

Wellbeing When Writing

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# Writing as Thinking I

Year 1

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Delivered by:

[Facilitator Name], [Facilitator Title]

# Learning outcomes:

- Identify and discuss your own approach to writing for your PhD
- Practice a range of writing & wellbeing exercises that you could use in your own studies
- Evaluate the statement: 'writing is thinking'
- Design your own writing strategy

# Identify and discuss your own approach to writing for your PhD

- Question 1: What place do you think writing has in PhD research?
- Question 2: What are your preferred approaches to writing?

# Practice and evaluate a range of writing exercises that you could use in your own studies

Timed free-writing exercise:

- Write whatever is on your mind for the next five minutes.

# Begin writing about anything that comes to mind...

This strategy is particularly useful if you have written very little so far. Think of it as a warm-up exercise to get your creative juices flowing.

For example you could begin by writing about your preliminary data, data published by others, or the goals of your research. Do not worry about grammar or even accuracy. Just get words on the page for about 15-20 minutes.

# Begin writing about anything that comes to mind...

Ideas are born with writing, and the more you write the more ideas you will have. Even when you are in a rhythm of writing, it helps to begin your day by just jotting down ideas for the first 15-20 minutes.

Remember, ideas are useless inside your mind – they need to be on paper and explained so others (particularly your thesis committee) can understand them. Most of this writing will not make it into your final draft, but it will help you to create new ideas.

# Directed free writing

Free writing works best, ironically, if you direct it carefully. You can do this quite simply by writing a question or statement at the top of the page to use as a guide for your writing.

Questions that start with ‘how’ work well, for instance: “how do I know that free writing works?” or “how might we get more people to do writing exercises?” In case you haven’t already worked it out, the word ‘how’ is good to use at the start of research questions because it prompts a wide range of responses.

<https://thesiswhisperer.com/2014/06/04/two-exercises-to-help-you-with-your-writing/>



# Directed free writing

Timed directed writing exercise – write for five minutes on:

- Who are you?
- What is your PhD research topic?
- How did you come to be researching in this area?

# Note taking and redrafting

- Note down five key words from your free-writing on a fresh piece of paper (condensation/distillation)
- Tear/screw up and throw away your original free-writing (freedom to begin afresh)
- Re-write your response, using the key words as prompts (editing/redrafting)

# Thinking creatively...

Imagine your thesis is an animal:

- What kind of animal is it?
- How does it behave?
- What is its habitat?
- Is it a daytime creature or nocturnal?
- Is it carnivorous, or not?

## Practice and evaluate a range of writing exercises that you could use in your own studies

- Can you identify three writing strategies we've just tried?
- How might any of these practices be useful for you in your studies?

# Introductions and project summaries

Move around the room introducing yourself and your project, making networks, connections, collaborations...

# Evaluate the statement: 'writing is thinking'

Think about the relation between writing and thinking – i.e., that writing is necessary for rigorous thinking, indeed that writing *is* thinking. This is true for all writing, whether scientific or more discursive.

# Writing as thinking

- Read stimulus text and write for ten minutes to process ideas – every time!
- Start writing about anything that comes to mind
- Focus on your research question / the bigger picture of your PhD

# Writing as thinking

- Do you agree that 'writing is thinking'?
- Why/why not?



# Physical wellbeing exercises, rest-breaks & strategies for movement

- <https://www.fnu.edu/8-health-wellness-tips-college-students/>
- <https://www.york.ac.uk/students/health/wellbeing/>
- Embodiment – read the stimulus text and move key ideas through your body / join up with others / create collaborative movement strategies for communicating key ideas

# Breathing for wellbeing

Try the 'Three Minute Breathing Space Practice', here:

<https://www.mindful.org/the-three-minute-breathing-space-practice/>

# Design your own writing strategy

- Write every day – practical strategies for building a writing routine
- <http://www.nextscientist.com/writers-block-phd-students>
- In a group or on your own, design your own strategy for writing as a regular part of your PhD process.

# Plenary discussion:

- What are five words you associate with the writing process?
- When you are about to begin a new piece of writing, how do you feel?
- Why do you think writing makes you feel like this?
- What for you are the main pleasures of writing? And what are the main obstacles?
- What are the strategies you have developed/will develop to help your writing process?

# Further info (online)

- #PhDchat
- #PhDAdvice
- #AcWri
- #ShutUpAndWrite
- @WriteThatPhD
- <https://thesiswhisperer.com>
- <https://www.vitae.ac.uk>

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