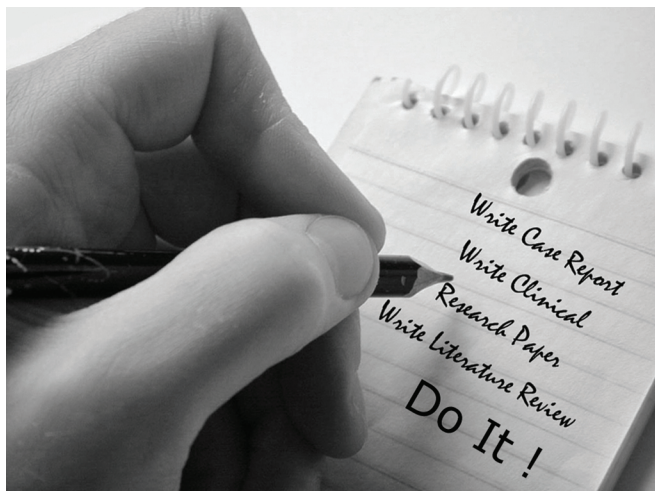


The Seven Habits of Highly Successful Writers

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Editor



The seven habits of highly successful writers include the following:

1. Write
2. *Write*
3. **Write**
4. Write
5. **Write**
6. Write ... and ...
7. **Write**

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The seven habits noted above are the most important parts of writing... unfortunately even though this tells you what to do (write); it leaves much to be desired as to the who, why, and how parts of developing a writing habit.

Who Should Write?

Since optometry is a learned profession, it is the responsibility of all optometrists to write. As one author notes, *The world is run by those who write*¹ and *You do not know what you know until you ... express it* [in writing]. Are you willing to give up your share of running the world by not writing? I hope not. Will you be open to all that writing has to offer, so that you can determine exactly what you know? I hope so. A quick look at PubMed² showed 20 ophthalmology journals and only 10 optometry journals. Who's getting the eye and vision care message out to the world? Who is demonstrating what they know? Are you doing your share? *You* should write.

Why Should You Write?

I always tell my students, residents and co-authors to write to inform. Getting out our message the way we want to tell it, is one of the reasons why we should write. Who better to tell the functional, developmental, and behavioral vision story, than those who practice within this mode? We often have our patients and their families write about their experiences within our therapy programs and then post these in a conspicuous place in our office. (We call these success stories.) You should do the same, but post what you write in *Optometry & Vision Development (OVD)*, *Journal of Behavioral Optometry (JBO)*, and/or *Optometry*. Our success stories can then be called case reports, clinical research, literature reviews and editorials.

How Do We Put It In Writing?

As my colleague, Dr. Paul Freeman^a, editor of the American Optometric Association's journal,

Optometry (noted in a recent issue); his Seven Steps to Begin the Publication Process³:

1. Decide what your reason is for writing (to inform, challenge, review, etc)
2. Determine your audience
3. Carefully review your chosen journal's Author Guidelines
4. Gather all the necessary data for writing
5. Write
6. Read, re-read, proof read
7. Submit the paper to the journal

All of which will certainly get you started along the writing path. My list is somewhat different but will lead you down the appropriate "get published" path as well.

The *Dr. Dominick M. Maino's Seven Habits of Highly Successful Writers* include (besides what's noted above):

1. Find a case or clinical research topic you are passionate about.

This could be a patient that amazed you by the outcomes achieved, or the inventiveness or unique manner you helped the patient solve their oculo-visual-perceptual problems.

2. Do your research.

Find out if someone else has published something similar by conducting a PubMed search and a literature search of OVD or JBO articles (You can now review articles in OVD⁴ and JBO⁵ online. Find supporting evidence for your outcomes. Have your optometric institutions' learning resources services obtain copies of the articles.

3. Determine your audience and then which journal is best suited for that audience.

Obtain a copy of the journal's Guidelines for Authors. (OVD's Guidelines for Authors are frequently published within OVD. You can also obtain a copy of these guidelines by logging on to: <http://www.covd.org> and typing in "Author Guidelines" in the search box.) Find articles that are similar to what you are going to write and emulate what those authors have done (after all they were successful in getting their article published).

4. Write.

Follow the Author's Guidelines exactly as stated. If you follow the guidelines, the actual writing is easier. These guidelines provide the form and structure

that will allow your words to become the content you desire.

5. Read it.

Re-read it. Have your spouse, mom, friends and colleagues read it. Always pick someone who is willing to offer constructive criticism. Do not pick someone who is too polite to tell you what needs to be fixed to make it a better paper.

6. Re-write.

All papers can be improved. Yes, even yours. It is highly unusual to get it perfect the first or even the third time you re-write it. Once the rewrite is done, send it to the journal of your choice. (For OVD, it is recommended you email the paper to the editor at dmaino@ico.edu.)

7. It's all about the paper.

The editor will then send the paper out for peer review. Read the peer reviewers' comments carefully. Always remember that it's all about the paper and NOT about you. I usually read the peer reviewers' comments and then say (or think) something that goes along the lines of "*&%#&%&!!!" . After I've had a chance to remember that it is "all about the paper" and not about me, I realize that many of the suggestions improve the quality and readability of the paper. You do not have to make all the changes recommended. You should, however, inform the editor which changes you made and why you did not make all the changes. Send the paper back to the editor. The editor will review the paper again and then (hopefully) let you know the paper was accepted. Upon paper acceptance the actual publication dates can be anywhere from 8 months or longer before you see it in print.

If you follow these Seven Habits of Highly Successful Writers, you will not only become a published author, but have a say in how the world is run and know... just how much... you know. Now, start writing!

Resources

- a. Dr. Freeman will be presenting a one hour lecture on "Writing for a Peer-Reviewed Journal" at the 2008 AOA meeting in Seattle. Attend this lecture. Become an author.

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