

DEZERNAT
STUDIUM UND LEHRE



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

COURSE PORTFOLIO

SCIENTIFIC WRITING FOR HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

WRITING AS A PROCESS

ws **01**: REFLECTING ON YOUR WRITING EXPERIENCES

What do you find easy when it comes to writing?

What do you find challenging when it comes to writing?

THE FIVE-PARAGRAPH-METHOD

ws 02: DEVELOPING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL USING THE „FIVE-PARAGRAPH-METHOD”

Step 1 - (7 min.)

In what field and on what topic are you (or will you be) writing your paper?

- Explain to a friend, a grandparent, etc. (= a layperson) what you are working on and what you want to write about in your paper.

I am looking into ...

Step 2a - (5 min.)

Rephrase what you have just written: To do so, formulate only one sentence beginning with the words:

What I actually wanted to say is....

Step 2b - (7 min.)

Turn this declarative sentence into a question. Rephrase this question several times (at least three variations):

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Briefly review your three questions and ask yourself: Which one do I find most interesting? Would it be “verifiable” and “workable”? Select one option and note it down here:

Step 3 - (10 min.)

Briefly describe:

What other researcher(s) has/have already tried to answer this question, or related ones?

What do you know about the “answers” they supplied?

Step 4 - (10 min.)

What would you need to do (and perhaps already did do) to be able to answer your question?

What material/literature would you need?

What methods could be applied?

What data (broadly defined) would you need to collect or review?

What sources would you need access to?

Step 5 - (5 min.)

What is the purpose of your question? Why would it be good to find an answer to the question you have posed?

What do you hope to achieve by answering it?

What kind of result are you expecting?

Who would find the answer to this question helpful and why?

ws **03: REFLECTION**

Evaluate the exercise "Five-Paragraph-Method" (WS 02)

What is the purpose of such a task?

What did you notice during the writing process?

Now evaluate your own drafted text

What were you satisfied with?

What is still missing?

What else do you need to do or read...

... to find out what?

ws **04: WRITING A DRAFT**

Draft a research proposal, or project outline, on the basis of your text fragments from the Five-Paragraph-Method (write complete sentences). If you are in a live class, bring this draft with you to the next session.

1. *I am writing about (Context, Background) ...*

2. *My research question is... (50 words)*

3. *Researchers who have worked/are working in this field are... (50 words)*

4. *These researchers argue that... (25 words)*

5. *"Researcher A" proposes that ... (25 words)*

6. *“Researcher B” proposes that ... (25 words)*

7. *The discussion focuses on (topic)... (25 words)*

8. *It remains to be investigated whether ... (25 words)*

9. *My research is similar to that of "Researcher A / B" in terms of ... (25 words)*

10. *My contribution will be... (50 words)*

Review your draft

Complete the following sentences (prompts):

When I look at what I have written in my draft, I am satisfied with...

What is still missing is...

I still need to read or do the following...

... to find out...

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: RECOMMENDED READING

Five Paragraph Method: www.skrivekurs.uio.no

Academic Writing:

- Bolker, J. (1998). *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC.
- Booth, W.C.; Colomb, G.G. and J.M. Williams (2003). *The Craft of Research*. Chicago & London: Chicago University Press.
- Curthoys, Ann, and Ann McGrath (2011). *How to Write History That People Want to Read*. Palgrave Mcmillan.
- Day, R.A.; Gastel, B. (2006). *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Friedland, A and C. L. Folt (2000). *Writing Successful Science Proposals*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein (2024): *They Say, I Say. The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. 6th edition. Norton & Company.
- Gustavii, B. (2003). *How to Write and Illustrate a Scientific Paper*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mautner, Gerlinde, and Christopher J. Ross (2023). *English Academic Writing. A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*. utb: UVK Verlag.
- Murray, Rowena (2005). *Writing for Academic Journals*. New York: Open University Press.
- Murray, Rowena (2006). *How to Write a Thesis*. New York: Open University Press.
- Silvia, Paul J. (2007). *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Singh, Anneliese A., and Lauren Lukkarila (2017). *Successful Academic Writing. A Complete Guide for Social and Behavioral Scientists*. Taylor & Francis.

