review Board. The six basic principles of informed consent are in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 Six principles of informed consent

| |
|---|
| Participants have a right to know: |
| 1. The purpose of the data collection |
| 2. Why and how they were selected to participate |
| 3. The time commitment involved should they choose to participate |
| 4. How their data will be handled in terms of confidentiality or anonymity |
| 5. That participation is voluntary and no negative consequences will come to them should they choose not to participate |
| 6. How they can withdraw at any time from the study |

Due to concerns about litigation, publishers may require authors to supply evidence that their research went through a human subjects review process. If this is not something that is required or expected in another country, it can become an obstacle to publication. It also is common practice to require authors to disclose any possible conflicts of interest, such as financially benefitting from the article's publication. For example, if a medical researcher has conducted drug trials, continued major funding for research may hinge on reporting that the medication was highly effective and had few side effects; therefore, this information has to be disclosed (Stichler & Nielsen, 2014). Another type of disclosure required is when the work was supported by a grant. The funding group may require authors to include a disclaimer that the statements made are the authors' and do not reflect the grantor's point of view. It is becoming the norm for journals to require authors to verify this information as a condition of publication.

Policies Concerning Simultaneous Submissions

Many scholars are unaware about the rules that govern submitting manuscripts for review. The committees responsible for reviewing conference proposals, for example, may limit the number of proposals on which a presenter's name can appear. When articles are submitted to professional journals, there also is a prohibition against sending it to more than one outlet simultaneously. The reasons behind both of these policies are easier to understand when you consider that reviewing others' work is uncompensated service from respected scholars. If an individual "floods" the conference with several proposals or sends the same manuscript to several different possible publications, it is an imposition on the good will and volunteer time of other scholars. Furthermore, if a manuscript is simultaneously submitted to multiple journals and is accepted by more than one, what then? The worst thing to do is allow it to be published twice; that would be embarrassing for the journal editors and a clear case of self-plagiarism. The alternative would be to withdraw the manuscript from one of the outlets that accepted it—another irritating outcome for the reviewers and editor who took the time to read and critique the work. One exception to this policy against simultaneous submission is in the case of pursuing a contract with a commercial publisher. In this situation, it is a for-profit business and the reviewers probably get some form of modest compensation—for example, a free book chosen from the publisher's current catalog or a small honorarium. Even in this situation, in the interest of fair play, authors should let the publishing company know if they intend to pursue more than one publisher.

Online Tool Check to see if your institution has a site license with the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) <http://www.citiprogram.org>. If so, complete the *Authorship* module that discusses ethical issues in intellectual property.

Conclusion

A faculty member was serving on a university-wide committee with the provost. As they waited for the group to assemble, he said “I read your sabbatical leave report and was really impressed. One thing is certain: you know how to get your work published in the journals and books of your field.” Little did the provost know how many failed attempts were piled up in the shadows of those achievements. Nobel laureate physicist, Werner Heisenberg once said that “an expert is a person who knows the worst mistakes that can be made in a field, and how to avoid them.” Ideally, it would not be necessary to commit each of those mistakes and become a better writer through that lowest form of learning, trial and error. Nevertheless, errors and missteps occur along the way. This chapter has discussed many of those errors in scholarly writing and publication as a way to prevent them. Returning to the conversation, the provost remarked on a position paper written for the leading professional association in the field that was one of four finalists for a national award. “How many hours would you estimate that you spent on writing that piece?” he asked. “It’s hard to say,” she replied. “I can remember many, many 4 am to 8 am mornings invested in writing and revising it but did not keep count. There’s also the issue of what counts as time—just thinking about it while doing other things? The trainings I completed for professionals on the topic? The experience of reviewing others’ position papers over the years and writing one previously? It’s hard to sort out, really. But I can remember wondering if anyone would notice how much time I put into it to make the writing flow.” Perhaps this is the single, most important attitude to adopt, one that assumes: “Good writing isn’t forged by magic or hatched out of thin air. Good writing happens when human beings take particular steps to take control of their sentences, to make their words do what they want them to do” (Fletcher, 2000, p. 5).



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