The Writing Habits of Successful Academics

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BASE habits

![Graph showing the relationship between Behavioral, Emotional, Artisanal, and Social habits.](image-url)
What shape is your BASE?

Female 31-40, psychology, Switzerland (Portugal)

Female 41-50, astrophysics, UK (Italy)

Female 51-60, history, USA

Male 31-40, humanities, UK (Sweden)

Male 51-60, medicine, UK

Male 51-60, nursing, Scotland
Diagnostic Exercise: Mapping the BASE

**Behavioral habits.** My everyday academic writing habits are:

- Neither good or bad

5

**Artisanal habits.** My skills as an academic writer are:

- Neither good nor bad

5

**Social habits.** I engage in productive conversations with other people about my writing and work-in-progress:

- Occasionally

5

**Emotional habits.** When I think about my academic writing, the emotions I feel are:

- Evenly balanced between positive and negative

5
Diagnostic Exercise: Mapping the BASE

**Behavioral habits.** My everyday academic writing habits are:

Unsatisfactory.

3

**Artisanal habits.** My skills as an academic writer are:

High developed; I am confident in my ability to write clearly and well.

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**Social habits.** I engage in productive conversations with other people about my writing and work-in-progress:

Not very often

3

**Emotional habits.** When I think about my academic writing, the emotions I feel are:

Mostly positive.

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The BASE foundation
The house of writing
Habits of mind

- Behavioural
- Artisanal
- Social
- Emotional
1. Behavioural habits.

Briefly describe your academic writing habits. Where, when, and how often do you write?
Daily writing?

n=1132 questionnaires

Yes: 12%
No: 88%

n=100 interviews

Yes: 13%
No: 87%
Do you:

1. Write every day?
2. Write first, edit later?
3. Schedule your writing time?
4. Monitor your progress?
5. Snack write?
6. Retreat?
7. Reflect?

√ I already do it
+ I would like to try
- I’m not interested
2. Artisanal habits.

Briefly describe your professional formation as a writer. How and from whom did you learn to write in your discipline? Have you undertaken any formal learning (e.g. books, workshops, courses on academic writing), either pre- or post-PhD?
Formal learning?

n=1232

- Informal: 47%
- Semi-formal: 38%
- Formal: 15%
How we learn to write

We learn from:

- Teachers
- Supervisors
- Mentors
- Parents
- Friends
- Colleagues
- Students
- Editors
- Peer reviewers
- Other readers

We learn by:

- Imitation
- Emulation
- Self-reflection
- Trial and error
- Practice
- Reading in our discipline
- Reading beyond our discipline
- Editing and reviewing
- Working in other professions
- Teaching others to write
Artisanal habits

Stylish Academic Writing

HELEN SWORD

The Writer’s Diet

Helen Sword

www.helensword.com

www.writersdiet.com
3. Social habits

Name at least 5 other people who contribute to your writing practice (eg co-author, editor, writing group member, peer reviewer...).
Social habits

Starting a writing group

Things to think about:
• power dynamics
• disciplinary mix
• size
• frequency
• duration
• sponsorship
• processes
• purpose

Is your group ethos:
• motivational?
• reflective?
• supportive?
• competitive?
• creative?
• productive?
• escapist?
• other?

Your task: Design (or refine) your writing group
4. Emotional habits.

Briefly describe the main emotions that you associate with your academic writing.
Emotions?

n=1123 questionnaires

Positive 13%
Negative 17%
Mixed 70%

n=100 interviews

Positive 17%
Negative 11%
Mixed 72%
Questionnaires (n=1123)
Interviews (n=100)
The habitus of writing
What does your House of Writing look like?