Online Resources:

- Harvard University: <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/resources>
- University of North Carolina on Chapel Hill: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/>
- Purdue University (Indiana) Online Writing Lab (OWL): https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html
- Rutgers Guide to Grammar and Style: <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/contents.html>
- Strunk and White on Elements of Style: <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>

STRUCTURE OF A SCIENTIFIC TEXT

ws **05: ANALYZING AN INTRODUCTION**

Choose an academic text you have to read at the moment (for example for one of your classes or a current paper) and analyze its introduction, based on what you learnt in this section, by:

- identifying the main elements of that introduction (not necessarily in chronological order!)
- underlining the main sentences and signal words that help readers navigate through the main sections

Provide a brief outline of your analysis here:

ws **06: OUTLINING YOUR PAPER**

Spend about 30 minutes drafting a potential outline for your paper. In order to do so, consider the following questions:

What structure are you planning to use in your paper?

Which aspects or sections have you already planned?

How are these structured argumentatively? How are different aspects related to one another logically?

Would there be other options for structuring your ideas (be creative; where do you see advantages and disadvantages)?

ws 07: CREATIVE WRITING EXERCISE

Write for 5 minutes without pausing, using complete sentences and without worrying about structure (nobody will read this text!). If you get stuck, just continue to scribble on the paper with your pen (or keep typing random letters) until the ideas start to flow again.

What have I learned from the course up until now? What can I use for my own writing from the information presented so far?

STRUCTURING YOUR MATERIAL

ws **08: MIND MAP**

Create a mind map for the introduction of your project outline so far (landscape format). Feel free to refer back to the 5-paragraph-method and your outline from the previous unit. The point is to get you started with writing your actual paper, even if you revise the introduction later.

Use your mind map to derive "prompts" (keywords) for a first structural draft of the introduction.

Reflect on the exercise: How did mind mapping and using prompts work for you? How did you manage?

What was helpful?

What seemed less successful or less helpful for you?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: FURTHER EXAMPLES OF PROMPTS

Source: Worksheets for Senior Thesis Writers

[http://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/complit/files/worksheets_for_senior_thesis_writers.pdf]

1. Prompts for Developing a Research Question:

Connecting with your Curiosity

- What really interests me is ...
- When I started this project, what interested me most was ...
- What actually drew me to this topic in the first place was ...

Putting Vague Thoughts into the Form of Questions

- Here is a list of questions – large and small, near and far, grand and modest, and in no particular order – that I might want to consider in my thesis.

Identifying your Governing Questions

- If I had to put my topic into the form of a single question, that question would be ...
- What I really want to know is ...

2. Questions and Prompts toward an Introduction

- My governing question derives from competing observations*, i.e., observations that appear to me to be in tension with one another and to indicate an apparent puzzle, problem, discrepancy, oversight, mystery, contradiction, or surprise. The competing observations that give rise to my governing question are ...
- ... on the one hand ...
- ... but on the other hand/and yet ...
- These tension/discrepancies and the question I pose are of interest to this discipline because ...

3. Questions and Prompts toward a Literature Review

- Who else (or what other body or bodies of literature) has attempted to address my governing question (or related questions)?
- The question they asked was ...
- The way they approached their question was to ...
- What they ended up saying in response to the question they posed is...
- It remains unasked/unresolved/overlooked/unexplored/unaddressed/misunderstood ...
- My project addresses that gap by ...

4. Questions and Prompts toward a Methods Section

- I can think of my methods as being, in part, the actual tasks (e.g., library research, interviews, viewing of videos or film, field observations) I will need to undertake to approach the question I am posing. Those tasks are (and I will try to be as specific as I can) ...
- Other methods I could potentially use (i.e., other tasks I could potentially undertake) to approach the question I'm posing are ...
- My reasons for choosing to use some of the methods I list above and not others are ...
- Terms I will need to define to do this research include ...
- Some of the methodological issues/problems/challenges with which I will need to contend are (these include both questions others might ask about how I am approaching my question as well as questions I myself have about how I am approaching my question) ...
- I might respond to or deal with those methodological issues/problems/challenges by ...

5. Questions and Prompts toward a Chapter

- If I had to put this chapter into the form of a single question, that question would be ...
- Here is a list of other questions I need to address in this chapter.

