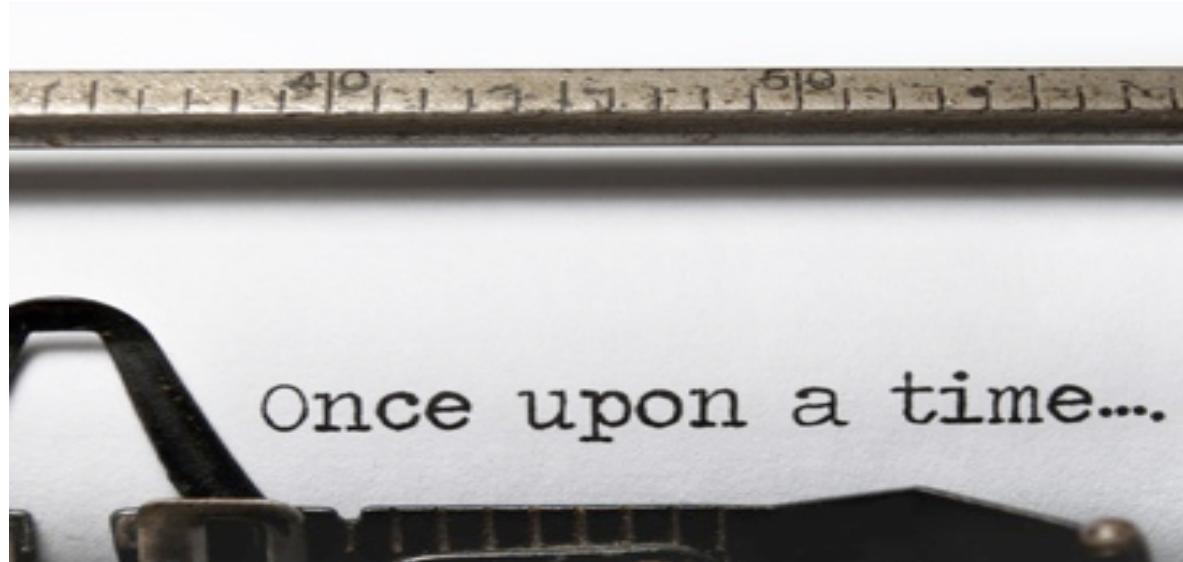


Writing skills to support your PhD



Mimo Caenepeel
Research Communication Scotland

Not often talked about

Writing and emotions

Practical aspects of writing

The transition into research writing

