

..... second edition .....

# Becoming an Academic Writer

.....  
50 Exercises for  
Paced, Productive,  
and Powerful Writing  
.....

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# Chapter 1

Get Ready to Practice

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*The style of an author should be the image of his mind, but the choice and command of language is the fruit of exercise.*

—Edward Gibbon (1737–1794)<sup>1</sup>

Wishing you could tackle all your writing assignments way ahead of deadline but wondering if this is even *possible*? Feeling as though you should be writing and publishing *more* but just don't know how to make it happen? Being pressured to write for publication in order to get promoted or tenured but unsure whether there will be enough time to get things out before you have to submit your packet? Having to write that thesis or dissertation but not envisioning how to manage such a monstrous project? Feeling motivated but lost when piecing together a journal article for publication or a grant proposal for extramural funding?

Well . . . you're not alone.

Although writing and publishing define much of our lives as academics (professors, students, research staff, administrators), survey data show many faculty in U.S. colleges and universities publish less than one article or book per year (Belcher, 2009). What's more, within specific fields of inquiry such as social work, faculty members from 20% of the doctoral-granting programs are responsible for 43% of all journal articles published in that field (Green, Bellin, & Baskind, 2002). In other words, only a small number of college or university professors (in the United States and worldwide) write and publish at a steady, productive pace (Teodorescu, 2000).

When probed for reasons why they aren't writing or publishing more, both faculty and graduate students point to multiple barriers. Lack of time is the most common (DeAngelo, Hurtado, Pryor, Kelly, & Santos, 2009; Page-Adams, Cheng, Gogineni, Srana, & Ching, 1995). Faculty and students claim they have difficulty fitting large chunks of writing time into their extremely busy schedules. And because many academics struggle with writing or lack confidence in their abilities, they relegate the task to the proverbial back burner.

As they (or should I say *we*?) systematically postpone a task they experience as difficult and unenjoyable, finding time to write, to start, or to complete a project looms over their academic lives like a guillotine, ready to plunge at any second (Steel, 2011). This is how writing controls our lives: through fear, avoidance, and stress. The more we avoid it, the more it controls us.

If you are such a writer—the kind who begins writing shortly before a deadline, who *knows* you should be writing but just can't feel motivated or find the time to do it, who isn't quite sure how to put together a publishable piece of academic writing—this book is for you. It will help you gain

(or regain) control over your writing and disarm forever the guillotine of anxiety, fear, and stress.

## The POWER Model

This book describes a model for taking control of the academic writing process—the POWER model (Promoting Outstanding Writing for Excellence in Research)—and provides weekly exercises to improve control. The model combines certain behavioral *principles* with specific *practices* to help you master and become comfortable with your writing. If you understand the principles and practice the exercises on a weekly basis, you will

- a. establish a *stress-free writing habit* that will serve you throughout your academic career;
- b. *increase your writing (and publishing) productivity* at a comfortable, consistent pace; and
- c. *improve the quality* of your academic writing (in two words: *write better*).

POWER embodies two related elements: (a) a writing support service created for faculty and graduate students at Texas A&M University (as a service provided by the College of Education and Human Development) and (b) a set of principles and practices for promoting academic writing productivity and quality (in other words, a writing *model*).

POWER Services<sup>2</sup> are based on the POWER model. The model represents my effort to organize available theory and research data into useful strategies anyone can use. Peter Elbow (1998), Robert Boice (1990), Joseph Moxley and Todd Taylor (1997), along with Michael Mayrath (2008), are a few of the scholars who developed the theory and conducted the research supporting these strategies. Moreover, the neuroscience and psychology literatures regarding the characteristics of elite performers, such as Olympic athletes, chess champions, and expert musicians, also anchor the exercises and suggestions contained in the model.

## The Theory Behind POWER

The POWER model is grounded in Peter Elbow's (1998) theory of the writing process. Elbow refers to the notion of *writing with power* as encompassing two meanings. The first meaning alludes to powerful texts—the

writing we see in poetry, religious documents, and political manifestos—the kind of writing that touches people’s hearts, moves their souls, and fills them with courage (Rosenblatt, 2011).

Yet anchoring this book is the *other* meaning in the phrase *writing with power*: the idea that the writer has control and power over his/her writing. Writing with power, as Elbow (1998) defined it, “means getting *power over yourself and over the writing process*: knowing what you are doing as you write; being in charge; having control; not feeling stuck or helpless or intimidated” (p. viii; emphasis added).

