

## Planning Writing Time

Planning time for writing can be really challenging, given all of the other pressures on your time, such as coursework, teaching, research, and family obligations. Many of us put off writing projects, waiting for a free day or the right mood for writing. However, this procrastination could cause us to run out of time to revise or edit, losing opportunities to get feedback on drafts, and even miss deadlines. This handout suggests approaches to prevent procrastination by breaking large writing projects into small tasks, determining how much time you have available for writing, and then working backward from deadlines to make sure projects are completed in time.

**First, make a list of writing projects you want to complete by a certain time (i.e. end of the semester, end of summer, end of winter break). Example:**

- Make progress on dissertation (goal: submit two chapters to advisor by the end of the summer)
- Submit chapter 2 to a journal for publication

**Then break down these goals into smaller tasks. Example:**

Chapter 2:

- Finish analyzing data
- Use advisor's comments to revise the literature review
- Revise methods to include new tests I ran on the data
- Send new draft to advisor and arrange a meeting
- If my advisor feels the chapter is strong enough to publish, determine which journal to submit it to and look up journal publication guidelines
- Revise chapter according to journal publication guidelines
  - Review past articles in this journal on my topic
  - Shorten draft to meet word limits
  - Add abstract
  - Check to make sure the reference list is complete and accurate
  - Copy-edit the draft and submit

Chapter 3:

- Methods
  - Determine best methods for analyzing results
  - Write outline
  - Write a draft
- Findings/Results
  - Finish running experiment
  - Analyze results
  - Figure out what the results mean
  - Write outline
  - Draft the findings and results sections

- Introduction and literature review section
  - Check database for new studies on my topic; read and take notes
  - Reread notes from past readings
  - Figure out what gap my study fills
  - Write outline
  - Write a draft
- Send draft to advisor and arrange a meeting

### **Determine how much time you actually have for writing and set deadlines for each writing task.**

Print out an empty calendar for the time period you are planning for (i.e. the semester, winter break, summer break) and then do the following:

1. Cross out time that is not available for writing.
2. Look back at your writing goals. Do they still seem reasonable? If not, adjust them.
3. Mark your deadline for each writing project.
4. Estimate how much time it will take you to complete each writing task.
5. Working backward from the project due date, create a deadline for each writing task and add the task to the calendar.
6. If you use Outlook (or another online calendar), block out time in your schedule for writing (so that you don't accidentally plan other activities during this time).

### **Create Ways to Stay Accountable to Writing Goals**

1. **Create a Writing Journal:** Each day, start by setting a writing goal. This writing goal could be focused on a specific task (i.e. take reading notes on five articles) or be behavioral (i.e. write for two hours without checking Facebook). At the end of the session, take notes on what you accomplished. This practice will help you keep track of goals as well as get a better sense of realistic goals.
2. **At the end of each writing session, make a list of next steps.** This will help you set writing goals and get right to work during your next writing session.
3. **Find a writing partner,** someone you can sit and write with or someone to check in with about setting and meeting writing goals.
4. **Create deadlines** for different points in the writing process (i.e. taking notes, creating visuals of data, creating an outline, drafting a section) **by setting up meetings** with a co-writer, peer, tutor or advisor. Knowing that someone expects to see a certain amount of work done will motivate you to reach goals.