**Productivity and Publishing in Physical and Health Education:
Top Ten Tips for Graduate Students**

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Abstract

This paper is a compilation of ten top productivity and publishing tips gathered from faculty members and graduate students of the Physical and Health Education Canada Research Council who have experience producing and disseminating impactful research writing. It provides graduate students and early career scholars with productivity strategies for writing; guidance on submitting manuscripts for peer-reviewed publications; and information on a variety of options for knowledge mobilization and dissemination.

Résumé

Ce texte présente une compilation de trucs favorisant la productivité et la publication recueillis auprès d'un groupe de professeurs du Conseil de recherche de EPS Canada ayant des expériences réussies dans ce domaine. Ils offrent aux étudiants gradués et aux professeurs en début de carrière des stratégies d'écriture; des conseils sur la soumission de manuscrits à des revues évaluées par les pairs; de l'information sur diverses options de mobilisation et de dissémination du savoir.

In an effort to support the professional development of graduate students, a survey was sent out to the Physical and Health Education Canada Research Council (PHECRC) faculty and graduate student members where 'writing for peer review publication' was identified as a desired topic. Highlighting demand for this topic, Kamler (2008) reported that many graduate students indicate a need for mentoring and support to successfully publish their research. As well, translating research findings into evidence-based practices and lay information is a professional responsibility, yet one of the greatest challenges faced in health-related disciplines (Kerner et al., 2005). Thus, thorough awareness and understanding of traditional and alternative formats for knowledge mobilization are necessary to effectively disseminate research for impact (Waddell, 2001). Regardless of the publication format, sharing research successfully in the current academic climate, where demands on time and workload are ever increasing, requires the development of considered habits for productivity.

Therefore, to attend to the desired need for professional development on this topic, in 2019 our authorship group - who, at the time were doctoral students situated at Western University, Queens University, and the University of Alberta, in the physical and health education field - assembled and shared tips solicited from PHECRC faculty members, graduate students, the PHE*nex* editorial board[1] and published sources in an oral presentation at the PHECRC Forum in Montreal, Quebec. Specifically, we shared 'top 10 tips' on how to: (a) maximize writing productivity; and (b) be successful in the process of impactful publication. In this paper, we summarize these 'top 10 tips' including updated information on writing productivity strategies, guidance on submitting for peer-review publication and a variety of knowledge mobilization options.

1. Identify the Purpose of Your Research and Writing

At the beginning *and* the end stages of your research, it is important to identify the purpose of your work. It is important to think about two distinct purposes: (a) the purpose of your research to you, and (b) the situation of your research in the field. These influence both your writing and planning process. Throughout your research, your purpose(s) will inevitably shift and evolve, making it critical to revisit this question regularly to help inform your plan for knowledge mobilization[2] and publication of your research.

When identifying the purpose(s), you can consider the who, where, and why of your research by using these questions:
- Who is the target audience for your research, knowledge mobilization and publication?
- Where would the information be most accessible to the target audience? Where will your research have the largest impact?
- Why are you writing this publication? (e.g., thesis requirement, curriculum vitae, passion project contribution, resource for professionals)

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[1] These contributors included: Dr. Doug Gleddie from the University of Alberta; Dr. LeAnne Petherick from University of British Columbia; Dr.'s Tim Fletcher and Ken Lodewyk from Brock University; Dr. Joannie Halas from University of Manitoba; Dr. Antony Card from Mount Saint Vincent University & PHEnex Journal; Dr. Lynn Randall from University of New Brunswick; Dr. Jennifer Tomasone from Queen's University; Dr. Sylvain Turcotte from Université de Sherbrooke & PHEnex Journal, and; Dr.'s Sandra Gibbons & Viviene Temple, University of Victoria.

