

## Break the Isolation: Strategies for Improving Your Academic Writing Through Peer Support

Presented by the UBC Writing Centre and the Graduate Pathways for Success Program



## Session Format

- Why writing groups?
- How to run successful writing groups
- Pre-grouping questions
- Networking/connecting

Please feel free to ask questions at any time during the presentation.



## What is a writing group?

Really anything you want it to be!

But most effective writing groups have some things in common:

- Meet in a group to share your work and get peer feedback
- Rules or guidelines that group members have agreed on
- Structured meeting times



## Why writing groups?



## The Value of Peer Feedback

- Makes you think about writing in the abstract as well as in specific situations
- Makes you focus on your audience/readers
- Feedback gives you multiple readers' perspectives
- Receiving feedback helps you learn to take critique well



## The Value of Peer Feedback

- Help you go from student to scholar by forming communities of practice
- Forces you to learn about a genre to offer effective feedback
- Good practice for reviewing in a literary journal context



## Accountability



- Accountability
- Accountability
- Accountability



## Best Practices for Writing Groups



## When you start or join a writing group, commit to it.



Remember that you will:

- Get feedback on your writing
- Get accountability and emotional support for your writing
- Share expertise and ideas about the grad school experience
- Share best practices and learn some new ones
- Set deadlines and have external motivation to reach them
- Learn about others' writing strategies
- Make new friends
- Create communities of practice



## How to Start



- Review resources on Writing Centre blog page
- Find friends and allies: start recruiting from people you know, and remember that not all members need to be from your discipline
- Network when and where you can (foreshadowing here...)
- Set goals: decide what you want to accomplish and stay focused on that



## Set a Writing Goal



Take a moment to write down:

1. A three-sentence summary of your graduate research project (or area of expertise).
2. Your personal writing goal(s): make your goal(s) specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely



## Maintaining Momentum



- Characteristics of good facilitators/meeting leaders
- Effective communication between sessions
- Stay focused: decide on the type(s) of writing to bring and feedback to offer
- Meet regularly: don't skip meetings, and fulfill your commitments to the group
- Have fun: have a drink or play a board game after the work is over – but do put the work first



## Giving Feedback



Use the language of negotiation; avoid commands and directives.

- Give feedback from your perspective:
  - “I don’t know...”
  - “I’m not sure I understand...”
  - “Could you explain this to me?”
  - “I wonder if maybe...”
  - “What if you...”



## Give yourself and group members time for editing.

- Editing your own work needs to be prioritized
- Schedule time for editing multiple drafts and incorporating feedback
- Can be done during your writing time – it’s part of the process!



## Writing Groups: Questions to Ask



- How often will the group meet?
- How will you communicate?
- Will there be a facilitator? Rotating role or consistent?
- What’s the optimum number of group members?
- How will you respond to each other’s writing?
- What kinds of writing can be submitted to the group?
- What will the meeting format be?



## Talk to your fellow attendees:

- What is your ideal writing group?
- What would you look for in other group members?
- What parts of your writing (or the writing process) do you want to improve?



## Thank you!

- If you have any questions about the content here, or want to contact us for any other reason, please email us at [writingcentre@ubc.ca](mailto:writingcentre@ubc.ca).
- Please fill out the evaluation about this session. We appreciate your feedback.
- Check <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/tutoring-studying/improve-your-writing> for information on the Writing Centre tutorial service and for our most recent blog posts.

