Savannah State University  
Proposal Writing Workshop, conducted by Dr. Geoff Weiss, University of Charleston  
September 5, 2008


This is the best book I’ve found for writers looking to improve. Trimble keeps his advice simple and useful, dispels some long-held myths about writing, and provides quotes about writing from famous writers, which I often use to inspire or comfort myself, depending upon how discouraged I am at the moment.

**The Writing Process**  
([http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/587/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/587/01/))

This link takes you to a handout about starting the writing process. This handout links, in turn, to information on almost every aspect of writing, presented by Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab (OWL). The Purdue OWL is one of the earliest—and still one of the best—sites for writing on the web.

- Writing a draft
- Discovering topic, audience & purpose
- Gathering data and information
- Writing the thesis and developing a sketch
- Reviewing and categorizing information

**Writing as a Process—3 Stages**

- **Pre-Writing**  
  - preliminary research
  - reading literature
  - planning project
  - making notes
  - figuring out the rules

- **Writing**  
  - “then a miracle occurs”

- **Revision**  
  - re-seeing
  - rethinking
  - rewriting
  - editing
Stage One: Pre-Writing

- generating an idea
- preliminary research
- reading the literature
- planning the project
- making notes/lists
- walking the dog
- cleaning the house
- shutting up to committee

Audience: What does NIH/NEA/NEH/DOE, etc., want?
(The golden rule of proposal writing: He who has the gold makes the rules.)

For NIH proposals, the following criteria apply.

- Significance
- Approach
- Innovation
- Investigators
- Environment

You can propose criteria as questions to help you write your justification section.
- How is my research innovative?
- How will it increase knowledge in the field?
- What gaps or discrepancies in the field does this work fill?
- If I succeeded, what would be the next logical research beyond this application?

A proposal to the National Register of Historic Places uses the following criteria:
- How is this property nationally significant?
- What is the threat to the property and how severe is it?
- How does my project mitigate or eliminate the threat?
- How do I demonstrate that my project is feasible?

The funding agency will spell out the exact criteria. List them with bulleted points at the top of your document so your justification responds directly to what the agency wants.

Writing Tips
- Write to a specific audience
- Write early & often
- The List
- Answer the Questions
- Articulate your hypothesis
- Freewrite a “zero” draft
Evaluating a Proposal
Your manuscript is both good and original; but the part that is good is not original, and the part that is original is not good.
--Dr. Johnson

Basic Rubric

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Basic Rubric--Thesaurus version

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Revision Practices

- Begin with hypothesis & specific aims
- Underline & outline main points
- Revise paragraphs & sections for coherence
- Strengthen transitions
- See--http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~ulrich/306f04/great_big_transitions_list.htm
- Edit on the floor for organization
- Read the document out loud

Metric Evaluation (abstract):
Rate the following on a scale of 1 to 4, four being the best.

1. Rate the overall quality of the abstract as a self-contained summary of the proposal.
2. How well does the abstract summarize the project’s hypothesis?
3. How well does the abstract state the project’s specific aims?
4. How well does the abstract explain the relationship of the research to public health?
5. How well does the writer explain the research design and methods?
6. How well does the research design seem suited to accomplish the objectives?
7. Rate the level of detail. Is there enough for you to understand the research design and methods?
8. How well does the abstract avoid first person, passive voice constructions, and unnecessary jargon?
9. How well does the abstract avoid summaries of past accomplishments?
10. How well does the abstract avoid revelation of proprietary information?
11. If you were an NIH reviewer, how likely would you be to pass this proposal to the next stage of the process?

• Innovative:
  • Where does the proposal show how my research is innovative?
• Increase knowledge:
  • Where does the proposal state how the work will increase knowledge in the field?
• Background:
  • Where does the proposal include appropriate background information about the field?
• Understanding:
  • Does the literature section convey a thorough understanding of the field?
• Gaps or discrepancies:
  • Where does the proposal point out the gaps or discrepancies in the field?
  • Where does the proposal specify how the research fills the gaps or resolves the discrepancies?
• Research path:
  • Where does the proposal identify the next logical research beyond this application?
Critical issues for improving the treatment of alcoholism are what neurobiological changes are responsible for the transition from non-dependent alcohol use to alcoholism, and what persistent changes mediate relapse. The goals of the present proposal are to delineate brain biomarkers that indicate the neurobiological mechanisms responsible for alcohol escalation and to define brain biomarkers associated with relapse. To achieve these goals, we will test the following hypotheses: 1) Sufficient exposure to alcohol leads to changes in specific elements of the extended amygdala that produce elevations in the hedonic set point. In turn, this leads to progressive elevation in ethanol intake and a propensity to relapse during abstinence. 2) Self-administration of ethanol coupled with passive administration causes changes in protein expression levels and function more characteristic of the addictive process than passive administration alone. To test these hypotheses, we propose studies with the following Specific Aims: 1) To examine the effects of ethanol dependence on protein expression and modification with a focus on changes associated with ethanol reinforcement. 2) To determine long-lasting changes in protein expression and modification associated with vulnerability to relapse upon re-exposure to ethanol. Our proposed combination of cutting-edge behavioral, neuroanatomical, and proteomic approaches will permit the identification of important biomarkers that should enable the development of more specific and effective pharmacotherapy both to help block the process of alcohol addiction and prevent relapse in those suffering from alcoholism.
Useful Links

**Humanities**
Lists of Funding Agencies

- [Trinity University Federal & Major Grants in the Humanities](#)
- [University of Richmond Foundation & Government Grant Opportunities](#)
- [Office of Sponsored Research Administration](#)
- [Fundnet Services](#) (includes grants in many categories including religion)
- [www.grants.gov](#)

**Sciences**
Lists of funding agencies

- [Office of Sponsored Research Administration](#)
- [www.grants.gov](#)
- [Center for Scientific Review](#) (provides lots of information about submitting to NIH)