1. Emotions and facts

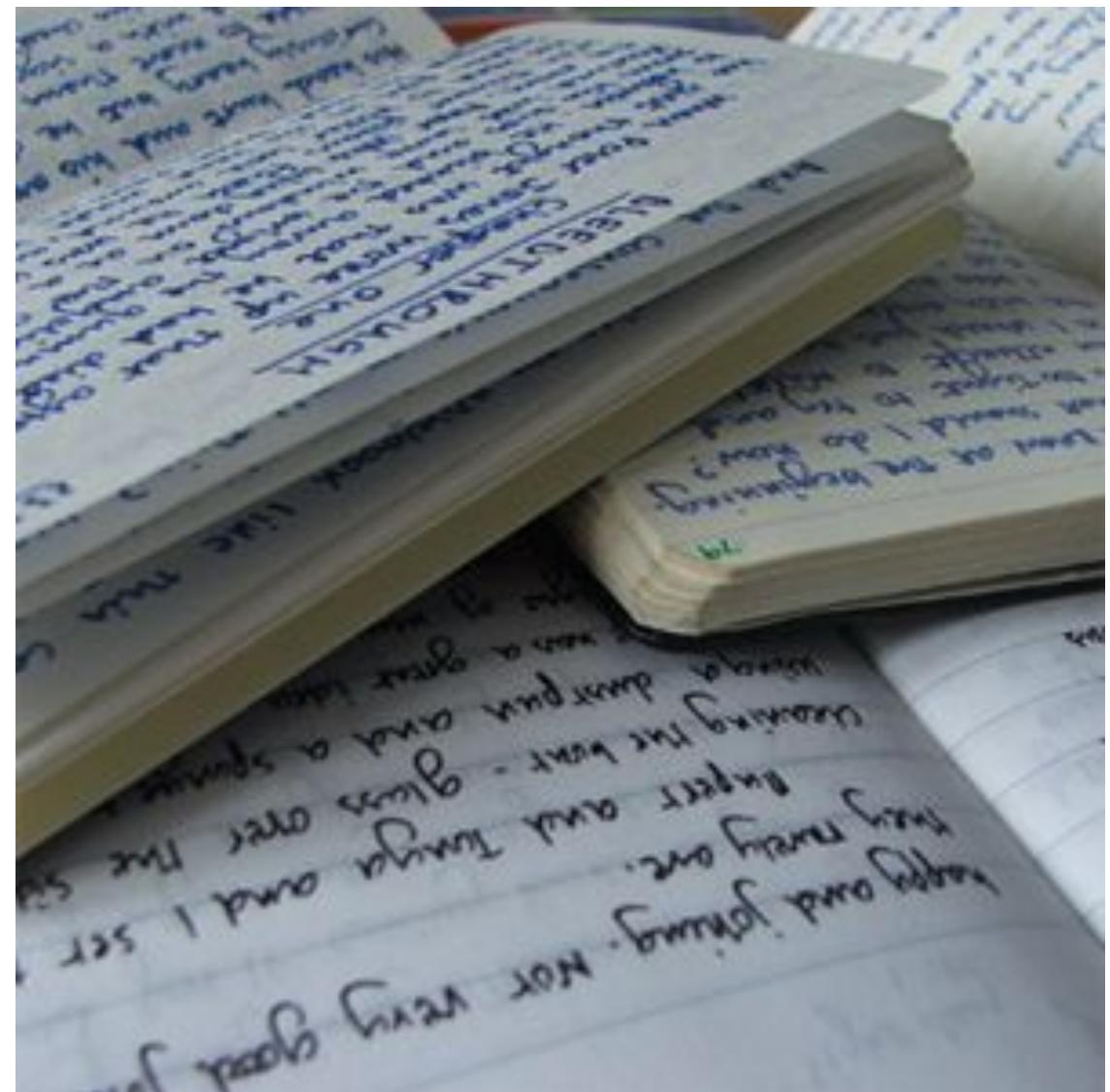
PhD facts

You will need to do **a lot of writing** over the next three or four years.

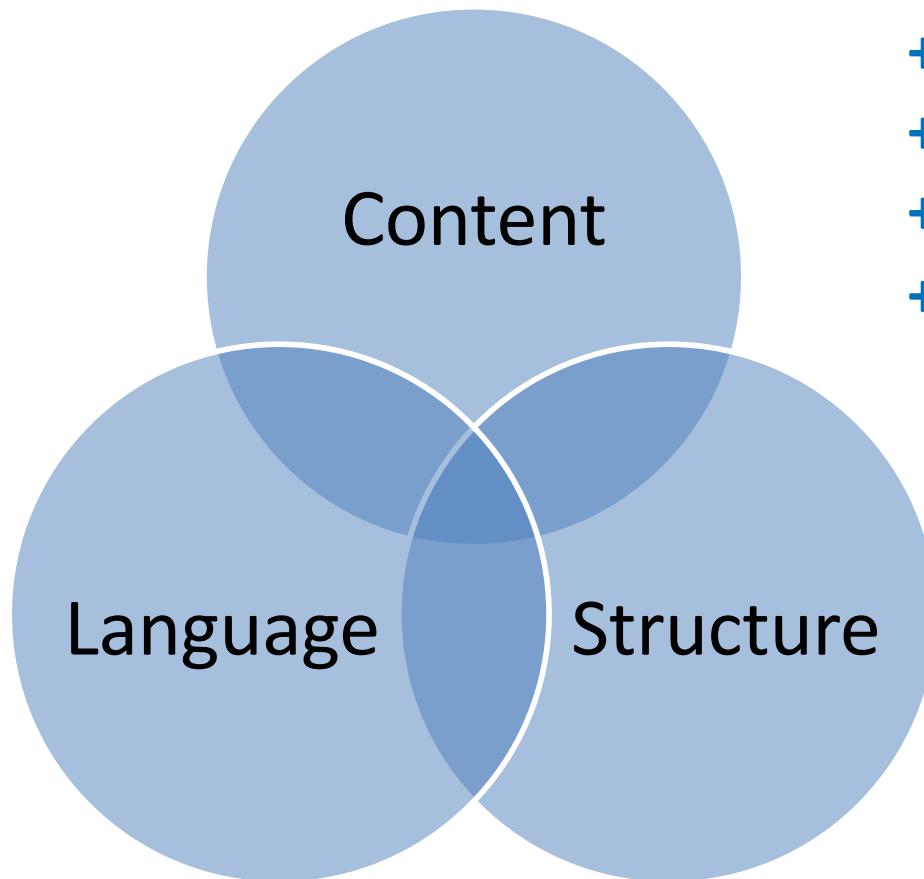
Doing a PhD will turn you into a writer.

