

A student of the POWER writing model



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Brittany Rosen is an assistant professor in the College of Education, Criminal Justice, & Human Services at the University of Cincinnati. A recent Texas A&M University doctoral graduate, Rosen credits the POWER writing model with providing the structure and strategies that helped her complete her dissertation in a timely manner and achieve publishing success.

Here Rosen explains the benefits of the POWER writing model.

TAA: You are a self-described student of the POWER writing model. Can you briefly explain the basic steps of the model?

Brittany Rosen: “The POWER (Promoting Outstanding Writing for Excellence in Research) writing model encompasses principles and practices allowing you to establish a stress-free writing habit, increase your writing productivity, and improve your quality of writing.

These principles and practices, which could be viewed as the basic steps, are (1) schedule your writing, (2) write quickly and edit slowly, (3) keep and share a writing log, and (4) give and get regular feedback.

Scheduling your writing time, at the same time every day, is the best strategy to help increase productivity and manage distractions. Writing (or generating) quickly allows you to be creative and turn-off the inner critic of whatever you are writing. Editing is an analytic task, which is the opposite of generating; it can be difficult to write when trying to generate and edit at the same time. Using a writing log provides you with a record of how much writing you are accomplishing and sharing this log with others keeps you accountable to the amount of time you spend writing. Receiving feedback means you can correct areas of your writing and

ultimately improve your writing quality. Giving feedback to other writers, sometimes considered more valuable than receiving feedback, is also important because you can see mistakes in others’ writing that you might not have seen in your own writing.

To get a more in-depth explanation of the POWER writing model and to find more writing strategies, I encourage you to read *Becoming an Academic Writer: 50 Exercises for Paced, Productive, and Powerful Writing* by Dr. Patricia Goodson.”

TAA: As a recent doctoral graduate, can you discuss how you benefited from adopting the POWER writing strategies?

BR: “As most people know, graduate school can be a very stressful and demanding process, especially when writing a dissertation, taking courses, and applying for jobs all at the same time. Implementing the POWER writing model allowed me to have a handle on these stressors. For example, keeping a writing schedule was vital to my success of completing my dissertation in three months. I wrote at the same time every day and was accountable to connecting with my project every day. This helped me reduce the amount of stress I had when writing my dissertation because I knew every day I was moving forward with the project.

The POWER model also helped me improve my writing and allowed me to find my voice. You can ask any of my high school and undergraduate teachers, and they would say I was an AWFUL writer. However, the POWER model encourages practicing daily writing and values feedback. Through these strategies, I have greatly improved my writing quality and actually enjoy receiving feedback to continue to develop my work.”

TAA: Which of these steps are the most beneficial to your writing process and why?

BR: “All of the POWER practices are beneficial, but if I had to select the three most beneficial practices, I would pick scheduling writing time, writing quickly and editing slowly, and receiving feedback. Creating and keeping my writing schedule is vital to my writing process. Before the POWER model, I engaged in “binge writing”—writing for large chunks of the day but not very often. While I was always able to complete assignments and manuscripts, they were not high quality and I had unwarranted stress. By scheduling writing time, I have lowered my stress level and I touch on my projects a little bit every day, allowing me not to be overwhelmed with writing. I even scheduled my writing time to write this article!

Writing quickly and editing slowly is the one tool I feel is my secret weapon. While I see graduate students, professors, and other writers talk about writer’s block, I know that when I start a new manuscript or grant and I’m looking at a blank page, it will not be blank for long. I do not struggle with writer’s block because I generate words quickly without trying to edit (or critique my writing) at the same time. I am able to write freely, knowing that I will edit my text at a different time.

Feedback is critical to any writer, no matter what discipline, but feedback is beneficial to my writing because feedback allows me to understand what, in my writing, needs to be fixed, reworded, edited, or cut. I want my writing to be clear and concise and feedback provides the opportunity to test my writing with different audiences. I use all types of people for feedback from other graduate students, professors, friends, and even my mom.”

Although these steps may appear simple, a writer must actually implement these strategies in order for them to work. And my writing productivity

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is evidence these strategies work; they work in keeping me accountable in my writing and help increase my productivity.”

TAA: Is there any theory and/or research that supports that these types of writing strategies lead to proven results?

BR: “The POWER model was actually based on Peter Elbow’s theory of the writing process and research from psychology and neuroscience literature regarding talent development. Elbow suggests good writing occurs through the need to write badly (yes, I said write badly), and develop this bad writing through sharing early and late drafts. Only when writers are comfortable with generating messy text, sharing the text for feedback, and actually look forward to incorporating the feedback into the writing, will they truly enjoy the writing process.

The research behind POWER indicates elite performance, such as skills shown by prolific scholars or elite athletes, is linked with deliberate practice. Deliberate practice can be described as practice in which you

slow down, make mistakes, and correct these mistakes. Daniel Coyle, author of *The Talent Code*, discusses that by engaging in deliberate practice, a person is able to build myelin—a substance that insulates the brain’s nerve wires. Through myelin building, a person begins to develop and refine his/her ability and skills, to become an elite performer—or in our case an elite writer.

This theory and research is why the POWER model is focused on valuing messy writing (generating quickly), the importance of feedback, and the need for deliberate practice (which includes receiving feedback to correct mistakes).”

TAA: What is your favorite benefit of TAA?

BR: “My favorite TAA benefit is the opportunity it provides me to connect with other writers from different disciplines. Through this exposure, I have realized the writing issues I encounter are not singular to me—or my discipline. I value discussing, with other writers, solutions to common writing issues.” ■