Peter Elbow’s theoretical approach to writing—in other words, his explanation for how good writing takes place (Goodson, 2010)—begins with the need to write badly, develops through the importance of sharing both early and late drafts, and results in gaining mastery over the writing, with the entire process becoming more pleasurable over time. According to Elbow (1998), when writers are comfortable generating initially messy texts, are eager to hear readers’ reactions to what they wrote, and are motivated to rewrite their texts to incorporate these reactions, only *then* will they begin to enjoy the writing process and the power it engenders. In his words,

Once people have the feel of producing *some* words that were a pleasure to write and that make a dent on readers, they do better at putting in the enormous work needed to produce more of them. For really, the central question in writing (as with any difficult skill) is this: How can I get myself to put in the daunting time and effort I need for more consistent good results? The answer, I think, is to cheat—to look for pleasure and shortcuts. (p. xxi)

The POWER model and the exercises in this book, then, build on this theoretical perspective, emphasizing the value of initially messy writing, the need for practice, and the importance of feedback. If the principles, as well as each of the 50 exercises, are put into practice, they will nudge you into developing consistent and healthy writing habits, becoming more productive in your writing/publishing, and gaining power over your writing. Along the way, you may even surprise yourself by finding the entire process a bit more pleasant!

## The Research Behind POWER

The most informative data on faculty productivity were collected in the 1980s and 1990s. Despite its age, the research remains valid because little has changed over time. Similar to the data I quoted regarding faculty in social work doctoral programs, data from faculty in science reveal that between 10% and 15% of authors are responsible for publishing 50% of

everything read and cited in the field (Cole, 1981). Bolstering these dated findings, more recent surveys continue to indicate—as I mentioned earlier—that many professors in U.S. colleges and universities publish less than one article or book per year (Belcher, 2009).

It will be interesting to observe how the advent of open access publishing might change these numbers—as some analysts have suggested. Yet, despite estimates that in the sciences “a new paper is now published roughly every 20 seconds” (Munroe, Kaiser, & Malakoff, 2013, p. 58), it is still true that many academics are not publishing at expected rates and struggle with academic writing. What explains the low publication rates for many academics? Researchers such as Robert Boice (1989, 1990, 1997; Boice & Johnson, 1984) and Joseph Moxley and Todd Taylor (1997), among others, examined academic writers’ low productivity systematically. What they found pointed to faculty who struggled with getting their writing done and did not wish, or did not know how, to ask for help. Robert Boice (1990) wrote:

In my two decades of experience with professors as writers, I’ve consistently seen people whose inexperience in discussing their blocks exceeded their shyness for revealing almost anything else, even sexual dysfunctions. They often came for help believing themselves to be unique as problem writers. And they worried that asking for help was an admission of weakness. (p. 1)

Dedicated to understanding and providing solutions for these professors, Boice and other scholars dug deep into academic writers’ psyches and work habits. They found many explanations for academic writers’ low productivity, including

#### *Research Shows . . .*

Gerardo Ramirez and Sian L. Beilock (2011) tested whether a 10-minute expressive writing session before a high-stakes academic exam could prevent college and high school students’ low performance due to test anxiety. The authors conducted four studies based on two important premises: (a) When people perform under pressure, their worries and anxiety about performance “compete for the working memory (WM) available for performance” (p. 211), leading to less optimal performance levels, and (b) expressive writing has been proven effective in dealing with traumatic or emotional experiences and is therefore useful for regulating worry and anxiety.

Based on the studies’ findings, the authors conclude that the expressive writing intervention “significantly improved students’ exam scores, especially for students habitually anxious about test taking” (p. 211).

And they add, “For those students who are most anxious about success, one short writing intervention that brings testing pressures to the forefront enhances the likelihood of excelling, rather than failing, under pressure” (p. 213).

their strong critical sense or censorship, fears of failing, strong tendencies to perfectionism, struggles with procrastination, and negative writing experiences in the past. Poor mental/emotional health, personality type, work habits, attitudes toward writing, and perceptions of busyness were also identified as culprits for low writing productivity among faculty (Boice, 1989, 1990).

While psychologists such as Boice and Moxley zoomed in on individual-level factors, sociologists examined the problem of faculty productivity using a wide-angle lens. The broad image revealed multiple-level as well as structural influences, including the socialization process that faculty undergo when entering a professional field, the reinforcement and reward systems in which they operate, as well as the quality of the academic training received during their doctoral programs (Neumann & Finaly-Neumann, 1990).

