Erin’s Recommended Resources for Academic Writing & Productivity, 2018

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| Text/Resource | Author | Comments |
| For Academic Writing | | |
| How to Write a Lot | Paul Silvia | Very short (about 100 pages), “take no prisoners” text on getting your writing done. My favorite chapter is: Specious Barriers to Writing A Lot. |
| Write it Up: Practical Strategies for Writing & Publishing Journal Articles | Paul Silvia | This text is a nice companion to his first text (above). In this text, he tackles the specific issues of: How do you write an introduction? How do write methods? … |
| Becoming an Academic Writer | Pat Goodson\* | Fantastic text which present 50 exercises for improving one’s writing (draws upon Deep Practice described in the Talent Code below). Exercises can also be “prescribed/recommended” to students for strategies to improve their writing. Covers both the processes of writing (e.g., building a habit, getting feedback) and specific types of an academic manuscript (e.g., Methods, Results, Discussion). (If you were going to buy just one text – I would recommend this one because it is most comprehensive). |
| Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks | Wendy Belcher | A text that is part project management and part writing support. Belcher helps break down the journal writing into weekly and daily items. The chapter on how to write an **argument** (e.g., why is this study needed?) is particularly useful and this is one of the few texts that break that down. It is important to note though that as a literature professor, examples tend more towards social science. |
| The Writer’s Diet: A Guide to Fit Prose | Helen Sword | **Fit prose** (no extra flab) is the first step for revising one’s work on the path to powerful writing. This very short text (<100 pages) presents highly practical tools for addressing the flabby areas of your writing. It is a companion to a (free) online diagnostic tool where you can input samples of your writing. |
| On Writing Well | William Zinsser | Zinsser’s text is a joy to read and imparts principles for non-fiction writing. My favorite is his focus on **Simplicity** as being the core of quality writing. This stance defies tradition in academic writing. |
| Style: Lesson in Clarity and Grace | Williams & Bizup | This text provides one of the best explanations for issues of **coherence** and **cohesion** in writing. Many texts provide support for the macro-organization of writing, but good writing should be connected at the level sentences, which is clearly explained and examples provided. |
| They Say, I say: The moves that Matter in Academic Writing | Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein | A super-fast read … more of a reference book than a text that one reads front to back. Authors first present that effective academic writing is a conversation with other researchers. They quantify conversational “moves” that are essential. Finally, they extract the basic format of these moves into templates (e.g., the art of summarizing, the art of meta-commentary). They also provide discipline specific chapters such as, Writing in the Sciences. The template format can be very useful for ESL writers, but can certainly enhance any writer’s skills and reduce time for writing. |
| Stylish Academic Writing | Helen Sword | This is not for basic writing strategies. This is for competent writers who would like to become masterful writers. Sword analyzes copious amounts of academic writing, identifies the patterns which can make it so terribly dull … and then presents useful alternatives and strategies to keep your writing within the confines of “academic” but also stylish and memorable. |
| Texts for Mentoring Graduate Students in Writing | | |
| Destination Dissertation: A traveler’s guide to a done dissertation | Sonia Foss & William Waters | This book follows a “coaching philosophy” but in static, print form. It helps students break the dissertation (or any large research project) apart into manageable steps. It **helps advisors** by answering many of the questions that would formerly be asked to them. I would recommend buying it for any dissertation writers that one knows! |
| Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students | Stephen Bailey | One of the few texts on academic writing for ESL writers. Fairly basic, but can be a good reference when working with international graduate students. (Note this is written with British English spelling). The activities all have answer keys. |
| Academic Writing for Graduate Students | Swales & Feak | Comprehensive, bestselling textbooks for academic writing for grad students. Has many useful exercises. The downside is that the “answer key” to exercises is not available it is not ideal for individual study. Swales developed the CARS model (Creating a Research Space) and describes it in this text. |
| Productivity | | |
