What is POWER Writing?

- Theory based on research with faculty who are not as productive as they should be:
  - In academics, 80% of published work comes from just 20% of the faculty.
  - What makes the 20% of faculty who publish so productive?
  - They have figured out the “formula” for productive writing.
What is the “formula” to productive academic writing?
- Develop a writing habit and sustain it!
- Brushing your teeth is a habit (Is it stressful and do you skip it?)

Principle #1: Write regularly

Schedule your writing time (and protect it!)
- Writing is a craft which requires practice.
- Important activities must be scheduled, to make sure they get done.
- If you were a piano player and had to play a piano concert in 3 months, what would you start doing now?
Practice in SMALL, REGULAR chunks of time

- Why small?
  > Creativity can only be sustained a short time.
  > With a small chunk, you can be in control.
  > If you write so much you’re sick of it, you won’t want to come back the next day.

Practice in SMALL, REGULAR chunks of time

- Why regular?
  > Ideal: Same time every day.
  > Neurological benefits: brain creates new pathways/synapses
  > Two requirements for establishing motor behavior patterns
    - Repetition (lots!)
    - Sleep
  > Remember: your brain is a cheap and efficient graduate assistant. It just needs a little food every day!

Deep or Deliberate Practice

- If you have a writing project, what should you do?
  > Start TODAY. Even if you don’t know how to start.
  > Dump: write down everything that is on your mind.
  > A strong end product requires TIME. So start now!
  > TIME for ideas to percolate: for you to edit/polish; to feedback
  > To practice well: write regularly, pay attention; get feedback.
Application

- Examine your schedule for next week. Schedule your writing times. **Write them down!**
- Ask yourself: when am I at my best? (morning, afternoon, evening)
- Try different times until you find the one that works best for you. Be flexible as you begin to establish the writing habit. But, be regular and deliberate about it!

Principle #2: Use a timer

- Gives you perspective of time
- Helps you progress, especially if you don’t like a task
- Can get more done in 5 minutes than in 0 minutes
Principle #3: Break down large projects into one-inch-frameworks

Example
- How do you start your undergraduate writing project?
  - Can you write the purpose statement (2-3 sentences) TODAY?
  - Set timer for 30 minutes and capture, in several different ways, what your project is about. Then, STOP.
  - When you return to your project, you will be different. Your brain has continued to work while you've been away, and you'll see connections you didn't see before.

Principle #4: Log in your writing each session
**Log in your writing information each session**

- Those who log their time are 4 times more productive than faculty who do not do this.
- Those who log and share their logs are 9 times more productive.
- Logs help you learn about yourself as a writer.
- Motivation can be built in with logging.

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**Principle #5: Plans for next session**

- Helps you remember where you left off.
- Super helpful for managing several projects.
  - Schedule it in your planner
- When you are “on a roll” and your timer tells you to stop, it builds motivation: “I can’t wait to get back to this!”
Principle # 6: Warm-up

Warm-up Idea 1: Dumping
- Set timer for 3-5 minutes and write everything that comes to mind.
- One rule: DO NOT STOP!
- Why dump?
  > Your mind can be your biggest distracter. If you get your thoughts down on paper, you can then focus on your writing project.
  > Dumping can also help you generate ideas ("structured or purposeful dumping").

Warm-up Idea 2: Copying
- Find a well-written article in your field
- Set your timer and copy the first paragraph SLOWLY, with great ATTENTION. (Tomorrow, copy the 2nd)
- Advantages
  > Brain absorbs grammar and syntax of academic English
  > Through slow, repetitive exposure, your fingers and brain learn how to say things
  > Especially helpful for international students
- You are not plagiarizing—you are "priming" yourself in the academic language of your field.
- Think: "Look how they started this paragraph. Can I use a similar pattern in my own introduction?" (or methods, or whatever)
Warm-up Idea 3: Read about writing

Note: Dr. Goodson's book has many more warm-up ideas!

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Principle #7: Separate generating from editing

Separate creating from cleaning. Approach writing and editing as separate tasks.

- Generating is a creative process; editing is not.
- We need our INNER CRITIC to be active while editing; asleep while generating.
- Analogy of car accelerator and brake: You cannot accelerate and brake your car at the same time.
- Trying to write the perfect paragraph or sentence can mean staring at the screen for hours.
  > Capture your ideas first (dump), THEN, edit them! More about this in next principle...
Principle #6: Write FAST, edit S-L-O-W-L-Y

Generate quickly (dump), THEN...
- Polish/Edit your writing
  - Why?
- Image of a fine porcelain vase.
  - How did the vase start its life?

Writing as Process
- ...as a shapeless lump of clay. Through a gradual process, it was crafted into a beautiful vase.
- It is the same thing with our writing! It starts messy, and then gradually takes shape.
- Peter Elbow, from whom much of the POWER Writing model comes from says:
  - The precondition for writing well is... (what do you think?)
  - ...the ability to write badly
  - and to write when you are not in the mood.
Writing as a two-stage process

- **Generating:**
  - Gives us raw material to work with
  - Requires the *creative* part of our brain

- **Editing:**
  - Shapes the raw material into a compelling, cohesive product
  - Requires the *critical* part of our brain

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Principle # 9: Write to clarify your thinking

- Think of writing as a thinking/learning tool.
- Use writing to help you learn about your research topic.
- Use writing to help you learn in a class.
  - As you read books/articles, capture your thoughts IN WRITING (more on this in Week 2).
- If you can use writing this way, you will be far ahead of your peers.
Principle # 10: Learn to accept initially messy drafts

Messy Drafts
- Research indicates that for every 10,000 words you write, you need to throw away 9,000 to get 1,000 worth keeping. So, write messily and generate frequently!
- If you are not OK with this, you will always struggle with writing.
- "The precondition for writing well is the ability to write badly and to write when you are not in the mood." – Peter Elbow, in Writing with Power

Principle # 11: Find support and feedback