

# MASTERING MANUSCRIPTS

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some slides inspired by Mathias Benedek  
Pictures from Pixabay

# OVERVIEW

How to write a lot

How to write well with the help of AI

Wrap up and questions

# WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU ENCOUNTER WHEN IT COMES TO WRITING? (PARTICIPANT RESPONSES)

- Starting
- Finishing a draft
- Motivation
- Focus
- Block/find time
- Being satisfied
- Being a perfectionist and then never finishing anything
- Paraphrasing
- Being concise
- Structure, especially discussion
- No "perfect fitting" examples

# THE CHALLENGE

## Scientific writing

- **takes a lot of time:** How much time does an article take?
- **is hard:** Complex top-down, largely ill-defined work
- **involves uncertainty:** Long delay of gratification, possibility of rejection

⇒ Avoidance

⇒ Stress & bad conscience

⇒ Binge writing at cost of social life

# HOW TO WRITE A LOT

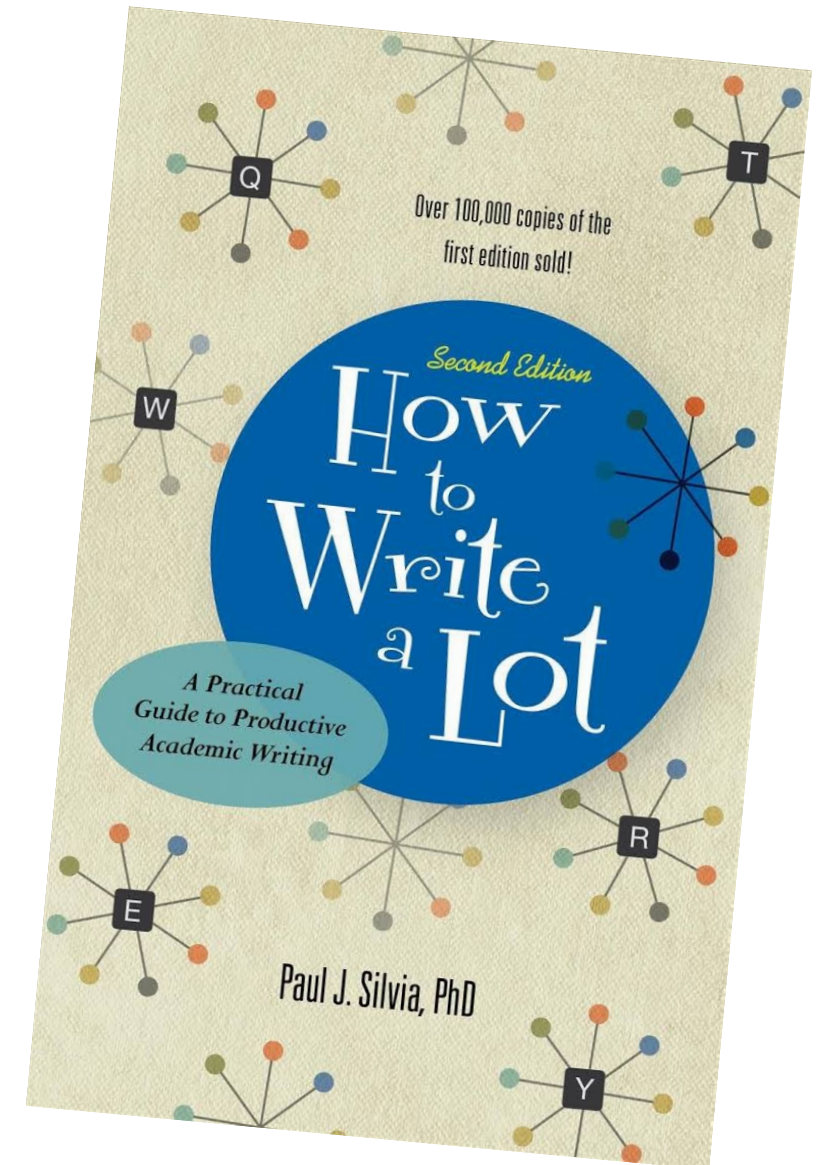
*Assumes:*

Hard to change writing spirit -

Easier to change writing conditions

→ Establish writing schedule

→ Monitor writing behavior



# SPECIOUS BARRIERS TO WRITING 1

**„I first need to do more analyses, reading, etc.“**

→ Do “pre-writing” in you writing time

Pre-writing is everything that gets you closer to publication:  
Reading, analysis, study author guidelines, ...  
as long as it is not just procrastination

# SPECIOUS BARRIERS TO WRITING 2

**„I first need a better computer, table, reference manager etc“**

→ Find a place devoid of distraction



# REFLECTION TIME

What are typical distractions?