2. Consider How You Can Achieve Your Purpose

Once you have identified your purpose, review and explore different knowledge mobilization types and venues to identify a best fit to achieving your goal. We often automatically think about publishing in academic journals. However, there are a variety of research outputs that can help share your findings with a much larger and diverse audience. Consider reviewing the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)[2] guidelines for effective knowledge mobilization. These guidelines identify key questions and definitions that could support your research outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Also consider consulting with your supervisor, colleagues, and communities you are working with to help you determine appropriate research outputs for both breadth and depth of impact. Some examples are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Examples of Research Outputs

Alternative Knowledge Mobilization	Examples
Podcast	• Playing with Research in HPE
Blog Post	• Healthy Schools Lab • PEPRN
Video	• Stephanie Beni - "We want more PE; don't you see?" Finding meaning in elementary physical education
Infographic	• Healthy School Communities - PHE Canada
Vlog	• Vicky Goodyear's VLOG 18: Health-Based PE in Practice

There are also resources available to help guide you to consider your target audience, cost/budget for dissemination, timelines etc. Consider using and reviewing the following resources to support your planning and writing process:

- Knowledge Mobilization Tool Kit (The Knowledge Institute on Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions)
- Exchanging Knowledge - A Research Dissemination Tool Kit (University of Regina)
- End of grant knowledge translation plan worksheet and Knowledge User Engagement (Canadian Institutes of Health Research)

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[2] SSHRC (2022) identifies knowledge mobilization as "The reciprocal and complementary flow and uptake of research knowledge between researchers, knowledge brokers and knowledge users—both within and beyond academia—in such a way that may benefit users and create positive impacts within Canada and/or internationally, and, ultimately, has the potential to enhance the profile, reach and impact of social sciences and humanities research."

3. Do Your Homework and Adhere to Publishing Guidelines

Review and follow guidelines of your target publication at the outset. For example, if you are formulating a press release, review guidelines to get a sense of the required length. For journal publications, attention to detail (e.g., word count, structured or unstructured abstract, required sections, etc.) at the time of submission can facilitate the review process OR can get you a desk rejection. Review examples of existing works in your target publication to contextualize guidelines, better understand the explicit and implicit required style, and get a sense of tone. This will help you anticipate feedback from reviewers or audiences.

If you are new to a particular writing format (e.g., podcast, dissertation etc.) it is a worthwhile investment to develop a template based on a 'model publication' (i.e., map the components/functions, not the content, to create a formula). For example, if writing a journal article, find a quality article in your target journal, and map out each sentence/section function (not the message of the content). For example: this sentence is a transition sentence; the next indicates alignment between research question and methodology; and so on.

4. Plan a Productivity Timeline and Commit to Strategic, Consistent Writing Blocks Along the Way

When planning projects, map out the potential outputs at the outset (e.g., one theoretical article to X journal; one practical/professional video to Y website; etc.). Aim for more than one publication type per project and ensure variety. When you plan a project and apply for research ethics, ensure you are collecting enough data to support a few diverse outputs. Having a plan and a variety of outputs will help you communicate your research through appropriate formats to various audiences.

Once you are in a position where you are working on more than one publication at a time, you should aim for a well-spaced timeline. For example: one item in review/press; a second in the middle of writing; one in data collection; and another in development. We are not suggesting that you have multiple projects on the go but rather having your tasks and projects organized will help you determine if it is appropriate to start something new or finish a project. Additionally, the timeline can help you organize when writing your dissertation for example, so you are not writing manuscripts at once. Below are two sample timelines (Figure 1) for someone doing multiple projects or setting a timeline for writing their thesis.

Figure 1

Project Title & Location for Submission	Writing / Publication Phase Sample						
	Early	Mid	Late/ Final	Submitted / Re-Submitted	Revisions	Accepted	Published
Media Interview: local radio							X
Scoping Review: PHEnex			X				
Dissertation Paper 2: PD in Education		X					

Blog post: Healthy Schools Lab	X				

Chapter or Section	Thesis / Dissertation Research Phase Tracking				
	Writing	Supervisor Review (Y/N)	Revisions	Complete	Specific tasks list to complete
Introduction		Y		X	
Literature Review		Y	X		- Work on revisions from supervisor - Read X articles suggested and add in content to section 3 - Compile references
Methodology		X			- Receive revisions March 8th - Create task breakdown
Ethics	X				- Get samples from colleagues - University ethics webinar (March 1st) - School board ethics

To keep your timeline moving with projects in-progress, if you do not have any new data, you could (a) start a scoping review or a systematic review, (b) write up a course assignment for publication, or (c) do a book review. However, you want to reasonably achieve submission and completion and avoid getting overwhelmed with too many projects all at the same stage.

To make this timeline a reality, you need to plan consistent writing blocks in your calendar. It could be one hour each day or one full day per week. Choose the format that works for you and **keep it "sacred."** Do not book anything (e.g., meetings) during this sacred writing time and treat it like an appointment in order to make writing regular 'practice.' Think 'drops in the bucket,' the philosophy of the well-known book 'writing your dissertation in 15 min a day' (Bolker, 1998). You could also check out Wendy Belcher's book on *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*.