Even though sociologists identified structural elements that significantly impact academic writing productivity, it fell to psychologists to offer solutions to the problem. So far, at a broader, systemic level, little has been done to change the socialization process or the reward systems in which academics are immersed. Meanwhile, focusing on individual-level factors, psychologists devised specific strategies that professors and graduate students can adopt to improve their writing productivity.

The principles and practices you will find in this book are grounded in that psychology literature. The strategies include making writing a priority within one's daily schedule, managing distractions, and changing nonproductive/maladaptive attitudes toward writing (Moxley & Taylor, 1997). This book will also teach you the importance of obtaining feedback and establishing a social support system for yourself and your writing. I admit this with sadness, but the exercises will do nothing to change the structure of academic settings and how they reward writing. Perhaps *you* might take on this particular challenge?

While I anchor this book's principles and practices in the research on faculty productivity, two other bodies of knowledge also support the POWER model: (a) the psychology literature regarding elite performers and talent development and (b) the neuroscience literature focusing on the neurological dimension of extraordinary achievements, talent, and performance.

#### *Talent Development and Elite Performance: The Psychology Literature*

The work developed by K. Anders Ericsson represents a portion of the psychology literature regarding elite performance (Ericsson, Nandagopal, & Roring, 2009). Ericsson has done extensive research and theoretical development regarding elite performers' characteristics. With his observations,

experiments, and theoretical reasoning, he has contributed to the scientific debate surrounding the question “Is expert performance the result of innate talent (or genes), or of learned behavior (or practice)?”

Ericsson’s (2007) conclusions point to the role of *deliberate practice* (sometimes also referred to as *deep practice*) as one vital element shaping expert performance:

My central thesis is that experts continually engage in *deliberate practice* activities . . . that lead to refinement and maintenance of the mediating mechanisms [such as mental representation, anticipation skills, and control of motor actions, among others]. In contrast, less-accomplished individuals do not engage in these activities once they have reached an acceptable level. Their performance is prematurely arrested in its effortless automated form. (p. 12)

Put simply, Ericsson’s thesis is this: Elite performers differ from non-elite performers in one key element—*deliberate practice*. Non-elite performers will learn a certain task—playing golf, for example—and will practice just enough to become “competent players.” Once they feel they’ve achieved a satisfactory level, they stop practicing. Elite performers, on the other hand, don’t stop. Instead, they sustain practice in order to maintain and further refine the basic skills they achieved (see also Colvin, 2010, for more on deep practice).

*Talent Development and Elite Performance: The Neuroscience Literature*

Curiously, neuroscientists researching expert performers have come to the same conclusions about practice as those reached by psychologists: Deep practice or deliberate practice is one (if not *the one*) key element for developing extraordinary skills. In *The Talent Code*, Daniel Coyle (2009) proposes to find answers to the question “What explains exceptional talent?” Not surprisingly, one of the first answers he unveils is *deep practice*, and he offers this insight:

Deep practice is built on a paradox: struggling in certain targeted ways—operating at the edges of your ability, where you make mistakes—makes you smarter. Or to put it a slightly different way, experiences where you’re forced to slow down, make errors, and correct them—as you would if you were walking up an ice-covered hill, slipping and stumbling as you go—end up making you swift and graceful without your realizing it. (p. 18)

Yet Coyle uncovered that practice, by itself, does not explain talent or expert performance. It’s what happens to our brains *during* or as a *result* of deep practice that accounts for the expertise.

Coyle (2009) begins describing the importance of what happens during and after practice by first admitting the biases he brought to his investigation. Similar to what most of us understand about how human brains work, Coyle believed the most important element or portion of our brains was the neuron network. But while interviewing numerous neuroscientists to learn about expert talent and performance from their points of view, Coyle learned these neuroscientists were experiencing an important shift in their thinking: As important as the neurons and their synapses are for brain function, it appears that *myelin*—the substance insulating the axons (or nerve fiber extensions of our neurons)—might have an even more prominent role than the neurons themselves. Coyle describes this shift in thinking as a “Copernican-size revolution” and adds:

