

## PhD Professional Development Series: *Planning Tips*

We shared tips based on our strengths and struggles when writing a paper: what is the part we are the most confident with, the part that we struggle the most with, how do we structure our text and which tools are we using to help writing?

### **Structure your text**

- 1 paragraph = 1 topic. Start the paragraph with a topic / claim sentence explaining the content of the paragraph, followed by a few sentences supporting the claim.
- 1 sentence = 1 idea.
- Add sub-headings, it helps the reader to know what to expect.
- To learn more about that, some of the participants recommended the SLU course on [academic writing](#)

### **Introduction**

- Think about the reader when you write it: what should they know before they move on to the rest of the study.
- Don't spend too much time on the introduction if you're not sure of the contents of your material & methods and result parts, as you might have to re-adapt the introduction to these sections later on.

### **Results**

Before writing the results, some of us struggle to stop analysing the data:

- Try to stop when you don't have new results coming up or set a deadline for yourself. There is always more analysis that you can do, but it might not be useful to continue if it doesn't add anything relevant to the results you already have.

What should be shared in the results? Should everything we found in the study be presented in the results part?

- Write all the results you have in tables and start writing the discussion. As you will not be able to discuss everything, writing the discussion "as it comes" will make you focus on the most important results. These are the ones to keep in the results section. The rest can be either removed or put in the supplementary material section. Note that there is often no limit on how much can be added to the supplementary materials in the journals, so don't hesitate to use them.

### **Discussion**

It can be difficult sometimes to write the discussion when having different treatments in the results: what is a good balance between mainly comparing the treatments together or comparing them to other studies?

- A tip could be to write everything first: comparisons between treatments, treatments compared to other studies and sort the information after with the co-authors. As we are quite space limited, it will not be possible to keep both, but only the most important parts to keep the focus with some red thread.

### **Organising the text**

When you know what you want to have in your text but don't know how to organise it:

- Write it as it comes and print it on a one-sided page. It is easier to organise it when you have the different text parts in front of you.
- You can also ask AI to organise it better for clarity.
- When writing a literature review, you can also use [Litmaps](#) to visualise how different papers on the same subject are related together and it can help you to organise your text when citing them.

### **Start writing**

- If you are a young PhD student, a tip from fellow older PhD students is to start writing as soon as possible. It will get easier! Remind yourself that no matter what you write, you will get some comments, so dare to start and send it.
- Discuss the outline of each part with your co-authors before starting to write so that you can write with a good outline.

### **When revising your text on your own**

- Listen to your written text: it helps you notice problems with organisation and clarity. In the results, for example, it shows whether it is convincing enough or not. A tool is available through SLU's software center: [TorTalk](#)
- Use writing groups to share your text and get feedback from colleagues outside of your research group. It also helps to have first feedback if you don't want to share it first with your co-authors.
- Do not revise your text all the time. For every new line that you write, you can reward yourself and go back to a previous paragraph.

### **Revising your text with your co-authors**

- Have regular revision rounds with your co-authors.
- If your text is too long, don't remove information before your co-authors see it. Send it and discuss with them what is relevant to keep or not.
- In general, if you're stuck, send it to your co-authors: they are co-authors and should write something in your paper, don't write it alone!
- Instead of waiting to send a draft when you think it is good, set a date with your supervisors / co-authors and send it no matter what. It is okay to send unfinished things, better so than to send them after having written everything. It might also be quicker to get feedback.
- Use an external reviewer from your field before sending your manuscript to the journal: they can help revise the content with an external point of view.

**Good luck with your writing!**