5. Create a Conducive Writing Environment(s) and/or Cue(s)

Try to secure a distraction-free (or minimized) environment for your writing block (e.g., turn on the 'do not disturb function' on your phone and put on noise canceling headphones). Not all writing will take place in a distraction-free zone - and some writers might even thrive when more is going on around them! If you are not one of those writers, recognize that you will still need to write in instances when the distraction-free environment is not available (e.g., in a bustling shared office space). Conditions do not need to be perfect to write. However, determine what it is that **you actually require to write** (e.g., computer?) and give yourself a 'cue' that signals to you that it is writing time. If you waited for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done!

Once you have determined it is writing time, be sure your mind is ready. To clear your mind, try Julia Cameron's 'Morning Pages' exercise from *The artist's way: A spiritual path to*

higher creativity. The idea of this exercise is that you write a set number of pages (e.g., 3 pages), by hand, about whatever you want (academic or not), as early as possible in the morning or prior to writing time. For example, write about your favourite food or about the movie you watched last night. There is no wrong way to do these morning pages. Just keep your hand moving. This strategy (a) helps to build a daily writing practice; (b) is motivational as first thing you have already written three pages; (c) helps to work out ideas about your project in a no-pressure venue; (d) clears your head and prioritizes your day, and; (e) unblocks creativity.

6. Determine S.M.A.R.T. Writing Block Tasks to Get You to 1st Draft Status

So, you have blocked off time to write; now what? What do you actually do when you sit down in your writing 'block'? Tackle the most critical project and the most challenging task first. Be specific about what you are actually working on in your session. No one sits down to 'write the journal article;' however, they do sit down to write the abstract or the summary paragraph at the end of the introduction. This means you need to assign overarching goal, sub-goals, and tasks to specific writing blocks in your calendar. Knowing exactly what you are working on helps to avoid wasted time at the start of writing, wasted efforts on unnecessary 'busy work,' and perfectionism (e.g., continual editing and no new writing). It is critical to distinguish writing tasks from other 'work.' The idea is that you have already clearly mapped out the following and assigned them to the writing blocks in your calendar, for example:

- The main goal: Chapter 1 to supervisor by July 1
- Sub-goal (i.e., manageable steps to achieve main goal) Introduction section written by April 1; and so on…
- Writing block task (i.e., SMART task: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timed task): Write chapter overview paragraph

Setting the goals and knowing your timeline might be straight forward, but you also need a strategy to complete the writing block tasks effectively. One recommendation is to use a timer (e.g., "be focused" app) for 1 hour writing block. In 'The Professor Is In's' course titled *Unstuck: The Art of Productivity,* they suggest: Start with 30-minutes of preparation (e.g., read, outline, brainstorm); move on to 15-minute SMART task, then 15-minutes for reflection and logging of next steps for the next writing block/tasks. You could also use a task manager app like Asana to help you get organized and outline tasks or log your progress in a personal journal or excel file. Also, check out Exordo's list of the 10 best apps to support academic productivity. Remember your goal here is to get to DRAFT status. Ask yourself whether each task moves you towards your goal.

7. Set Up Accountability Systems, Writing Communities, and Collaborations

Have an accountability partner (within or outside your field or both!) for consistent check ins on your productivity. You can do this through regular emails or texts. Some accountability partners keep a shared google doc or excel file with intentions and log their completion (similar to the productivity timeline tables) as a way to identify goals and accomplishments. The accountability partner might also support you by reading a section of your work for feedback, be someone you seek advice from, or ensures you are staying on track with your goals.

Also consider a writing community and collaborations, which might be separate from your accountability partner. Having a writing partner will ensure you are building in writing blocks to your schedule and you have someone to do it with. For instance, even if your writing project is independent, like your thesis, consider organizing a one day writing retreat with a peer so you both have designated time for writing. Also consider writing collaborations where you take the lead on

one project, and your collaborator takes the lead on the other, so you have work moving along in your productivity timeline but are able to collaborate and share some of the workload and responsibilities.

