

# Approaching a Writing Project

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## Overview

- Establishing the mindset
- Knowing the ethics
- Preparing to write
- Doing the writing
- Revising your work

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## Establishing the Mindset

- Remember that you are writing to communicate, not to impress.
- Realize that those reading your work want you to do well.
  - Journal editors
  - Peer reviewers
  - ProfessorsTheir constructive criticism is to help you succeed.

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## Knowing the Ethics

- Authenticity (not fabrication)
- Accuracy
  - Providing complete data (not only those supporting your hypothesis)
  - Avoiding inappropriate manipulation of images
  - Using appropriate statistical procedures

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## Knowing the Ethics (cont)

- Originality
  - Not republishing the same findings (except under special circumstances, with the original source cited)
  - Not submitting the same manuscript to two or more journals at once
  - Not dividing one research project into many little papers (“salami science”)

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## Knowing the Ethics (cont)

- Credit
  - Citing sources of information and ideas (also aids credibility, helps in finding out more)
  - Avoiding excessive use of others' words
    - Recording sources when copying items or taking notes
    - Placing in quotation marks, or indenting, items used verbatim
    - Perhaps drafting some items while not looking at the source materials

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## Knowing the Ethics (cont)

- Observing copyright and obtaining needed permissions
- Ethical treatment of humans and animals (and documentation thereof in publications)
- Disclosure of conflicts of interest
  - Financial
  - Other

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## A Resource on Ethics

*On Being a Scientist: Responsible Conduct in Research*, 2nd edition (1995):

- From the US National Academies
- Largely for graduate students
- Available at [www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/obas/](http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/obas/)
- 3rd edition in the early planning phase

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## Preparing to Write

- Use published items as models.
- Obtain and review instructions.
- Perhaps get a style manual—for example:
  - [Scientific Style and Format](#)
  - [The ACS Style Guide](#)
  - [AMA Manual of Style](#)
  - [The Chicago Manual of Style](#)
  - [Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association](#)

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## Preparing to Write (cont)

- While you are gathering content, write down ideas that occur to you.
- Do lots of “prewriting”—for example:
  - Stack papers in the order you plan to cite them.
  - List points you want to make.
  - Perhaps make an outline.
- If you’re having trouble formulating ideas, perhaps do something else for a while.

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## Doing the Writing

- Schedule specific times to write.
- Start with whatever part you find easiest.
- Don’t interrupt your writing to search for small details.
- Realize that often in writing there is no “one right way” but rather a series of problems with more than one solution.

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## Revising Your Work

- Note: Good writing is largely a matter of good revising.
- First revise your writing yourself. Then get feedback from others and revise more.
- Consider having an editor help you.
- Avoid the temptation to keep revising your writing forever.

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## Questions to Consider in Revising

- Does the manuscript contain everything it should?
- Does it contain anything it shouldn’t?
- Is all the information accurate?
- Is the content consistent throughout?
- Is everything logically organized?
- Is everything clearly worded?

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## Questions (cont)

- Are points stated briefly, simply, and directly? In other words, is everything concise?
- Are grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word use correct throughout?
- Are all figures and tables well designed?
- Does the manuscript comply with the instructions?

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*Wishing you much success  
with your writing projects!*



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