Writing is hard.

Writing is rewarding.



Why is (academic) writing hard?



- + research process
- + thinking process
- + writing process
- + communication
- + pressure and expectations!



Is academic writing purely intellectual?

Which feelings do you associate with (academic) writing?

Alice Brand: The Psychology of Writing

Describe an instance when you enjoyed academic writing

Tell someone



When I write, I...



**writeordie.com
writtenkitten.net**

**What happens
(for you) when
you write?**

**5 minutes
For your eyes only
Don't stop until the 5
minutes are up**



*'... we write to find out what we
know and what we want to say.'*

William Zinsser: Writing to Learn.

2. Practical aspects of writing

Where do you write (best)?

Music/silence/ambience
noise?

Solitude or buzz?

Phone, internet?

A space of your own?

Window?

...

William Zinsser: Writing Places

Describe to the person next to you where you write most productively. Give detail.



Types of writing

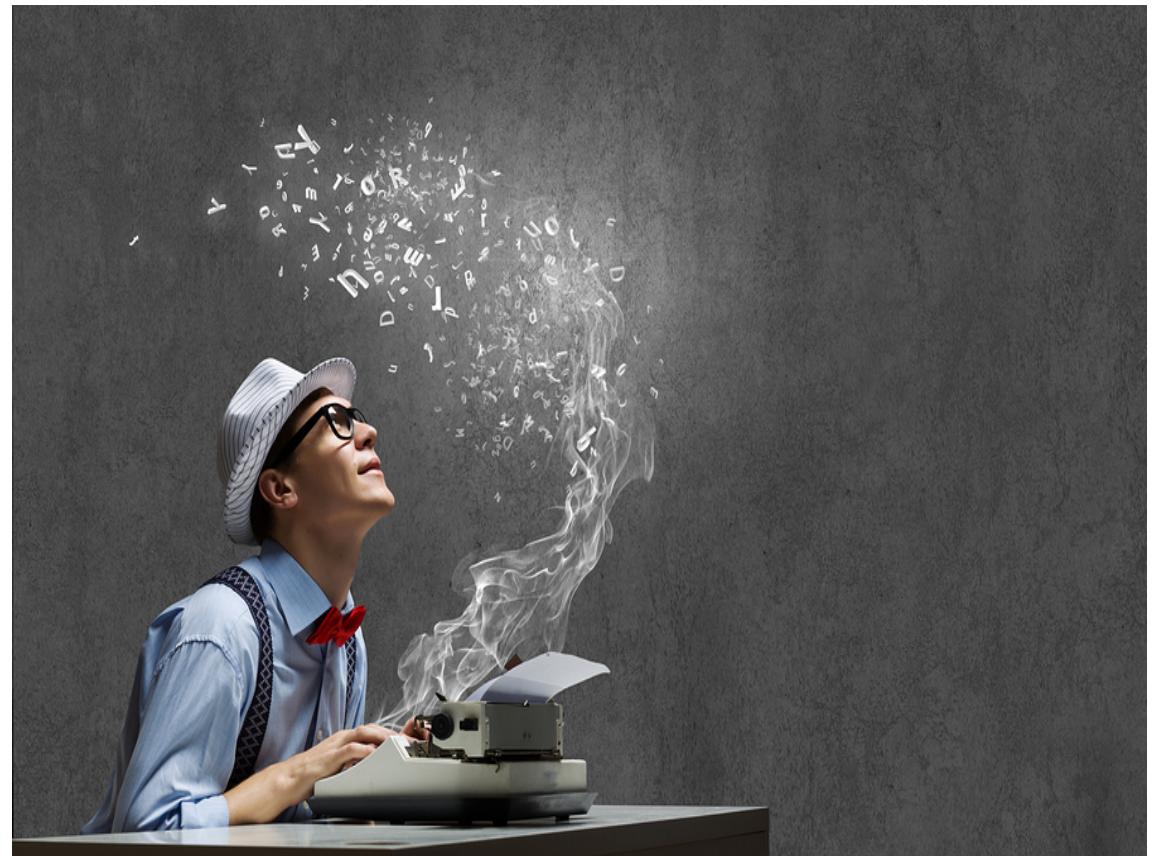
Blatting, sculpting, fiddling

Zigzag writing

A-Time writing and B-Time writing

Snack writing and binge writing

