

## ALA NMRT Online Discussion Forum – November 2012

Summary by Jo Alcock

Huge thank you to those who contributed to this month's NMRT Online Discussion Forum conversation on **writing skills**. As mentioned, it's a very appropriate month to be discussing this - I hope those of you who have been participating in Academic Writing Month, Digital Writing Month, or National Novel Writing Month have enjoyed your month of writing. There have been some really great tips and resources shared from you all this month. The main themes coming through the contributions have been the need to write regularly and to practice different types of writing. Below is a summary of the points raised:

### Writing tips:

- Practice, practice, practice!
- Keep a blog or journal/diary to encourage regular writing
- Try to write about something you feel passionate about - this will make the task of writing much easier
- Continue to practice different types of writing; short stories, technical essays, exploratory paragraphs, step-by-step guides, writing for the web, concise (e.g. tweets)
- If you regularly use social media but want to also write in an academic style make sure you continue to practice academic writing
- Include regular writing into your job role (e.g. book reviews like at <http://www.manhattan.lib.ks.us/littleapple/>)
- Structure your days for writing - try writing for the first and last half hour of your working day to get into the habit and get regular practice
- Pay attention to voice and make it appropriate for intended audience
- Volunteer to be editor or reviewer for a publication - by reviewing submissions, you'll be able to more easily identify good and bad writing, and you will become familiar with editorial styles

### Editing tips:

- Try not to edit as you go (this will interrupt the flow)
- Develop techniques for editing your work which suit your style of working - use colours, post-it notes, or moving sections around (physically or digitally)
- If you have time to enable it, leave the writing for a day or two before going back and editing with a fresh mind
- Find someone whose opinion you trust and respect to review your writing

### Working with others:

- Make your writing social - get regular feedback on ideas or drafts, or write collaboratively
- Join a local or organisational writing group (useful for holding yourself accountable to self-set writing goals). If you don't know of a group, try forming your own

### Recommended books:

Paul Silvia's How to write a lot <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/70778271>

Robert Boice's Professors as writers <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/21353427>

Stanley Eugene Fish's How to write a sentence and how to read one  
<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/641532413>

Carol Smallwood's Writing and publishing: the librarian's handbook  
<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/421947148>

William Strunk and E.B. White's The elements of style <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/4004812>

**Useful online resources:**

Absolute write forums: <http://absolutewrite.com/forums/>

Indiana University Bloomington's guide to writing book reviews:  
[http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/book\\_reviews.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/book_reviews.shtml)

Bohyun Kim's blog post on how to write less terribly:  
<http://www.bohyunkim.net/blog/archives/1739>

TC3.biz's editing class (online course):  
[http://www.ed2go.com/tc3/online\\_course/kee/detail/The\\_Keys\\_to\\_Effective\\_Editing.html](http://www.ed2go.com/tc3/online_course/kee/detail/The_Keys_to_Effective_Editing.html)