8. Learn and Improve from Feedback

Seeking and receiving feedback on your writing will support the publication process immensely. Address your edits, feedback, and reviewers' comments carefully and specifically. For example, when addressing peer-reviewers' comments on a submitted manuscript, create a point-by-point table (Table 2) that lists items to be revised/edited and assign them tasks and timelines. Have an additional column on the table that has your responses to the feedback. This column can highlight your decision making, including where in the work you have made changes so that reviewers or your colleagues can see the direct changes. When you submit the changes to reviewers you can simply share the reviewer(s) comments and your responses (remove your tasks and timelines!). A table is a great organizing system and can help you keep on track of what you have done.

Table 2

Example Point-by-point Table on Feedback and Revisions

Reviewer(s) Comments	Task & Timeline	Author Responses (with page / line numbers)
- P. 3, Lines 25-27- I found this sentence confusing. Adding a specific example would be helpful and would tie into the rest of the paragraph. The paragraph is too vague. Use an example to set a reference and create understanding	- Tasks: (a) Rewrite sentence / paragraph for clarity, (b) include a specific example to support clarity - Time: 1 hour for completion Wednesday morning.	We have adjusted the sentence for clarity and added in some information to provide an example of the problem. - See p. 3 lines 24-30.

When it comes to submitting a manuscript for peer-reviewed publication, do not rush submission. After drafting the manuscript, step away from it for a few days so you can review it with a fresh perspective to make any changes before submitting. The more feedback received before submission, the manuscript will be better and thus the peer-review process smoother. Remember for any type of writing and knowledge mobilization of your work it is important to solicit formative feedback from colleagues or other experts. For example, if you are writing a blog post directed at parents, have a friend who is a parent read the blog and provide feedback that might make the work appropriate, readable, and relatable for your target audience.

Also remember that sometimes you just need to pull the trigger and submit. By this we mean that after you have drafted the work, come back to it, had some peer review, and refined the manuscript, it is time to submit your work. Furthermore, consider determining an appropriate deadline for submission at the outset of your project and when you get there, do not delay and dwell. Click the submit button and get your manuscript in the review process because you WILL

receive feedback to strengthen the work. Use the feedback have received, make suggested changes, address reviewers' concerns, and revise the work for resubmission.

9. Include Motivational Support in Your Plan

 "I will write it up when the project is done" or "I am not 'ready' to write, I have not read enough." These statements remind us that procrastination can stall the best intentions. You can always start working on a manuscript at the outset of a project. For instance, if you are writing your thesis, consider writing the methods section as soon as you have completed data collection or compile literature from your comprehensive exam papers to use in your dissertation. One strategy to support your writing timeline is to use conference presentations to motivate you to write a draft of your paper or product. Preparing your work for a conference presentation can be used as a self-imposed deadline to have a draft of your paper.

To keep the progress of your work going, do little things to motivate yourself, such as creating the manuscript cover page as soon as you begin so the paper looks 'real.' Be realistic and expect days where brain-power is low so have a list of 'small things' to complete in those instances that will help you continue to keep your writing moving along (e.g., find missing citation, uploading author information in the portal, starting a cover letter).

10. Keep it in Perspective – Take Care of Yourselves and Do Not Get Discouraged

Personal goals, institutional expectations, and the types of knowledge mobilization vary. It is important to ensure personal goals and institutional expectations mesh in a productive way. Overall, consider what is manageable and appropriate for you and the work you are sharing. To figure this out, go back to your research and writing purpose (Tip #1). Different people choose various publishing strategies for different reasons such as career goals, research type, etc. Your goals and knowledge mobilization plan will help you prioritize what makes sense for your research and might change throughout your writing and dissemination process. Remember, when you receive a rejection (not if… when) do not get discouraged. Consider any feedback you receive, ask for advice from a peer and/or mentor and either revise and resubmit or find a different place to submit your work.

Make sure you take time off from writing. Whether you believe it or not, writing is 'creative work,' and you need to be properly fueled and rested to do it well. A clear head and fresh eyes can also help with your work so you do not get discouraged. Taking a coffee break with a colleague and talking through something about your writing could serve you well and get you over a writing hump. Remember that publishing and writing gets a bit easier the more you 'practice' it, but it takes time.

Lastly, but one of the most important things to remember is that we need to celebrate successes (including the small 'wins' such as getting the first draft of the introduction complete or completing data collection!). Take care of yourself throughout the process and regularly acknowledge all the things that are helping you or that you are grateful for in the writing and publication process. To end with a sport metaphor – think of the process sharing your research not as a sprint, but a marathon!

Acknowledgements

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