Prewriting, drafting, revising, rewriting,
editing, proofreading, polishing



Eviatar Zerubavel: The Clockwork Muse

Where does writing fit in?

When and how often do you plan to write?

What is the optimum time span during which you can focus (without distraction) on a writing task?



Dedicated writing time

1	5
IAD STAFF - This is what 09:00 Writing time	IAD WP HSS? 09:00 Writing time

Robert Boyce: Professors as Writers

Paul Silvia: How to Write a Lot. A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing

Routine writing



'... if writing is not routine, then there is pressure on writers to generate fluency out of the blue.' (Rowena Murray)

Making writing routine

*What interests
me about my
research is...*

Keep your hand
moving on the
page



'The physical act of writing (...) forces the integration of neural, kinesthetic and manipulative processes into new forms of thought' (Helen Sword: Air & Light & Time & Space)

Writing Your
Dissertation
in Fifteen
Minutes
a Day

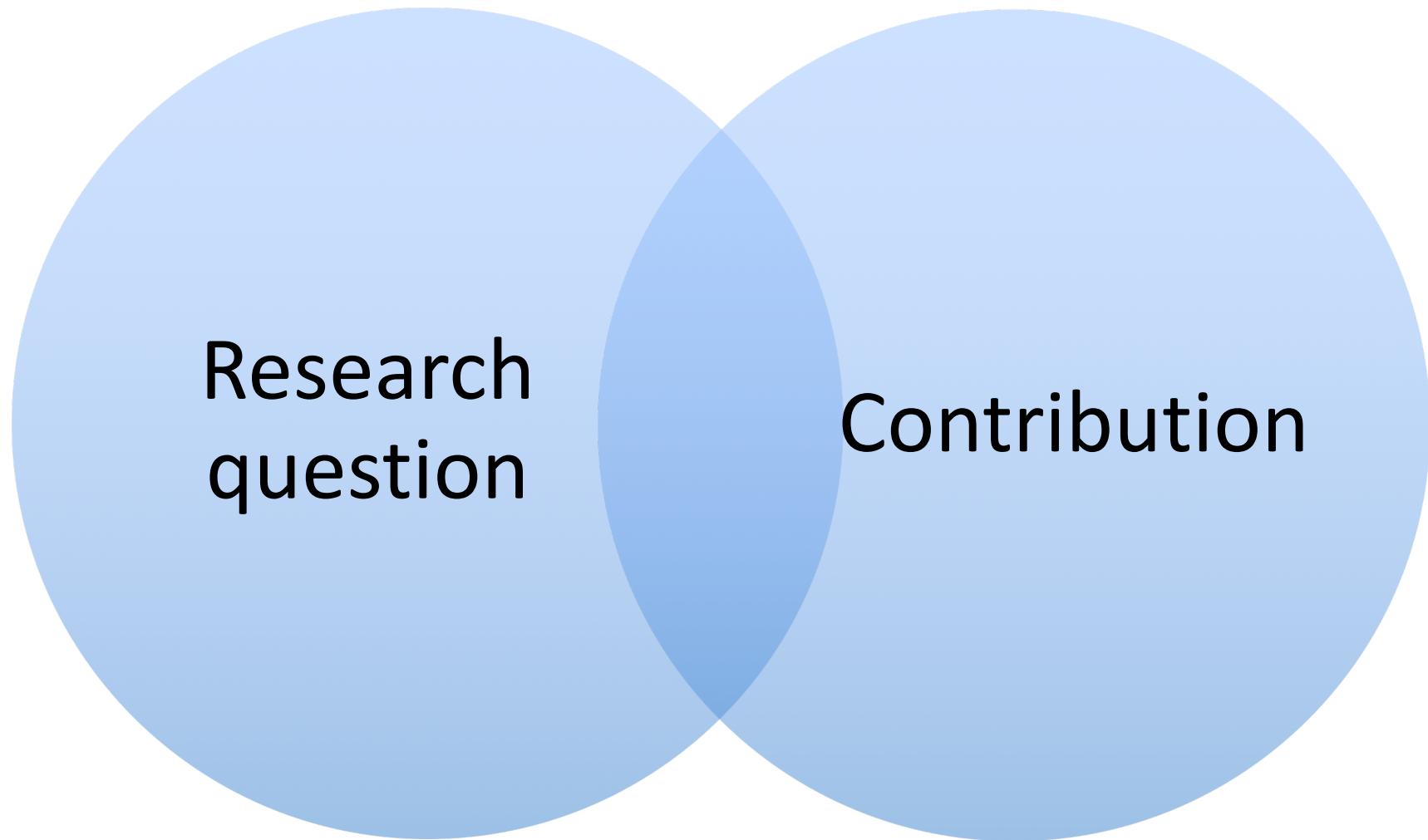
*A Guide to Starting, Revising, and
Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis*