| Getting Things Done: The art of Stress-Free productivity | David Allen | This is a “go to book” for productivity … and for good reason. He presents key, philosophical principles to follow and then translates these principles into practical systems, tools and tips. One big idea essential for academics, is that you need to have a clear mind so you can reach your creative & cognitive potential. You can reach this clear mind through organizing and systematizing the necessary “stuff” of your work. |
| Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World | Cal Newport | Newport is a professor himself, so he provides many examples that resonate well with academics. His big premise is that we get so busy with the shallow work of our jobs that we rarely get to the important, creative, cognitively challenging “deep work”. Then he devotes a good deal of focus on how to “drain the shallows”. It is similar premise to “Getting Things Done” but less prescriptive. He focuses on how to prioritize the really important and creative work. |
| The Power of Habit: Why we do what we do in life in business | Charles Duhigg | Refutes many myths about habit formation (particularly that when you can’t form a habit it means that you don’t have will power) and replaces the myths with data-driven ideas about habit formation. It provides useful, practical tips for how to create new habits in your life and replace those old habits that you aren’t so keen of (e.g., procrastination). |
| Reaching Creative Potential | | |
| The Talent Code | Daniel Coyle | Dismantles myths about talent and presents the power of practice – particularly Deep Practice. Draws upon many disciplines but can be easily applied to mastering writing. Inspiring book to read. |
| The War of Art: Break through the Blocks and Win your inner Creative Battle | Steven Pressfield | Tackles how and why creative people in particular get bogged down in procrastination. Provides you with language to describe the cause of the procrastination – The Resistance (i.e., fear). Then gives you the tools get to work anyway. It is both awareness building and then makes you want to go do your work. |
| Team Building/Leadership | | |
| Conversational Intelligence: How Great Leaders Build Trust and Get Extraordinary Results | Judith E. Glasser | Glasser consults primarily for corporate leaders so her examples tend to be related to business, but her work can easily apply to: a) building teams for research, b) working with co-authors, and c) working across disciplines. She builds a case as to why conversations are one of our most powerful tools and how to have more effective and meaningful conversations so that teams can be positive and effective. |
| The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups | Daniel Coyle | Through presenting case studies of highly successful groups (including sports teams, businesses and criminal rings), Coyle extracts key ideas for how you can make your own work groups more effective. One big theme is the need for safety, cooperation amongst groups, as well as “getting rid of bad apples” … or at least minimizing their damage … and how to not be a “bad apple”. |
| Handling Stress & Sources of Stress in Academia | | |
| Conflict Management and Dialogue in Higher Education: A Global Perspective | Nancy T. Watson, Karan L. Watson, & Christine A. Stanley | Presents powerful mindset shifts: E.g., Conflict is not neutral, it will always exist in academia, but it is how you deal with it that makes it positive or negative. Details specific strategies for having difficult conversations and managing conflicts in a proactive and effective manner. Reading this text reduces stress about dealing with current or future conflicts. |
| Rising Strong | Brene Brown | Brown, a faculty member & researcher who studies resilience, courage, shame and vulnerability, tackles the issue of how to move forward after failure. It is not specific to the work world, but is highly applicable to moving forward after setbacks and failures at one’s job. |
| Texts specifically focusing on women’s success in the workplace | | |
| Ask for it: How women can use the power of negotiation to get what they really want | Linda Babcock & Sara Laschever | This negotiation book is written specifically for challenges that women often report when trying to obtain their goals. Very practical and includes basic principles of negotiation and determining “what you are worth” before entering the negotiation. Can apply easily to the academic setting because it is not just about negotiating for a salary. |
| Playing Big: Practical Wisdom for Women Who Want to Speak Up, Create & Lead | Tara Mohr | Mohr is a leadership coach who uses a combination of inner-work and practical skills training. In this book, she communicates her message through both description and through activities (e.g., writing prompts) for the reader to do. Concepts include: Your Inner Critic, A New Way of Looking at Fear; Unhooking from Praise & Criticism. Includes a very practical chapter on “Communicating with Power”. |