The revolution is built on three simple facts: (1) Every human movement, thought, or feeling is a precisely timed electrical signal traveling through a chain of neurons—a circuit of nerve fibers. (2) Myelin is the insulation that wraps these nerve fibers and increases signal strength, speed, and accuracy. (3) The more we fire a particular circuit, the more myelin optimizes that circuit, and the stronger, faster, and more fluent our movements and thoughts become. (p. 32)

Practice allows us to fire specific circuits in our brains repeatedly and to develop more myelin. In turn, more myelin leads to faster or more optimal firing of circuits and developing of skills, as explained in this exchange between Coyle (2009) and the neuroscientist George Bartzokis:

“What do good athletes do when they train?” Bartzokis said. “They send precise impulses along wires that give the signal to myelinate that wire. They end up, after all the training, with a super-duper wire—lots of bandwidth, a high-speed T-3 line. That’s what makes them different from the rest of us.” (pp. 32–33)

As Coyle (2009) recounts in his book, nearly all extraordinary talent can be explained by tremendous amounts of practice and consequent myelin production. One example he gives relates specifically to writing: the Brontë sisters, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne. Many literary scholars have labeled them “natural-born novelists” and poets because they wrote prolifically at very young ages (p. 56). Yet the facts suggest that instead of being naturally talented they were born into a literary-nurturing environment, engaged in a significant amount of practice very early in their lives, and produced quite a lot of poor (yes: *poor!*) writing early on. Coyle writes,

Deep practice and myelin [as opposed to “natural talent”] give us a better way to look at the Brontës. The unskilled quality of their early writing isn’t a contradiction of the literary heights they eventually achieved—it’s a prerequisite to it. They became great writers not *in spite of* the fact that they started out immature and imitative but *because* they were willing to spend vast amounts of time and energy being immature and imitative, building myelin in the confined, safe space of their little books. Their childhood writings were collaborative deep practice, where they developed storytelling muscles. (p. 57)

Granted, both the psychology and neuroscience literatures also list several other factors, alongside myelin, as playing roles in developing above-ordinary talent. These factors include exposure to skilled mentoring/teaching and skill acquisition at young ages. Yet the central, common element in all the research is *practice*, with its consequent *myelin building*.

## Practicing Academic Writing

So, what does all this mean for us academics? What does it mean for our writing productivity and writing quality? Simply put, it means this: If we commit to *practice our academic writing*—and obtain continual feedback—our writing and productivity levels will improve!

And how can we *practice* academic writing, besides by just . . . well, just *writing*? We can incorporate practice exercises designed to develop specific dimensions of our writing, much as we would do if we were attempting to strengthen and build specific muscles in our bodies through physical exercise.

This book will provide the opportunity to *practice* your writing on a regular basis. It is designed to give you a chance to repeat an exercise, make mistakes, correct them, and, with repetition and feedback, add to the myelin you already have, and improve (Stern, 2012). As Ronald T. Kellogg and Alison P. Whiteford (2009) state in “Training Advanced Writing Skills: The Case for Deliberate Practice”:

The term *deliberate practice* refers to practice undertaken with a specific goal to improve. The learner mindfully engages in practice designed by an instructor, coach, mentor, or tutor, who further provides corrective feedback as encouragement to excel. (p. 251)

Please note that—as the quote above emphasizes—an important element in this practice approach involves *obtaining feedback* so we can correct

our mistakes and incorporate the corrections when rewriting. Therefore, you may want first to take a close look at Chapter 2 (where we practice creating a writing habit) and Chapter 5 (where we practice securing support and feedback). Making sure we develop a system for continually obtaining feedback will help our practice significantly.

I hope this brief incursion into psychology and neuroscience helps you see how this book is grounded in both a theoretical and an empirical platform. I also hope that the evidence pointing to the value of gaining control over your writing, the importance of deliberate practice (with feedback), and the contributions a text such as this one can make to the process will motivate you even more to plunge into these exercises and improve your writing productivity.

### *POWER in Practice . . .*

During my graduate studies, the POWER model and its scaffolding, as well as the POWER Writing Studios and anecdotes shared by my colleagues, provided a solid foundation for me, in the world of academic writing. This foundation is particularly evident in this first chapter, where Dr. Goodson connects writing with deep or deliberate practice. As a former college athlete and Division I collegiate coach, the concept of daily practice resonates with my experience. In order to be successful during my competitive years, I had to practice daily and if I didn't practice it would show; the same was true for the athletes I coached. I realized I had to approach writing with the same mindset I used in training for an athletic event: with appropriate tools, daily practice, and lots of discipline. The exercises in this book provided those tools, the structure for practice, and the motivation for discipline.

