Preparing to Write: Transcript

Slide 1:

Thank you for watching the Purdue OWL's vidcast on preparing to write! Planning a writing-heavy project and maintaining momentum can be difficult even for the most experienced writers. In this vidcast, we'll explore what writers should consider to create a sustainable work-life balance that will help create sustainable, achievable writing sessions.

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To promote writing session productivity, writers can embark on four pre-writing tasks.

The first task we will discuss is setting a writing schedule. Then, we'll discuss how to prepare for your writing session and clear your mental space. After this, we'll consider other daily preparations for a successful writing session. Finally, we'll discuss the value of reflecting on your writing sessions.

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Setting a schedule will help you understand when you're able to write, how long you're able to write for, and more. As you create your schedule, ask yourself: How many days can you write? How many hours per day will you dedicate to your writing? Do I need to meet with anyone to discuss this writing task? If so, when and how often?

Whatever works best for you is great, but the ultimate goal is to ensure your schedule is consistent; for example, you might determine that you can write a half hour every day, or that you have time to write for one hour on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

One way to do this is to create a "Life Map." First, consider what is non-negotiable about your schedule. Identify the blocks of time you use for sleep, coursework, teaching, lab work or research, personal obligations, and anything else that you can't sacrifice for writing time. Place these items in a chart that goes hour-by-hour, day-by-day.

Next, consider who you are as a writer: How long does it take you to write a page? How many pages can you complete in an hour? How much time do you need for reading, research, feedback, and other writing-related tasks? When will I need a break, and how

long will I need that break for? As you start considering these questions, look for places in your chart that you can use for writing time.

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After this, clear your mental space by taking care of necessary life tasks prior to your writing time. You might set aside mental concerns by asking yourself: What would make my writing session great today? Or, you might take an inventory of how you are feeling. Ask yourself: What excites me today? What has me feeling anxious? What worries can I set aside for another day? Save space for any other ideas and thoughts you might want to capture.

Another way to clear your mental space is to accomplish things like errands, bill-paying, phone calls, etc. before you write. If you can complete these tasks before your session begins, they will not be mental distractions when you're trying to write.

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There are also other small, daily preparations that you can do ahead of your writing session to maximize productivity.

Collect personal comfort supplies like coffee, tea, water bottles, snacks, a comfortable sweater, and other things like that so that you don't have to interrupt your writing time to go find them.

Silence your phone and, ideally, put it in a drawer in another room so that you aren't tempted to multitask between answering texts or scrolling on social media.

Ensure that you have all the necessary working supplies you'll need for the day's work.

Finally, arrange childcare or take care of childcare needs, whether it's preparing a snack or going down for a nap. If you have pets, you might ensure that pets are fed and have water and have been walked.

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Reflection is an important part of growing as a writer because you can figure out what works best for you, which is different from what works for other writers.

At the end of each writing session, spend a few minutes reflecting on your progress. What did you accomplish? If you met all your goals, celebrate that! If you accomplished less than planned, what were some of the challenges that got in your way? Will you need to adjust future goals as a result?

This reflective practice can then be used to answer other questions about what could change or stay the same for future writing sessions. What times of day work best for you? What locations work best for you? What are some other minor distractions that kept occurring that can be muted, such as a phone or social media? As you reflect, your answers to questions like these will help you adjust your practice to create successful, productive writing sessions.

Slide 7:

Check out the rest of our videos which will help prepare you for any writing task—whether it's clarifying distinct parts of the writing process, writing clearer sentences, or setting SMART Goals.

You can also find more information about graduate writing on the Purdue OWL website.

For now, thanks for watching!