



## Writing for Professional Enjoyment

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### Introduction

Writing is a source of creativity, communication, information, advocacy, and enjoyment. Writing can be done in a solitary manner or collaboratively. Writing may be for a personal record of events or experiences, such as in a diary or journal; as part of one's work, such as a report; or for publication in a journal article, book, review, or academic thesis or dissertation.

### Tips for Writing

Perhaps you are wondering where to start; you have the interest and the time, a computer and computer skills, and have thought of something to say. First, know your topic—have good references, resources, and experiences to communicate to your reader. Focus on what you want to say and the audience you want to reach. Always be clear and concise in your communication. If you need to practice your writing skills, take an adult education class, attend a seminar, or go to a special workshop on writing skills.

Find a quiet place where you can do your work. Do not be judgmental of your work—let it flow. Disregard syntax and concentrate on semantics. Endeavor to get your message across to your reader, then go back and fix up punctuation, grammar, spelling, etc. Let the ideas flow through your pen or your computer—do not stop to evaluate, let it be a singular (your personal) brainstorming session. You may want to organize your thoughts in a different way than initially conceived when you finish so do not let your self-expression be hung up on organization. Avoid educational jargon—speak clearly and concisely to your audience; the best writers paint a visual picture in the mind of the reader. Use your visual abilities to envision what you want to say and then describe your thoughts through the written word.

Few writers complete a work in one sitting. Whether it is a book review, short story, chapter, or an inspirational piece, give yourself the opportunity to let time pass between your thoughts and expression of those thoughts on paper. Go back to your original ideas and add new thoughts, clarify, change, enhance, and create once again that which you want to communicate to your reader. Throughout the process of writing, enjoy your experience, have fun with your topic, get involved personally with your message, put your passion on the paper.

Like anything, the more you write the better you become. You may start out with something simple like a newsletter article for a professional association and end up editing or writing a whole book. I started writing devotionals when in youth organizations at a young age and enjoyed my

experience so much that I vowed one day I would write my own book. My first attempt was editing and writing several chapters of *School Counseling: New Perspectives & Practices* (Allen, 1998) and now I am telling others about the joy of writing in this digest.

As a reader, what do you want to know about, what do you want to share, what are you curious about, what do you have to contribute? Your answers to these questions will form the content of your future writings.

### Types of Writing

There are so many opportunities for you to write. Some general suggestions include: an inspirational article, an article for a newsletter or magazine, a book report, a chapter for a book, a research article for a journal, a book, a thesis or dissertation, and many more.

If you are currently working as a counselor, there are many ways to develop and use your writing skills. Here are quite a few ideas to get you started, and of course there are many more, as many as you can imagine: begin to write newsletter articles; write letters to senators and assembly members to promote counseling legislation; put together pamphlets to advertise your counseling program and place them in medical and dental offices in the community and or send them to civic organizations such as Lions Club; prepare a book review; prepare a grant application; or write a comprehensive school counseling program document (Allen, 2006).

Many counselors would like to write for a journal. There are a variety of types of journal articles: assessment and diagnosis, best practices, book and media reviews, practice and theory, perspectives from the field, profiles, reviews of literature, research, resource reviews, and trends. Articles may be quantitative or qualitative, historical or theoretical, literature reviews, case studies, practice articles, Web site reviews, Internet articles, or special issues. You definitely have something to contribute after you have worked in the counseling field.

### Where Can You Submit Your Writing?

Professional associations offer the opportunity for you to begin to practice your writing skills. The power of a counseling organization to put your ideas in print is remarkable. At a Writer's Workshop in 2005 for the California Association of School Counselors, Inc. (Allen, 2005), I passed out a one-page summary of some of the opportunities offered by professional associations to mentor writing skills and give a voice for school counseling. These

opportunities include: advocacy and drafting legislation, assessment reviews, book reviews, bylaws, case studies, editorials, manuals, monograph articles, newspaper articles, position papers, research projects, strategic plans, summaries of best practices and counseling programs, action research studies of your counseling program, and surveys of client opinions.

Counseling publications are always looking for original work by practicing counselors. Some of the publications you might consider submitting your work to include: your state school counseling organization newsletter, a special monograph put out by your state association, *ASCA School Counselor*, *Professional School Counseling*, *Counseling Today*, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, and other professional educational publications such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's *Educational Leadership*. You may be able to accept the challenge of writing a column for your professional newsletter or becoming a member of an editorial board of a journal.

There are many resources that will help you prepare to write with correct syntax, semantics, and form. One of the brief popular resources is *The Little, Brown Essential Handbook for Writers* (Aaron, 2000). Publishing companies, such as Houghton Mifflin, produce guidelines for preparing a textbook proposal or prospectus. Magazines and journals provide tips for authors. For publication style and format assistance the *Pocket Guide to APA Style* (Perrin, 2006), a brief version of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the *APA Manual* (APA, 2001), provides the correct editorial style used in counseling and psychological publications.

## Conclusion

Writing brings meaning to our lives in so many ways. All you have to do to begin is pick up a pen, or sit at your computer and begin to put your thoughts, wishes, desires, experiences, memories, and stories in writing. Yes, writing is creativity, communication, collaboration, advocacy, accountability, and above all personally and professionally enjoyable. I would like to leave with you the 5P's of Productive Writing (Allen, 2005) that might support your inspiration to write:

### Passion

- A spiritual experience
- Sharing the window of your soul with the world
- Believe in yourself...believe in your writing
- Your audience wants to know what you care about

- Personal inspiration and experience manifests itself in reader interest
- Creative works come from the heart

### Perspective

- Your personal opinion is valuable and worthy of sharing
- Writing your perspective enhances your communication skills
- Unique opinions make for interesting reading
- Your major literary contribution may be your personal perspective

### Plan

- Develop a general plan of your project
- Write on a daily basis- exercise the pen
- Plan for warm up time and meaningful breaks
- Provide opportunity for your "creative muse" to be released

### Patience

- Writing is a process- perfection takes time and practice
- Personally become part of your creative process
- Give yourself permission to create without judging your work
- Honing your craft takes time and patience

### Persistence

- Keep on going- write often-Write...write...write
- Peak writing periods vary with the individual
- Persist in communicating your thoughts to others
- Enhanced effort provides you with a product you will be proud of

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