

Writing is an essential part of any academic physician's career, yet most of this writing is done alone. We be more successful in publishing if we live by this rule: No one writes alone. Writing accountability groups can help move the process forward.^{1,2} Writing can also be a wellness activity when shared, as it forces social interactions.³

This page gives simple tips for writing in teams. The STFM Leadership Through Scholarship Fellowship teaches these tactics to new and experienced author teams.⁴ Remembering the VERSE can avoid team conflict and create a more enjoyable experience for all.

V Version

- Ensure each author on the team is writing on the same version.
- Use a shared document such as OneDrive, Google Docs, or others.
- An alternative is sending the Word document to the team with instructions that everyone work on the same version, but sequentially.
- When all authors have contributed, one author can reconcile the changes made on the document. Remember to write on the correct version.

E Etiquette

- Every team member's voice matters. Do not delete sentences or paragraphs written by others unless all authors agree.
- Make changes with track changes so original and changed information is present.
- The writing team should meet and decide what needs to be deleted, what needs to be added, etc. Plan your meetings at a time that all can meet, and if you cannot make it, notify the team as soon as you know.
- Notify the team if you have new information or cannot make your deadlines. Your colleagues will be understanding, but you can prioritize your writing commitments.

R Roles

- Decide author roles at the beginning of the project.
- The lead author is the first author responsible for pushing the project to the finish line. Consider this role for the author who is closest to promotion.
- Rotate lead author when the team has multiple projects.
- List the senior author as the most experienced member of the team last.
- The corresponding author submits the article to the journal and leads in addressing reviewer comments, but can be listed anywhere in author order.

S Single voice

- Each author has a unique style, yet writing teams must have a single voice.
- When combining styles, use a guide like the paper by Welch.⁵
- Find the fewest number of words to convey your ideas accurately.
- Use a good grammar check.
- Wordsmithing and making one voice can be the final editing step, and can be assigned to the lead or senior author.
- Until we have a better understanding of generative Artificial Intelligence and large language models, authors should not use them to make a manuscript into a single voice.
- Please state clearly in your manuscript if these tools have been used. Remember, data are plural.⁵

E Endnotes

- Use reference management software that suits your team. Only one author should add the references, and the task can be assigned to any author.
- When you want to signal to the team a sentence needs a reference, write ("CITE") by the sentence and add the citation in a comment or the text. The author tasked with referencing can then add it to the reference manager.
- Use the same reference manager for all your writing. One reference may serve multiple projects.

VERSE also calls poetry to mind, full of beautiful images and emotional content. This acronym was chosen intentionally, as writing in teams can be a fulfilling, satisfying, and meaningful experience.

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