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### Note to the Second Edition

Since the book was first published, I began to consider other factors—both theoretically and empirically—to be as important as the notion of practice for the development of a productive writing habit. I haven't yet elaborated these factors formally, nor incorporated them into the POWER model—therefore, you will not see an extensive treatment of these in this edition. I did want to briefly mention them, however, so you would become aware and consider how they might affect your own writing productivity.

The first factor is our *identity as writers*. While I do mention this notion in Chapter 2, I do not develop it substantially, for I've only begun to explore

the concept. But as I've learned more about how identities are formed, shaped, or changed, I have begun to think about ways to foster and shape academics' identity as writers.

Students who participate in the Writing Studios or in the writing productivity course I offer sometimes challenge me by saying, "Dr. Goodson, you say it is important to think of ourselves as writers; you say *we are* writers; if we are in academia, writing is the most important tool of our trade. Yet I don't *feel* like a writer; I write because I *have to*, but I don't see myself *as a writer*. I'm not there yet." And while I sympathize with the struggle, I have tried to learn about ways to foster this identity, ways to help people wear this "new persona."

An important starting point in developing a new identity, I learned, is to cultivate a mindset that privileges personal *growth*. The research agenda developed by Carol S. Dweck and her colleagues has demonstrated that people who embrace a "growth mindset" tend to experience both "short-term achievement and long-term success" (Dweck, 2010, p. 15; Dweck, 2008), when compared with people who have a "fixed mindset." A person who has a growth mindset approaches tasks with the perspective that the task can be learned, and the learner improves or grows in the mastery of the task over time. A growth mindset privileges effort and realizes that hard work and practice, with time, are the hallmarks of long-term, systematic success (Dweck, 2010). You may not yet identify yourself as an academic writer, but the magic word here is *yet*.

When it comes to writing, in particular, many students I teach have a *fixed mindset* regarding themselves as writers: *I can't write. I am not a writer. My writing sucks*. For those students (and, perhaps, for you, right now), the single, most beneficial shift they could experience would be to start believing "Yes, I can become a writer; yes, I can learn this, and with appropriate practice and adequate tools, I can become good at it! If others learned and mastered the academic writing process, so can I."

According to research done by many scholars, success is correlated with a growth mindset, coupled with steady commitment, practice, and social support. Dweck, in her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2008), comments on a study done by Benjamin Bloom of 120 elite performers in various fields (sports, math, and science, for instance):

Most were not that remarkable as children and didn't show clear talent before training began in earnest. Even by early adolescence, you usually couldn't predict their future accomplishment from their current ability. Only their *continued motivation and commitment, along with their network of support*, took them to the top. (p. 65; emphasis added)

The good news is that we can, indeed, change our mindsets. Yeager and Dweck (2012) acknowledge: “Our research also shows that students’ mindsets can be changed [from a *fixed* to a *growth* mindset] and that doing so can promote resilience” (p. 303). Even though this change in mindset will not happen in a vacuum, it will begin to manifest itself as you take steps to learn, as you begin your practice—and working through this book is a significant step in the direction of learning and growth.

But what does a growth mindset have to do with identity? It’s simple: If academics do not view themselves as writers—*yet*—they can view themselves as writers-in-training, or soon-to-be published authors, and devote the commitment and the practice to *becoming an academic writer*. According to the Heath brothers in their book *SWITCH: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard* (Heath & Heath, 2010),

people with a growth mindset—those who stretch themselves, take risks, accept feedback, and take the long-term view—can’t help but progress in their lives and careers. (p. 165)

(Take note of the phrase *accept feedback*—we will address this, closely, in Chapter 5.) And they conclude: “The aspiration of a new identity with the persistence of the growth mindset” can lead to amazing things! I believe it. I’ve experienced it myself, and have witnessed it in many of my students and colleagues.

The second factor I have begun to consider and to mention when I teach academic writing productivity is emotional intelligence (EI), especially the dimensions of self-awareness and self-control. EI has been defined in many ways, but the definitions I find most useful are the ones characterizing EI as a set of traits and abilities that facilitate effective decision making and performance (Bar-On et al., 2000; Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 2000; Shao, Yu, & Ji, 2013).