6. Questions and Prompts toward a Conclusion

- The headway I've made toward resolution of my governing question is ...
- What remains unresolved is ...
- It remains unresolved because ...
- My research has implications for ...
- For instance, my research has methodological implications for future research, that is, implications for how we frame the questions in this field and implications for the methods we use to address those questions. Those implications include ...
- Other implications include (e.g., implications for specific practices or policies, implications for how we interpret results of previous research) ...

7. Reckoning with Complexity

- What makes my question a particularly complex one with which to reckon is that ...
- I will attempt to reckon with those complexities by ...

8. Narrowing the Scope

- It is beyond the scope of my paper to ...
- Therefore, I won't consider/explore/analyze that issue in depth in this piece. For the purposes of this paper, I will ... (e.g., assume ... /work on the premise that ... /summarize others' thinking on this matter ... /refer the reader to ...)
- I make that particular assumption/work on that particular premise/summarize that particular person's thinking/refer the reader to that particular literature because ...

9. Gems without a Setting

- Here are some of the ideas that I might not be able to include in this thesis or paper but that deserve safekeeping because they are brilliant and precious thoughts – or at least interesting thoughts – that might come in handy for some other project.

STRATEGIES FOR READING SCIENTIFIC PAPERS

ws 09: QUESTIONS TO PREPARE FOR READING A TEXT

Choose a sample paper you found during your research that seems relevant for your current topic. You should choose a paper you have not yet read. Before you begin reading, and as you quickly skim the text, ask yourself the following questions and take notes (approx. 10 min):

What do I know about the authors/the circumstances or the medium of publication?

Who is the intended audience for the text?

What genre is the text? What type of text is it?

What is the text roughly about?

Why are you reading this text, i.e. what is your goal?

What specific questions are you trying to answer for yourself by reading the text?

What do you hope to gain from the text for your own paper?

ws 10: REFLECTING ON YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH READING ACADEMIC PAPERS

I generally find reading academic papers easy / difficult because...

My typical approach when reading academic papers is as follows (i.e., what do you *do*? What does it look like?):

ws **11**: APPLYING A READING TECHNIQUE

Apply one of the reading techniques presented to a text of your choice (ideally the same as in WS 09).

ws 12: REFLECTION: EVALUATING THE READING STRATEGIES

The preparatory reading approach using the questions from worksheet 09 and my chosen reading strategy from worksheet 11 were easy/helpful for me because...

The preparatory reading approach using the questions from worksheet 09 and my chosen reading strategy from worksheet 11 were more complicated / time-consuming / less helpful for me because...

SCIENTIFIC LANGUAGE

ws 13: REFLECTION: READER-CENTRIC WRITING

What is "reader-centric writing"?

What aspects of it am I already implementing in my own writing?

What concrete questions do I still have regarding writing and academic language?

ws 14: REVISION EXERCISE & REFLECTION

Please consult the text you wrote in the previous freewriting exercise (Prompt: "What is reader-centric writing?"). Go through the text and revise it according to the criteria for paragraph and sentence structure we outlined here. Write down what you are noticing and what stands out to you.

What are you already good at (in terms of form and style)? What is working well?

Where may you need a bit more practice?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: “ELEMENTS OF STYLE: KEEPING IT SHORT AND SWEET” (EXAMPLE PHRASES)

BE AWARE OF WORDINESS

This term is used to cover a couple of style problems that involve using more words than you absolutely need to say something. Especially when we talk, we use a lot of little filler words that don't actually have anything to add to the meaning of our sentences (this sentence has several examples--can you find them? Try to take out five words in the previous sentence.). In writing, these filler words and phrases become more obvious and act as delays in getting the reader to the point of your idea. If you have enough delays in your sentence, your readers might get frustrated. They might even start skimming your paper, which seems a shame after all of your efforts to communicate with them.

(THE WRITING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

[HTTP://WWW.UNC.EDU/DEPTS/WCWEB/HANDOUTS/STYLE.HTML](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/style.html))

LONG	SHORT
... at present now ...
... in accordance with the method described using the method described ...
... regarding clarity, nothing was left to be desired it was clear....
... in the university fieldat university
... the fact that it was the better method...	...as it was the better method ...
... the fact that he was not successful his failures ...
... he is a man who always knows what to do...	... he always knows what to do...
... if they do the former they should be able to the former enables them to ...
... in a hasty manner hastily ...