Where and when can they be best avoided?

# SPECIOUS BARRIERS TO WRITING 3

**„I have to be in the right mood“**

→ Steadiness

Hard to predict daily outcome:  
Sometimes more/less than expected

# SPECIOUS BARRIERS TO WRITING 4

**„I can't find time to write“**

→ Schedule time instead of finding time

„Writing class“ (one would not miss own class)



# REFLECTION TIME

When is a good time to write?

*Look at your calendar:*

- *Schedule one 1h writing session for the next 7 days.*

# SPECIOUS BARRIERS TO WRITING 5

**„I should clear the decks before I get down to writing“**

→ Make a plan

First things first

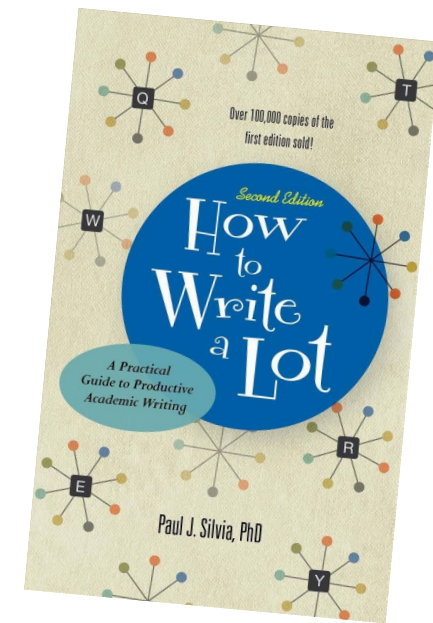
# WRITING GOALS

Establish a regular writing schedule:

- When and where will I write? (e.g., Mo-Fr 9-10, or Thur & Fr 14-16)

Ensure accountability (monitoring)

- Keep track (e.g., writing chart, <https://trackbear.app/>)
- Groups (offline or online)
  - Writing groups
  - Accountability groups
  - Feedback groups



# SPECIFIC TIPS

## Start early in PhD

- Relevant (file-drawer) data is typically available
- Review, meta-analysis
- Registered report



Stage 1: Definition of the most important aspects of the study before it is carried out (basically introduction + methods section) is submitted to **a journal**

Peer-Review

In-Principle-Acceptance (I.P.A.)