Any of us—for whom academic writing is integral to our professional lives—know that writing is a task demanding a substantial amount of self-control in the form of emotion regulation and management of delayed rewards (Magen, Bokyoung, Dweck, Gross, & McClure, 2013). It appears, however, this notion—that writing takes a great deal of self-control—is taken for granted among social scientists, because research on the relationship between EI and writing productivity is scant. In one of the very few studies published on this topic, Shao, Yu, and Ji (2013) claim: “At the time of writing this article [published in 2013], no research has investigated the relationship between EI and learners’ writing achievement” (p. 100), even though there are many studies documenting the association between EI and *academic* achievement. In their paper, those authors report a positive association between EI and writing achievement, after students are exposed

to a brief literature-based intervention. Their study, however, focused on testing a simple strategy for enhancing expressions of emotions (and EI) in the written text. They were not concerned with exploring the intricate mechanisms of emotional intelligence and how it can hinder or facilitate the academic writer's productivity.

James W. Pennebaker's work on using writing to manage the emotional outcomes associated with traumatic events may well be one of the most renowned pockets of research on the impact of writing on the writer's emotions. While not addressing academic writing, per se (nor EI, specifically), Pennebaker's methods are helpful for academics who either struggle with their emotions/feelings about writing (e.g., experience writing anxiety or aversion), and/or wish to learn how to use writing to manage their own emotional health and well-being (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986). In the book that has now become a classic, Pennebaker (and in the more recent edition with coauthor John F. Evans) not only proposes a strategy for using writing to heal from traumatic emotional wounds; he also documents the research on expressive writing. According to Pennebaker and Evans (2014), researchers have consistently observed positive effects of expressive writing for various physiological/biological systems (including the immune system), for the management of chronic illnesses, as well as for stress management. The authors also summarize the evidence in favor of expressive writing enhancing academic performance:

Among beginning college students, expressive writing helps people adjust to their situation better. Consequently, at least three studies have found that students make higher grades in the semester after a writing study. . . . This may be because emotional writing boosts people's working memory. (p. 11)

Although Pennebaker and Evans (2014) candidly admit (a) "not all people benefit from writing" (p. 13), and (b) research evidence has not delimited a specific profile of the people who *do* benefit from it, the data seem to suggest, rather strongly, that expressive writing does foster "improvement in overall well-being and improved cognitive function" (Pennebaker & Evans, 2014, p. 11). Given the evidence, it is reasonable to assume that using expressive writing to enhance the academic writer's EI is a strategy worth exploring.

As previously noted, I have not yet formally or systematically incorporated these elements into the POWER model. I have, however, begun to assess their role in academic writing productivity and in my own writing. Perhaps exposing yourself to some of the literature related to identity theory, writing to heal, and emotional intelligence can prove useful, along with the exercises in this book, to facilitate your growth as an academic writer. Conceivably, as you learn about the need for better understanding

how these factors affect academic writing, you might even feel motivated to explore these relationships in your own research.

## Notes

1. Quotations heading each of the chapters were chosen from a selection culled by Gregory Victor Babic (2008) and published in *Words to Inspire Writers*. All quotations are in the public domain.

2. A graduate student at Texas A&M University can go to <http://power.tamu.edu> to schedule an appointment with a consultant (or with me), to obtain feedback and support while working on a writing project. If you are at another university, you may want to consider creating a service such as POWER for the graduate students at your school.

## Electronic Source

Texas A&M University Writing Support Services. <http://power.tamu.edu>

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## Chapter One—Main Points in One Page

1. The POWER Model (Promoting Outstanding Writing for Excellence in Research) combines certain behavioral *principles* with specific *practices* to help you master and become comfortable with your writing.
2. The POWER model and the exercises in this book build on the theoretical perspective offered by Peter Elbow, emphasizing the value of initially messy writing, the need for practice, and the importance of feedback.
3. Evidence from three areas of knowledge anchors the principles and strategies in this book: (a) research on faculty productivity, (b) the psychology literature regarding elite performers and talent development, and (c) the neuroscience literature focusing on the neurological dimension of extraordinary achievements, talent, and performance.
4. Research evidence points to *deep* or *deliberate practice* as one (if not *the* one) key element for developing extraordinary skills. Therefore, if we commit to *practice our academic writing*—and obtain continual feedback—our writing and productivity levels will improve.

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# Part I

## Practice Becoming a Productive Academic Writer

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