

# Writing and Productivity Tips

As usual, let me start with a disclaimer that these are just advice and that none or just one or all of them may or may not work for you and that's ok. Take whatever advice you find useful, try it out, and toss it if it does not serve you.



Here are my top five writing tips for you to find your cadence in writing a long project like the CP.

## #1 : Find your groove.

- Make writing habitual and into a routine. **Commit to your project weekly, if not daily in that last semester.** Can you stick to writing Tuesdays and Thursdays and Monday/Wednesday/Fridays since you teach, make that a reading or editing day?
- Successful writers start their writing with a routine. It could be making a cup of tea/coffee, putting some instrumental music in the background, writing down the goals and time for that session and hitting the ground running (This is my writing routine, by the way). What would yours look like?
- No matter what can you write at the same time every time? I find that it's usually super rewarding to write in the morning when it's quiet and I've not had the stress of the day kill my spirit and my creativity. What about you? Are you a night owl? If so, how can you wind down and let the worries of the day leave your mind to allow for a more creative time?

- Track your writing: I'm a big fan of weekly reviews where I sit down and review what I've produced the week before. Was it too little? Too messy? Too much (need to be more concise)? Let this review inform how you will tackle your writing this week. Maybe 3 days of editing and only two days of "new writing".

## #2 : The Pomodoro Technique.



- Do you have a very limited time ahead of you (less than an hour) but feel like writing/producing something? Do you often start writing and end up on Instagram 15 minutes into your writing session?
- The pomodoro technique is a great way to divide up a small or big chunk of time into spurts of writing and minutes of rest. Think of it as HIIT or intervals! I use the app "Be Focused" (it's FREE!) every day and divide it up to 25 minutes of writing, no phone checking or anything else (I also turn off the internet at that time) and 5 minutes of whatever I want to do, stretching, making more tea, checking Instagram (I NEVER check my emails at that time!), switching playlists etc... My goal is to achieve 4 pomodoros or intervals every single day, rain or shine, happily or begrudgingly!

## #3: Research vs. Writing.

- You're going to say, well, I'm going to need something to write about and I haven't done enough research yet. Two things to that point: 1. you are absolutely correct, you will NEVER get to the bottom of your project, it is a bottomless pit. Get used to the idea and move on. 2.

This is a limiting belief. You do not need to know what every single person has said about "pastoral literature in the renaissance" to write your CP.

- Make sure that while you are researching, you are also writing. **Processing scholarship** by hand or by typing on the computer. Unless you put some words on paper, you will never know if what you have been researching actually works out for the purpose of your research.

#### **#4: Budget Your Time: Research, Writing & Editing.**

- Following up on that point, do divide your time each week so that you do allocate some time to the three pillars of your CP: research, writing and editing.
- By doing so, you will find that you do not feel guilty about not reading enough, or not "having time" to read X, Y, Z article, you have built it into your schedule.

#### **#5: Stop The Guilt!**

- Even though I want you to commit to your project every week, multiple times a week, I realize that sometimes, life gets in the way. Maybe you have other academic projects such as conference presentations to prepare, a brown bag to present, or other family obligations. It is normal to fall out of touch with your research. In fact, especially when it comes to family, that is the ONE ball you cannot drop, so do not drop it!
- How do you get back on the horse? Talk to your chair to air some ideas out of you, do a brainstorming session with your friends in the program or your chair, if you're a visual do a road map, read or listen to a book or an interesting podcast related to your research. Recommit. Recommit. Recommit. Don't guilt yourself about it any longer. Just. Do. It. Move on. You will be just fine.

#### **#6: Accountability**

I know I said it'd be my top 5, BUT I couldn't help but think that accountability is extremely important in this writing process, to make sure that you are always on track. Here are a few ways I suggest you get on with this:

- Share with your chair (me) deadlines for each chapter, by which date you will turn in a complete draft of that chapter;
- Share with your fellow M.A. students to be your accountability partner. You can decide on the form of that;

- Organize a writing group! Get together on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons to write and air out your ideas! You will get much more done this way, trust me!

Hope this helped, and as usual use what serves you and leave what does not serve you!