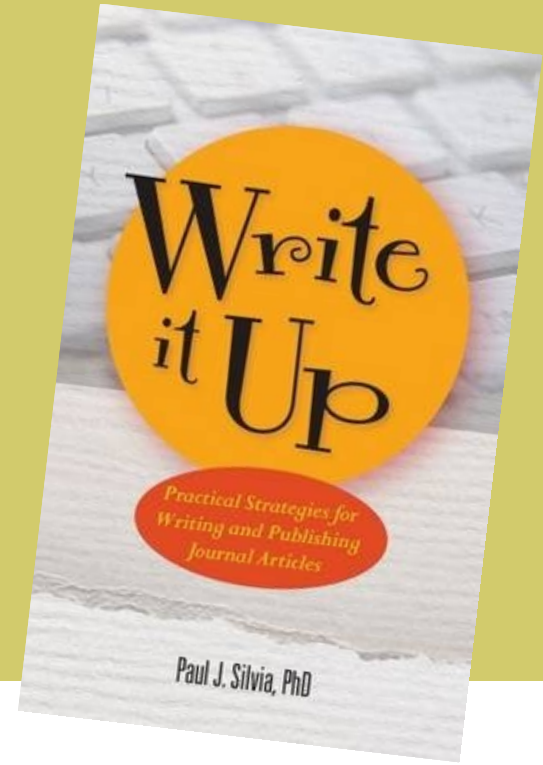
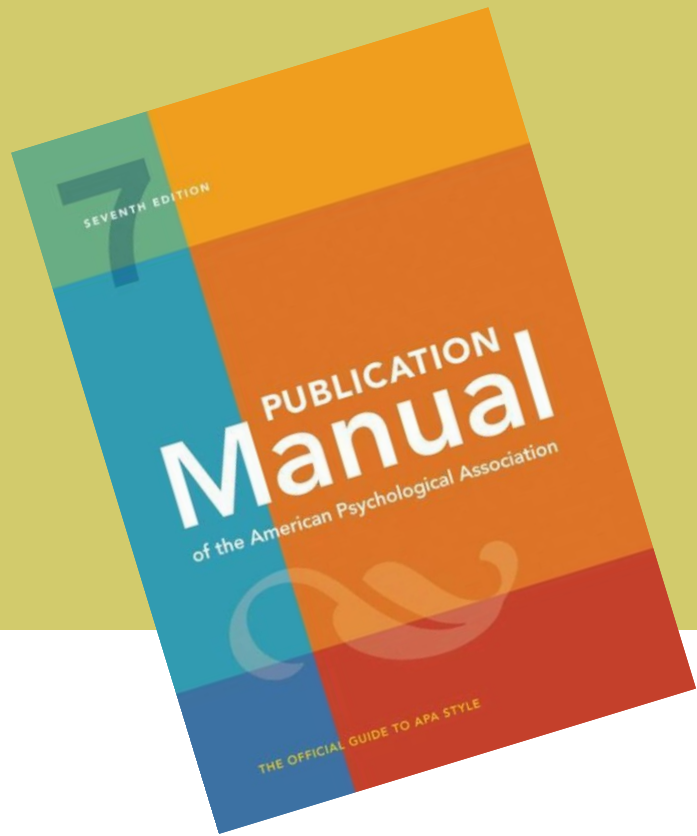
Conduct study