JOAN BOLKER, ED.D.

EDITOR OF THE WRITER'S HOME COMPANION

3. The transition into research writing

Research writing essentials



Articulate your (potential) research question and your (potential) contribution

Process and structure (+ questions!)

**Write
about
it**

What will you do? Why will you do it?	(Introduction) (Literature Review)
How will you do it?	(Methods, research design...)
What might be the outcome?	(Results)
What could that mean?	(Interpretation)
Why might that matter?	(Discussion)
What remains to be done?	(Conclusion)

Aim or objective?

Aim: overall intention, ambition, where you aspire to be by the end of the project (the what)

- *to map, to develop, to design, to track, to generate, to build, to synthesise, to catalogue*
- Needs to be concise and clear

Objectives: the specific steps you will take to achieve your aim (the how)

- *I will... collect, construct, produce, test, trial, measure, document, pilot, deconstruct, analyse...*
- Need to be practical, do-able, achievable, precise and concise
- Also act as project milestones, a set of stages (rather than a laundry list)

Aims and objectives generate the research questions and underpin the research design.

They need to be robust and durable.

Methods or methodology?

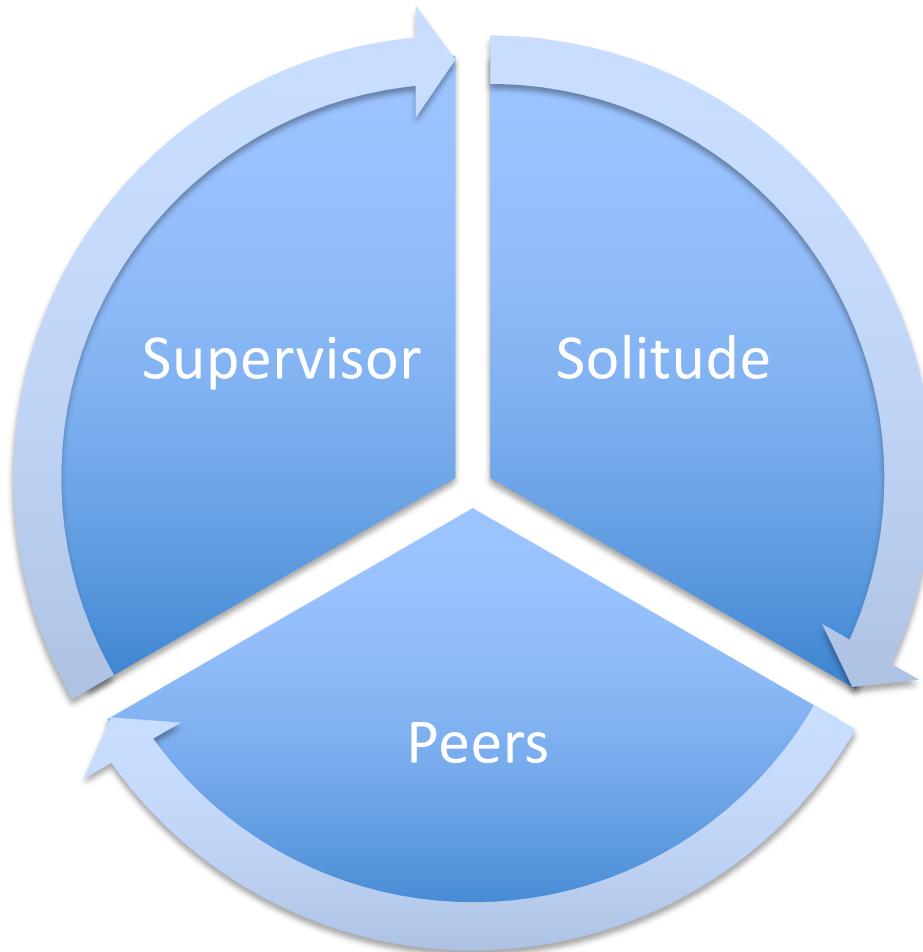
Methods: the tools, strategies, techniques used in the research

