

Visiting Scholar Program – Research Writing

Beyond writing accountability groups: Different supports for different needs in research writing

Success in academic research requires lots of writing, among all the other career demands.

A [blog post by Kerry Anne Roquemore](#) at *Inside Higher Ed* examines why it's OK for academic researchers to need writing support and how to identify what YOU need. Here is a summary of several types of writing supports for academic researchers and who might benefit from each.

I need support and community to stay motivated for writing regularly.

You can join or create a [writing accountability group](#), where members combine dedicated writing time with discussions of common problems. A group created by Daniah Basodan (Department of Pediatrics) was discussed in a [previous blog post](#).

I need strategies to get my writing started or to organize my ideas.

You can try **pre-writing techniques** such as [FreeWriting](#) to prime your writing. FreeWriting is brainstorming on paper. Ignore grammar, spelling, punctuation – just capture those ideas! With Mind Mapping and Concept Mapping, you create a pictorial web, clustering your ideas and concepts to organize them and see how they fit together. Many people think better when they start with pictures. You can use these techniques on your own or within a writing group.

I need regular, substantive feedback on my academic writing.

Members of a **writing feedback group** read each other's academic writing, formulate constructive critiques and meet regularly to share feedback. These groups require commitments from members to prepare substantive feedback (not just comments on spelling or grammar) and engage during meetings. Participants benefit from each other's feedback and from opportunities to talk through their ideas. Talking out ideas can help your research stories flow and come alive.

I need the energy buzz of other people writing around me.

A **just write group** (virtual or in person) can reduce feelings of isolation and help you build a regular writing habit. Self-organizing group members commit to meet routinely and simply write, while all the other group members write around them. No discussions, no feedback, no reading each other's work. Just write, energized by the buzz of the hive.

I am not confident in my research writing because my academic experience is in other languages or cultures.

A **peer tutor** at the [University of Alberta Centre for Writers](#) can give you one-on-one writing support. This is a safe, focused space to expand your expertise. You can seek similar support from a writing tutor or mentor in your department or your research field.



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I need intense, facilitated structure with high commitment.

At a **writing bootcamp or workshop**, everyone commits concentrated time to learning from experts on how to improve their writing. Talk to your peers or your department's Associate Chair, Research, about organizing a group event through the [Proposal Development](#) resources of the university's Research Services Office.

I need help in expressing my ideas clearly and succinctly.

A **professional editor** can help you revise your writing, making your research documents more clear and effective for the audiences that you want to reach.

I don't know what I need or what to do when I figure it out.

A **writing coach** can assess your research writing and help you shape it, offering strategies to improve its organization and content.

My needs for research writing support keep changing.

Your needs for writing support will undoubtedly change from year to year (and even from day to day at times!). When you are struggling with your writing or need a motivation boost, consider testing a new type of writing support. And combine different types of supports as your needs evolve!