Stage 2: Submit full manuscript

Several smaller projects may be better than one too-big-to-fail study

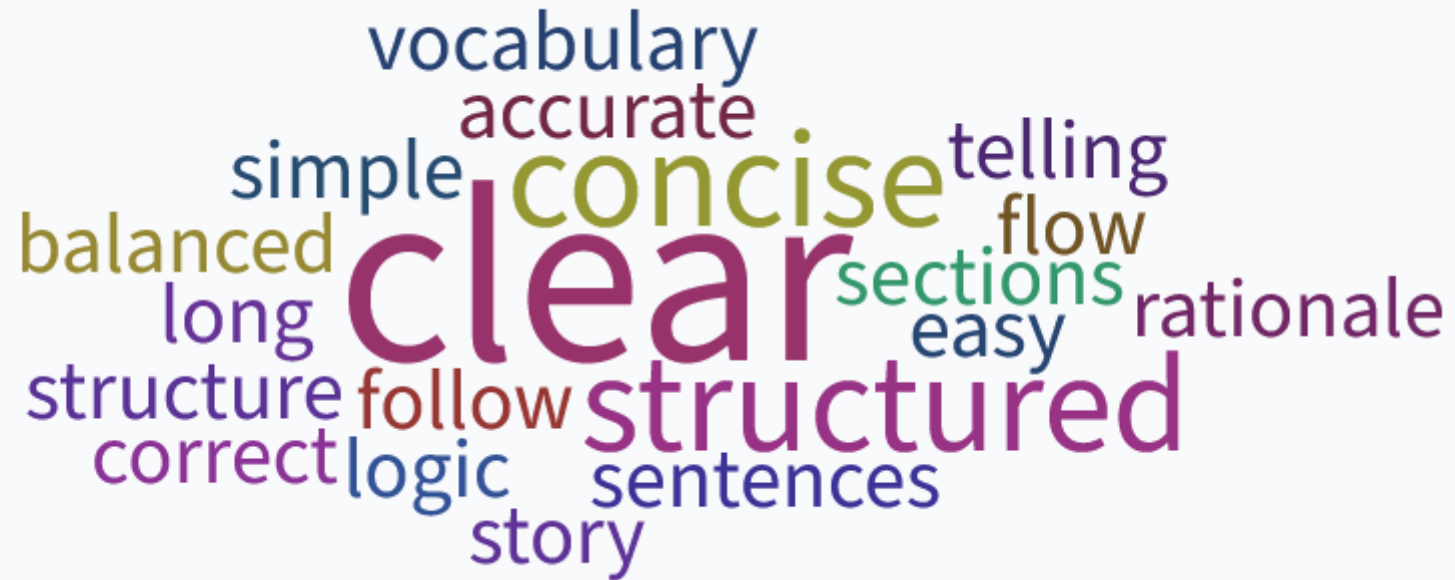
## When writing

- Outline general structure
- Start with question, methods, results



# HOW TO WRITE WELL

# WHAT CHARACTERIZES GOOD WRITING? (PARTICIPANT RESPONSES)



# USING AI IN WRITING

## Best use of AI:

- Brainstorming
- Structuring
- Rewriting/editing and improving flow
- Clarifying arguments
- Generating alternative phrasings
- Identifying gaps or unclear sections
- AI is a “conversation” process, use it iteratively:
  - Rough idea → theoretical clarification → restructure → shorten → improve precision → improve readability

## What AI should NOT do:

- Replacing critical thinking
- Understanding your project better than you do
- Making theoretical decisions for you
- Reliable citations/references

# HOW I USE AI

- Generating starting points to overcome writing inertia: starting is often harder than revising!
- Using AI as an interactive thinking partner
- **Structuring** complex arguments: reorganize paragraphs, improve flow between ideas, simplify overly complicated sentences
- **Clarifying** theoretical arguments: disentangle overlapping concepts, refine theoretical distinctions, sharpen interpretations, identify inconsistencies in logic
  - “Is this argument logically coherent?”
  - “What is unclear here?”
  - “What assumptions am I making?”
  - “What else could explain this finding?”
  - “Does this interpretation logically follow?”
  - “Are these constructs really different?”

# ABSTRACT

## **Goals:**

- Summarize all parts of the study
- Highlight innovative aspects

## **Structure:**

- Motivation
- Method
- Main results
- Conclusion

# ABSTRACT: AI INTEGRATION

## Common struggles:

- Too long/too vague
- Do not know what to prioritize
- Writing it too early

## AI integration:

- Ask AI to compress, not create: “Summarize this paper in 250 words”
- Use it to check balance: “Is this abstract too method-heavy?”

# INTRODUCTION: GOALS

Motivate research

Introduce main theories/findings: focus on those specifically relevant to this work  
(full review of state-of-the arts usually not needed)

Literature leads to research questions

# INTRODUCTION: POSSIBLE STRUCTURE

## Pre-Intro

1-2 paragraphs:

- What is the central motivation/question? and how will it be addressed in this study?
- Establish mindset for main part

## Main intro

2-5 paragraphs:

- No literature review, rather present specific arguments/assumptions

„The present research”/”Aims of this study“

1-4 paragraphs:

- Specific questions
- General method
- Expectations

# INTRODUCTION: AI INTEGRATION

## Common struggles:

- How to start
- How to structure the argument
- I have too many papers
- Weak storytelling

## AI integration:

- AI can help with structure and clarity
- Structure help: “Here are my key papers/topics, what are 2–3 logical ways to structure this introduction?”
- Argument sharpening: “What is the core research gap in this paragraph?”
- Improving flow: “Improve the flow of this paragraph”
- Rewriting weak or repetitive parts: Turn “There is increasing interest...” into something stronger

# METHODS: GOALS

1. Convince the reader that the study was well-conceived
  - Provide information to assess the validity (reliability) of the approach (APA)
  - Do not just show how, but why it was done
    - Classic: Established methods/test supported by references
    - Innovative: What can it do has not been possible before
2. Enable replication

# METHODS: AI INTEGRATION

## Common struggles:

- Too vague
- Too repetitive

## AI integration:

- Clarity: “Rewrite this methods section more clearly without losing precision”
- Missing info: “What information is missing for replication?”
- Rewrite existing study descriptions into coherent *Methods* text, e.g., using ethics applications, preregistrations, pilot documents, or previous studies