- questionnaires, surveys, interviews, observation sheets..

Methodology: the principles that guide the research practice

- why these methods for this piece of research?
- why not these other methods?

The human environment of research writing



Your readers

Individuals

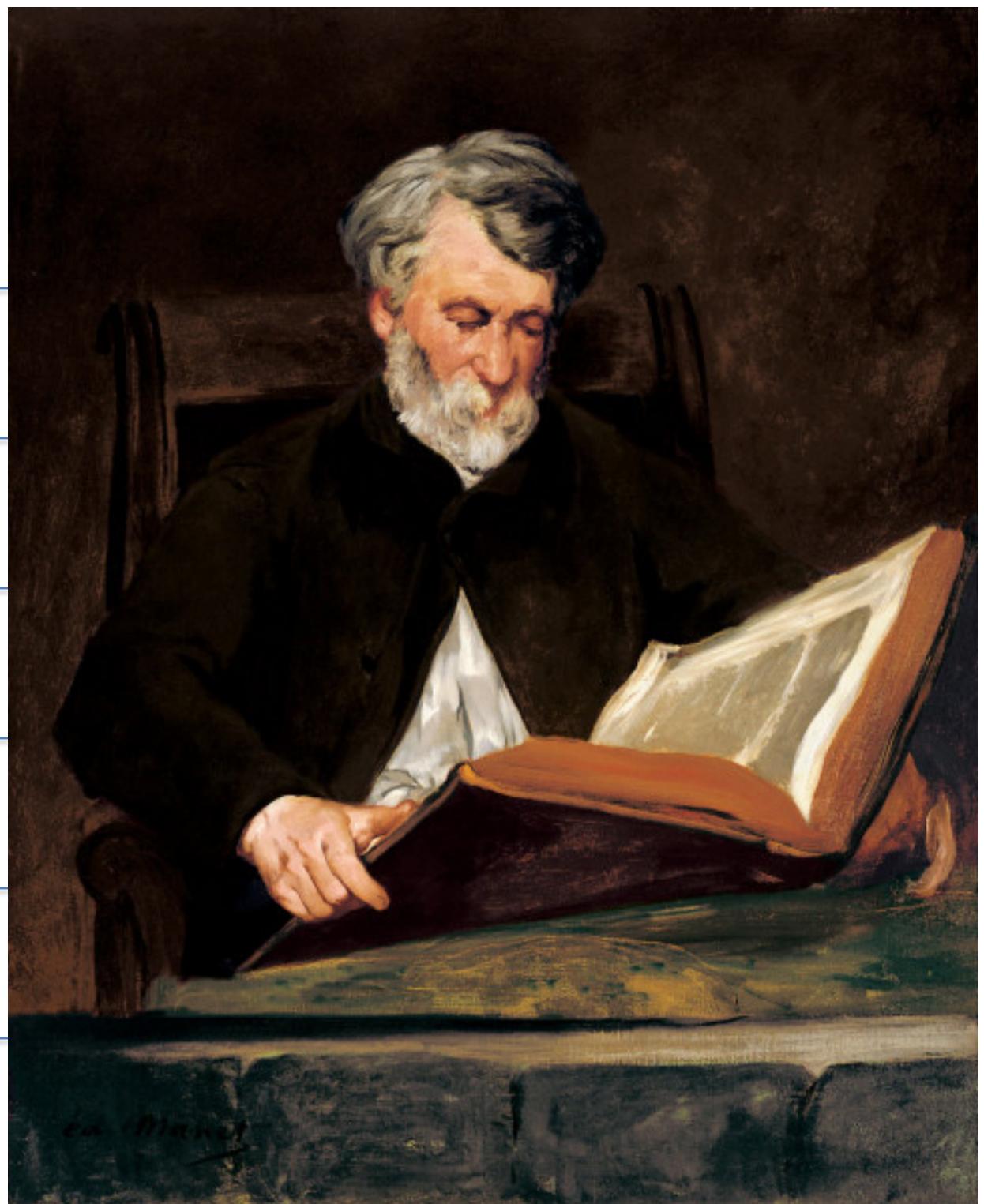
... with a name

.. who share knowledge and assumptions with you

... and need you to explain other things

