Shut Up and Write: How to write effectively

Agenda

- Shut Up and Write: What is it?
- Planning, Outreach & Communication
- The Event
- Who’s Attending?
- What Students are Saying
- Our Top 5 Tips
Shut Up and Write (SUW)

- Started in 2007
- Regular meetups in cafes
- Socializing + writing

- Create community of practice around *process* of writing
Our Blog

We help you improve your craft. Follow our blog to keep up with the latest news.
Welcome

Welcome to Shut Up & Write Tuesdays, a virtual writing workshop for academic folk.

Our goal is to help you set aside dedicated writing time, make progress, learn from others, and become part of an international community of academic writers.
How is SUW different?

- Some structure
- No standardized activities
- No feedback
- Write quietly in a public space
- Informal, voluntary

- Focus on: making the academic writing process visible and social
SUW participants like:

- Positive peer pressure
- Diversity of participants
- Commonality of purpose
- Potential to develop networks
- Positive writing outcomes
Planning, Outreach, and Communication

- Planning began in late November 2018
- Conducted a literature search on the SUW initiative and the concept of academic writing groups
- Booked a conference room for the entire semester - early bird gets the worm!
- PowerPoint presentation preparation
- Useful handout re: structure, % University of Leeds
- Logistics: When? For how long? What kind of refreshments?
- What takeaways (handouts) should we provide?
- How should we advertise the sessions?
SHUT UP AND WRITE

THURSDAYS 10AM-12PM
ALICE MOULTON ROOM
GERSTEIN SCIENCE INFORMATION CENTRE

MAKE A DATE WITH YOUR WRITING & WE’LL HELP YOU STAY MOTIVATED.
COFFEE & SNACKS PROVIDED!

Weekly from Jan 17 - May 30, 2019
more info: suw-gerstein.eventbrite.ca
The Logistics

- Every Thursday morning, 10AM-12PM
- Takes place in the Alice Moulton Room (AMR) at Gerstein Science Information Centre
- Checklist to prep setting up for the session
- PowerPoint Presentation to help introduce the concept and guide the session
- Writing sprints & breaks are timed
- A gamut of refreshments throughout the semester- cider, tea, coffee, cookies
Handouts

- Feedback form (thereafter inputted into Survey Monkey)
- Writing in the Sciences
- Writing Centres across campus
- Writing Help resources

**FEEDBACK FORM – SHUT UP AND WRITE**

1. My status at UoT:
   a. Undergraduate Student
   b. Graduate Student
   c. Post-Graduate Student
   d. Faculty
   e. Other – please specify:

2. I am affiliated with the department/faculty of:

3. This writing session was:
   a. Very helpful
   b. Somewhat helpful
   c. Not so helpful
   d. Not helpful at all

4. The day & time (Thursday 10-12pm)...
   a. Worked well for me
   b. Didn’t work well for me
   c. I prefer another day/time (please specify)

5. The 2-hour session was:
   a. Too long
   b. Too short
   c. Just right
   d. If you answered A or B, what time frame would you prefer?

6. How did you hear about us?

7. Any comments or suggestions?
Hello!

Welcome to Shut Up and Write – let this be YOUR time to focus and write.

SUW sessions are distraction-free, so that you can dedicate your energy to your writing, whatever it is!

We’ll be following the Pomodoro technique: there will be short sprints of writing (30mins) with a couple of short breaks in between (5mins).
Today’s Agenda: 10–12PM

- 10:00–10:05 Set up, introductions & writing goals
- 10:05–10:35 Write! (30mins)
- 10:35–10:40 Break & snacks
- 10:40–11:10 Write! (30mins)
- 11:10–11:15 Break & snacks
- 11:15–11:45 Write! (30mins)
- 11:45–12 Break & end
Housekeeping Rules

Reminder:
This is a distraction free zone! Please turn off your cellphones.

Need to charge?
Laptop chargers can be loaned downstairs from the short-term loan desk.
Before we begin...

- Name?
- Faculty or department?
- Today’s writing goal?
Who’s Attending?

- Affiliations with Departments & Faculties -

- Ecology & Evolutionary Biology
- Molecular Genetics
- French Studies
- English
- Social Work
- Biomaterials and Biomedical Engineering
- Pharmacy
- Rehabilitation & Kinesiology
Who’s Attending?

- Status at University of Toronto -
The Social Component: Break Time

- Participants socialize during the break periods.
- They show curiosity in each other’s programs, paper topics, and provide feedback and encouragement to each other.
Feedback

Was the session helpful?
Feedback:

How did you hear about us?

- Library announcement
- Poster
- Facebook post
- Friend’s recommendation
- Eventbrite
- Google search
- Gerstein’s webpage
- Email
Comments from participants

One participant attempted to follow the technique at home; she found that she was still very distracted, and said that being surrounded by other people writing helps her stay on track - there’s “peer pressure” to write & be productive.

Another participant shifted his work hours to later in the day so he can be productive in the morning by attending SUW: otherwise, he said his project would be delayed by 5-6 months. He likes that SUW holds you accountable and gives you structure.

One participant now calls Thursdays her “writing day” because of SUW.

The alarm was useful as a reminder to stop doing “simple stuff” like making minor edits, fixing typos, and adding citations, or writing emails.

1st sprint:
Dread → Adrenaline
And some more...

“This was the most productive I’ve been in a while!”

“25 minutes is just right for writing. Maybe the breaks can be 1-2 minutes longer.”

“Morning is a great time! Love the drop-in nature. Offer coffee/water. More outreach so that grad students and their supervisors are aware of this service. Everyday would be great to help students develop the habit of writing every morning.”

“Very helpful initiative. Would love to see individual faculties adopt this approach especially around assignment due dates.”

“Maybe having the event twice a week?”

“25 minutes is just right for writing. Maybe the breaks can be 1-2 minutes longer.”
Success Story

One participant started with an outline of a manuscript in the early sessions of SUW, and in about 2 months of attending she has almost finished the whole manuscript.
Why attend SUW when you can just go to the library to work?

- Sense of community by working together, separately
- Hard to implement on your own as noted by one of the participants
- Not as daunting - sessions are only 2 hours long, and focus on being productive
What’s next?

- SUW was scheduled until the end of May but has been extended into June, and perhaps the rest of the summer
- Most of the attendees are graduate students and therefore work throughout the summer, as well as undergraduate students who are taking summer courses
- Planning for the fall/winter semester as well
Top 5 Tips

★ Have an outreach campaign for both the short-term and long-term: posters, Eventbrite, social media sites, webpage, digital signage, in-library announcements.

★ Refreshments are key! People love coffee, tea, cookies.

★ Connect each week with participants about what they like & don’t like.

★ Aim to book a brightly lit, large room.

★ 5-6 people is an ideal group size.
Questions?
Selected References


Please note:

Permission was granted from Shut Up and Write!™ to use their name in our programming.
Thank-you!

Sabine Calleja, TALint student, Gerstein Library

Heather Cunningham, Librarian, Gerstein Library

University of Toronto