# RESULTS: GOAL

## Answer research questions

- Briefly remind of questions: “In order to test the hypothesis that ...”
- Describe what was found
- Explain what that means

# RESULTS: STRUCTURE & STYLE

## Necessary pre-analyses:

- Descriptive stats, manipulation checks, model specification, ...
- Data reduction, analytic plan, outlier analysis, missing data rather in Methods

## Main analyses

- First things first
- From simple to complex: e.g., (1) there is a relationship, (2) but it is moderated/mediated
- Organize findings in tables/figures; avoid redundancy in text
- Text guides through the story, highlights main findings (not each result)
- Consider structuring results with subsections (maybe even questions)
- Peripheral results in appendix/footnote
- In short articles and multi-study papers combined “results and discussion” possible

# RESULTS: AI INTEGRATION

## Common struggles:

- Reporting too much vs. too little
- Messy structure
- Interpreting results

## AI integration:

- Translation: “Report this result in plain academic language”
- Structure: “Organize these findings into a logical results section”
- Avoid overinterpretation: “Is this statement too interpretative for a results section?”
  - AI often overinterprets results! Use iterations and appropriate prompts to avoid this

# DISCUSSION: GOALS

1. Summarize findings and link to literature
2. Discuss open issues and limitations

# DISCUSSION: STRUCTURE (SILVIA, 2015)

- Recap
  - (Review the animating ideas from your intro)
  - Summarize what you found
- Connect
  - Link your ideas to important ongoing problems/findings/theories
- Resolve
  - Address unexpected findings (do not try to hide them)
- (Optional)
  - Limitations and Future Directions
  - Conclusion

# DISCUSSION: AI INTEGRATION

## Common struggles:

- Where to start, how to structure
- Repeating results instead of interpreting
- How much to interpret
- Weak connection to literature
- Avoiding limitations

## AI integration:

- Structure: “How to structure the Discussion?”
- Interpretation: “What are 2–3 possible interpretations of this finding?”
- Linking: “How does this result relate to [theory X]?”
- Limitations: “What are potential limitations of this design?”



# WHAT ADDITIONAL TOOLS OR TIPS DO YOU HAVE FOR WRITING? (PARTICIPANT RESPONSES)

1. Trackbear
2. Forest (growing trees and not being able to use your phone in the meantime)
3. Gemini for creating graphics such as logic models (it's incredible!!!)
4. Consensus for literature search
5. Claude.ai for structure and review
6. Perplexity and research rabbit for literature search

# SOME TOOLS GABY USES

Listen to music

Meet up with others

Stay focused: <https://www.forestapp.cc/>

Let an AI polish your writing: <https://www.grammarly.com/>

Learn to polish your writing yourself: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/sciwrite>

- Declutter your writing!

Manage your literature and cite it easily: <https://www.zotero.org/>

# SOME TOOLS ŽIVA USES

ChatGPT, DeepSeek for basically everything

Obsidian for notes and project structuring <https://obsidian.md/>

Reclaim AI for time management/tracking <https://reclaim.ai/>

Citation tools (e.g., Zotero) <https://www.zotero.org/>

Listen to binaural beats and focus music on YouTube

# FINAL NOTES ON WRITING A LOT AND WRITING WELL

“You don’t need special traits, special genes, or special motivation to write a lot. And you don’t need to want to write—people rarely feel like doing unpleasant tasks that lack deadlines—so don’t wait until you feel like it.” (Silvia, 2019, p. 133)

“When I think about the good things still to be written I am glad for there is no end to them, and I know I myself shall write some of them.” (Saroyan, 1952; p.2)



**TIME TO START WRITING!**

# CREATE WRITING RETREAT & NETWORKING EVENT

JOIN US FOR A DAY OF FOCUSED WRITING & EXCHANGE!

 TUESDAY, JUNE 9<sup>TH</sup> 2026 |  10:00 – 17:00 CEST | ONLINE

Put your (new) skills  
to use and get some  
writing done!

Sign up here: 

