Goal-Setting for your Intensive Writing Sessions

Setting goals for a writing project is crucial to your ability to make progress. In this session and in the writing accountability groups you can join this semester, we encourage you to think about not just your completion of the project as a whole but how you can set a goal that can be accomplished in a single writing session.

As you think about your goals, it is important that they be *specific* and *measurable*. Vague goals lack the detail necessary to determine whether they have been achieved in a meaningful way at the end of a writing period. Of the two examples below, only the second goal meets the criteria:

X   *I will work on my thesis.*

✔   *I will revise 5 pages of the introduction to my thesis.*

Even specific and measurable goals can sometimes be unrealistic. This is why your goals should also be *reasonable*—achievable within your time-constraints, abilities as a writer, and work environment. In a two-hour writing session, for example, the second goal below is reasonable whereas the first may not be:

X   *I will draft chapter 4 of my thesis from scratch.*

✔   *I will draft 3 polished pages for chapter 2 of my thesis.*

The remainder of this document will walk you through setting goals for the writing sessions.

Setting an Overall Writing Goal

Begin by setting an overall goal for your personal writing experience. You will need to take into account the number of individual writing sessions you will have as well as the length of each writing session. Fill in the chart below to determine how much writing time you will need to set goals for.

Number of days in your thesis retreat	Number of writing sessions per day and how many hours	Total number of hours set aside exclusively for writing

State what you hope to have accomplished by the end of the thesis retreat.

My writing sessions will span____day(s), in which I hope to meet the following overall goal:

Setting Individual Writing Session Goals

The next step in setting goals is to determine the tasks that are required to complete the larger goal. In order to set daily goals, you need to determine the sub-goals of your overarching goal. Remember to make your goals specific, measurable, and reasonable. For example:

- I will draft two paragraphs of my literature review using five previous studies. (50 min.)
- I will write 600 words for my intro about the gap my research fills in the scholarship. (50 min.)
- I will create a detailed outline of my methods section. (25 min.)

Note that you may have to adjust these goals as you progress.

Writing Session Goals for _____[date/time]	Estimated Time to Complete	Finished!
morning		
afternoon		
Week 1		
Week 2		
Week 3		
Week 4		
Week 5		
Week 6		

Week 7		
Week 8		

The remaining material in this handout explains how to set goals and debrief for individual writing sessions. You will want to go through these steps at the beginning and ending of each writing session. If it proves helpful during that time, you may want to continue setting goals like this on a regular basis as you continue to write.

Preparing to Write

You may find it helpful to use this sheet to clear your head of thoughts, feelings, and concerns at the start of each day or even prior to each two-hour writing session. Take a few minutes to jot answers to the questions listed.

What would make my session today great?

Today, I am excited about:

Today, I am anxious about:

Worries for another day:

Post-Writing Debrief

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. If you accomplished less than planned, what were some of the challenges that got in the way?

Work Session Goals:

Percentage of Goals Achieved:

Wins—what went well?:

Next Steps—where will you begin the next time you work on this project?:

After you reflect, revisit your goals for the next writing session. Do they need to be updated considering the previous session? This happens to all of us sometimes, and recalibration is natural as you learn how to set goals that match up with your writing expectations.