

## Preface

Hello, there. I assume that you're reading this book because you're feeling vexed by writing. It's too slow. There's no time for it. Evenings, weekends, holidays, and family time have become "writing time." You write less often than you'd like but ruminate about it more often than you should. Something has to change.

Helping people change, fortunately, is what we do in the meddlesome field of psychology, my intellectual home. If you look at models of change—whether it is quitting alcohol, taking up exercising, or learning to slowly back away from the open box of apple fritters—you see two approaches. One aims to change you as a person—your values, lifestyle, worldview, identity, authentic voice, and inner past—so that the desired change flows naturally from the new, improved self. The "new you," the theory goes, won't even want the fritters. The other approach, in contrast, ignores that stuff and focuses on changing what you *do*. Cultivating the inner nurturing voice of your authentic healthy self can't hurt, but I think it is faster and more practical to

say, “Let’s talk about the behavior of picking up apple fritters with your hands and smearing them over your face and chest.”

This book sees productive writing as a skill people learn. To write more, you needn’t adopt a new writing identity, cultivate an authentic scholarly voice, or interrogate your intellectual values. You’re welcome to, if that’s your scene, but focusing on specific behaviors that you can do today is faster and more practical. The aim is to make writing routine and mundane, so we’ll focus on strategies for writing during the normal work week, writing with less stress and guilt, and writing more efficiently. If you have a deep backlog of projects or worry about finding time to write, this book will help. It won’t make writing feel like a wondrous pageant of ceaseless joys, but it will help you get more writing done during the week so that you can have a life outside of work.

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Over a decade ago, when I wrote the first edition of *How to Write a Lot*, writing was both fun and vexing. Much has changed since then. My wife and I now have two wonderful children. Lia, our Bernese mountain dog and the unofficial mascot of the first edition, has gone to that big bark park in the sky, and household snuffling duties have been taken up by Athena, our affable and fuzzy shelter mutt. And in a jarring twist of fate that has caused me to question everything I thought I knew about myself, we got a cat. But writing is still both fun and vexing—much like cat ownership, I suppose.

People I work with are occasionally asked, “So, does he really do all that stuff? You know, writing schedules and all those things from the book?” It’s okay to ask. I still write every weekday with a slow-and-steady writing schedule; I don’t write in the evenings, on weekends, or during long stretches of the summer; I keep track of my writing; and I meet with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Agraphia group, which has held weekly meetings to talk about writing goals for almost 15 years.

This new edition has the same thesis and themes, but I’ve expanded some sections. Just in case the second edition wasn’t as dispiriting as the first, there’s a new chapter (Chapter 8) about writing grant and fellowship proposals. And I revised the text throughout to include all of academia. I never expected readers outside of psychology to hear about the book, but desperation about writing is broader than I thought. A few parts of this edition focus on the social sciences (particularly Chapter 6, which is about writing journal articles) but, otherwise, the book now hopes to speak to a broader scholarly audience. If I’ve learned anything since the first edition, it’s that we all share the same writing struggles.

I’m lucky to have colleagues who like to talk about writing and who tolerate interruptions. For the first edition, many people commented on early drafts and provided encouragement for what must have sounded like a weird project. Big thanks go out to Wesley Allan, Janet Boseovski, Peter Delaney, John Dunlosky, Mike

Kane, Tom Kwapil, Scott Lawrence, Mark Leary, Cheryl Logan, Stuart Marcovitch, Lili Sahakyan, Mike Serra, Rick Shull, my dad Raymond Silvia, Jackie White, Beate Winterstein, Ed Wisniewski, and Larry Wrightsman. Lansing Hays and Linda Malnasi McCarter at APA Books deserve thanks for having faith in a quirky book. Linda deserves extra thanks for a decade of texts and calls and emojis. She knows how to put her finger on the worst jokes and the best Ethiopian restaurants.

For this second edition, it's hard to know where to start. So many people have talked with me about writing, shared their tips and woes, and pushed me to sharpen my ideas. I'm fortunate to work at a university with a vibrant intellectual community, and I'm indebted to my friends in other departments for all they have taught me about the many cultures of academic writing. They might be surprised at how much I picked up from them, but they should know by now that we nosy psychologists are always listening. Special thanks go to the writing group members, Anna Craft, Sarah Dorsey, Alyssa Gabbay, Greg Grieve, Brooke Kreitingner, Patrick Lee Lucas, Joanne Murphy, Anne Parsons, Clifford Smyth, and Pauli Tashima. May your footnotes always be at least as interesting as your text. My recent doctoral students—Roger Beaty, Alex Christensen, Katherine Cotter, and Emily Nusbaum—gave feedback on early drafts of these chapters and served as long-suffering subjects in my ongoing experiments in how to teach writing.

Because of the vagaries of summer travel and children's activities, a large chunk of the second edition was

written in small-town public libraries. Working on this book next to a shelf labeled “Large Print HORROR” was both apt and inspiring. My thanks to the librarians, patient keepers of the books.

The only thing that a writer’s room needs, according to Stephen King (2000), is “a door which you are willing to shut” (p. 155). This book is for Beate, Helena, and Jonas, for coating the door with stickers, hand prints, and drawings of cats.