.. who are trying to understand which questions you are addressing in your research

... who are trying to understand what you are doing or have done



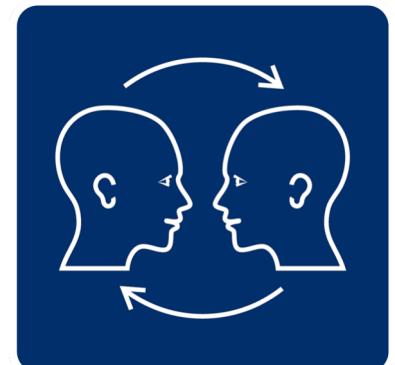
Working with peers

Talk

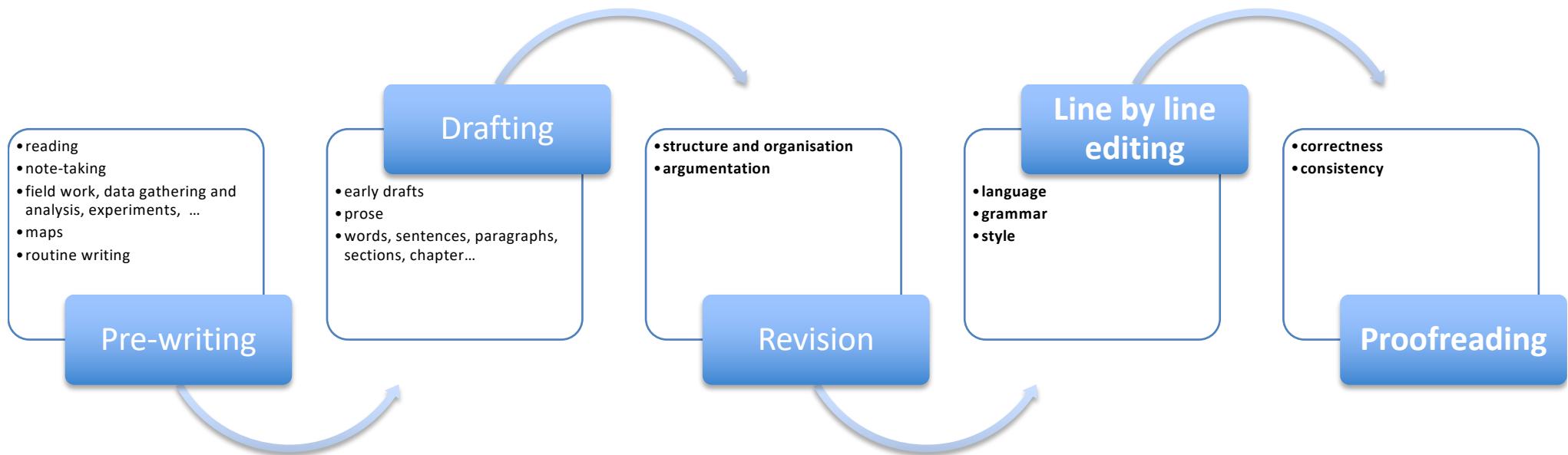
Listen

Reflect
back

Talk and listen. Three minutes each. When you listen, zip your lips!



The work of writing



IAD: community of practice

Postgraduate writing workshops

Writing retreats

Writing clinics

‘Just write’ sessions