Here are two lists of common or stock phrases to **locate** in your paper and **replace** with a single word (see Joseph M. Williams, *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, pp. 93-97):

<p>The reason for For the reason that Due to the fact that Owing to the fact that In light of the fact that Considering the fact that On the grounds that</p>	<p>because, since, why</p>
<p>Despite the fact that Regardless of the fact that</p>	<p>although, even though</p>
<p>In the event that If it should happen that Under circumstances in which</p>	<p>if</p>
<p>On the occasion of In a situation in which Under circumstances in which</p>	<p>when</p>
<p>As regards In reference to With regard to Concerning the matter of Where ___ is concerned</p>	<p>about</p>
<p>It is crucial that It is necessary that There is a need/necessity for It is important that</p>	<p>must, should</p>
<p>Is able to Is in a position to Has the opportunity to Has the capacity for Has the ability to</p>	<p>can</p>
<p>It is possible that There is a chance that It could happen that The possibility exists for</p>	<p>may, might, can, could</p>
<p>Prior to In anticipation of Subsequent to Following on At the same time as Simultaneously with</p>	<p>before, when, as, after</p>

Not different	similar
Not many	few
Not have	lack
Not include	omit
Not consider	ignore
Not the same	different
Not often	rarely
Not allow	prevent
Not admit	deny
Not accept	reject

a) Shorten by modifying phrases and clauses (Matthews & Matthews 2016; Skern 2011)

Several examples that can help with brevity and lucidity: Find possible modifications. (rule of thumb: try to write sentences with max. 15 – 20 words)

The genera of the group of fungi that was studied by Fitzpatrick at this time are placed in the group of genera that are called the order Hypocreales because of the work of Miller (1941).
(35 words)

Example: The fungal genera studied by Fitzpatrick now are placed in the order Hypocreales because of Miller's (1941) work.
(17 words)

It can be seen from Figure 1 that there is a significant correlation between the rate of growth of the incidence of cardiac-related disease and illness and the increasing frequency of the possession and use of a television.

It is a fact that 20% of the world's population has no clean water or enough to eat.

There is a considerable, if not extensive, body of literature dedicated to demonstrating that the Earth can be considered as a spherical body traversing a circular path around a similarly shaped, although significantly larger and completely different in nature, body which is in common parlance termed the Sun.

b) Shorten sentences by splitting them in two (Skern 2011)

Simple sentences are the best way to express complex thoughts. Especially native German speakers have a natural tendency to write sentences of great length. It is important to overcome this tendency when writing in English. To practise, use only one idea per sentences. Write them as a straightforward, direct statements (remember the S-V-O). To indicate that a statement might not be true in all situations (to qualify a statement), the qualification (the “disclaimer”) follows the statement.

Lengthy sentences	How it might be revised for clarity
<p>To be a good scientist, you have to be tolerant and patient when experiments or interpretations do not turn out as you had predicted, you must be able to stand high level of frustration.</p> <p><i>(34 words)</i></p>	<p><u>Example:</u> To be a good scientist, you have to be tolerant and patient when experiments or interpretations do not turn out as you had predicted. You must be able to stand high level of frustration.</p> <p><i>(24+10 words)</i></p>
<p>62% of certified drug addicts believe that cannabis has effects on the behaviour of car drivers and machine operators which lengthen their reaction time, 45% of students shared this opinion and only 38% of customers interviewed at discotheques were aware of this negative effect of cannabis.</p> <p><i>(46 words)</i></p>	
<p>Finally, the correlation has been clearly shown, even though not all parameters have as yet been investigated and further investigations have to be done.</p> <p><i>(24 words)</i></p>	
<p>This results in texts which are extremely difficult to read as well as revealing to the world that their authors are clueless about paragraph structure.</p> <p><i>(25 words)</i></p>	

c) Avoid Jargon (String of Pearls): uncouple long strings of nouns and adjectives (Matthews & Matthews 2016)

Be brief but not by sacrificing lucidity: a noun can be used to modify or describe another noun – but running together a whole series of nouns that modify one another is often difficult to decipher.

