

# Writing (and Teaching Writing) with Pleasure

**Helen Sword**

University of Auckland

[h.sword@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:h.sword@auckland.ac.nz)

**Presentation type** - Pre-conference workshop

## **Abstract:**

Seasoned academic writers understand that the joys of writing are inextricably bound up with the hard labour of craftsmanship. That message, however, is not always so clear to our students. Books, blogs and websites aimed at undergraduate writers tend to focus mainly on analytical thinking skills, productive writing habits and stylistic conventions rather than on fostering intellectual nourishment and delight. As a result, all too many of our students regard formal writing as an irritating chore on the way to a degree, the educational equivalent of “Shut up and eat your vegetables.”

How can we bring pleasure back into our students’ writing – and our own? Building on recent research findings about the writing habits of successful academics (Sword 2012, 2017), this workshop will take participants through a staged process designed to help them transform their own writing practice as well as to empower their students and colleagues. First, they will investigate their personal pleasure points (that is, the writing genres and situations that they most enjoy) and identify the writing-related tasks that drain their energy and sap their enjoyment. Next, they will be introduced to five key principles – social, physical, aesthetic, creative, and emotional – associated with both productivity and pleasure (see e.g. Brand 1989, Frederickson 2009, Seligman 2012, Seppala 2016). Finally, they will work individually and collaboratively to imagine new ways – for their students, their colleagues and themselves – of finding pleasure in and taking pleasure from writing.

On completion of the session, participants will be able to:

- diagnose their students’ (and their own) writing-related frustrations and identify learning activities that nurture pleasure in writing;
- plan targeted changes to practice based on evidence-based principles;
- adapt the strategies developed in this workshop for writing, teaching and professional development activities at their own institutions.

The workshop is relevant to the following conference subthemes:

- Learning – The workshop addresses the relationship between learning and pleasure, with particular attention to the role of intrinsic motivation in the writing process.
- Places and spaces – Participants will be invited to reflect on the places and spaces where their own most pleasurable writing has taken place.
- Academic development – The workshop will offer participants opportunities to develop writing interventions for academic colleagues as well as students.
- Work and identity – Participants will consider how their own academic identity, as well as that of their students and/or colleagues, is inflected by their writing practice.

## References

Brand, A. (1989). *The psychology of writing: The affective experience*. New York: Greenwood.

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Seligman, M. (2012). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Seppala, E. (2016). *The happiness track: How to apply the science of happiness to accelerate your success*. London: Piatkus Books.

Sword, H. (2012). *Stylish academic writing*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.

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