Example: Five two-week old single comb white leghorn specific pathogen free chickens were inoculated with approximately 10⁵ tissue culture infected doses of duck adenovirus

Exercise: Circle every batch of more than two nouns in your typescript and try to reduce those strings to simple pairs.

Sentence fragment containing a string of pearls	How it might be revised for clarity
a system necessitated automated motor starting circuit	<u>Example:</u> an automated motor-starting circuit required by the system
the negative penicillin skin test result group	
blue absorbing pigment spectral curve	
climate controlled gene cluster phenotype variation	

d) Hedges: scientific objectivity – author’s timidity (Matthews & Matthews 2016)

Remove unnecessary hedging (to hedge = protect one’s argument with qualifications that allow for unknown contingencies or withdrawal from commitment. AVOID double and triple hedges, it drains force from the sentence – one way of saying “I am not sure” is enough.

Example: The cause of the degenerative changes is unknown but *possibly* one cause *may* be infection by a *presumed* parasite

nouns	adverbs	verbs
supposition	presumably	appear
idea	probably	postulate
speculation	possibly	suggest
conjecture	apparently	seem
possibility	not unlikely	may be
inference	seemingly	speculate

Exercise: Reduce the following examples to a single hedge word apiece
 (your interpretation of the sentence might influence which hedge word you keep):

These observations serve to suggest the probable existence of a possible female sex pheromone.
Our belief is that the study may show an apparent link between cigarette smoking and lung cancer.
The results appear to indicate that the mixture may have been more or less saturated with oil:

e) Write precise and brief: avoid tautologies (Matthews & Matthews 2016)

A tautology is defined as needless repetition of an idea in a different word, phrase, or sentence.

Exercise: Omit needless words.

1 a.m. in the morning	new beginning
at this point in time	optional choice
collaborate together	five in number
circulate around	positive benefits
mandatory requirement	true facts

Check your own text sample regarding style:

Any favourites yourself?

ws 15: REFLECTION: REVISION

What stood out to me as especially important in this unit on academic language?

What do I want to pay special attention to when writing my next paper?

ws 15: REVIEW EXERCISE II – SCIENTIFIC LANGUAGE

Please go back to one of your earlier texts for another round of practice review (e.g. the text you produced for the 5-paragraph-method or a current paper draft). Go over the text and edit it according to the aspects of reader-centric writing outlined in this chapter. Pay special attention to the different levels (paragraph; sentence; individual words). Once you are done, write a brief reflection, considering the following questions:

What did you notice when reviewing your text? Any patterns or trends?

In addition to the phrases outlined in Strunk & White above, were there any additional turns of phrases or expressions you needed to edit more frequently? Anything that kept repeating?

REVIEWING

ws 16: REFLECTION: FEEDBACK AS PART OF THE REVIEWING PROCESS

Have you ever received feedback on one of your texts (not including grades)? Who gave you that feedback?

How did you receive that feedback and how did it feel? What did you do with the information in the feedback?

ws 17: CHECKLIST FOR MANAGING YOUR WRITING PROCESS

(BORROWED FROM GABRIELE RUHMANN UND SHEILA M. REINDL)

This questionnaire can help you deal with motivational problems that can lead to a writers' block. When you feel like your writing process is stagnating, it might be worth re-answering these questions.

1. What is the objective of my research?

1.1 Is there a deadline? If so, when?

1.2 How long should my text be?

1.3 What is my central question?

1.4 What purpose does this writing project serve? (dissertation, publication – where?)

**1.5 What main topics will I cover?
(no bullet points, try writing entire sentences or prompts)**

1.6 What do I want to achieve under each of these headings?

1.7 What makes my question difficult to resolve is...

1.8 If applicable: I am stuck. I am stuck because I can't figure out....

2. What goal do I want to achieve with my work? (i.e. “summa” for my dissertation or “just” getting it done; publishing; apply for a scholarship...)

2.1 Who will read the paper (name three people)? Who should like my work?

2.2 What makes it difficult for me to fully commit to my writing project is...

2.3 In an ideal world (regarding my writing project) ...

3. What other projects / tasks (work, errands, family...etc.) do I have to get done... Write down the tasks and the time each task will take – then you can estimate how much time you can devote to your writing project.

3.1 Looking at your additional tasks – how do you feel (often we do not realize how much we have on our plate in addition to the task we are focusing on)?