

The Graduate Writing Lab

at the Center for Teaching & Learning

For the craft of researching, composing, and communicating:
ctl.yale.edu/writing/graduate

Writing Your Way out of Imposter Stress

Eight Quick Tips

Tip 1: Reorient your perspective: it's okay to be slow and clumsy at first—we are “novice experts” (Aguilar, “We Are Not Imposters”)

- Learning new academic genres, styles, and research approaches is not about remediation or judgement—it's about building your professional toolbox
- Use university resources (academic professionalization and writing workshops, peer review groups, individual consultations) and read up on academic models and genres to try your hand at new modes of academic writing

Tip 2: Troubleshoot your concerns

- Assess the situation to see if it is something you can change and/or reflect on. Use Post-Its to separate out components of the problem and what can be done now to help you move forward (Vengoechea, “Troubleshoot Your Troubles with Post-Its”)

Tip 3: Change the narrative to focus on your merits

- Write out your “research origin story,” which always has a larger framework
- Practice accepting compliments without deflecting

Tip 4: Draw a clear line between feeling inadequate and recognizing areas for improvement

- Work like a writer: writers aren't inspired every single day, but they sit down and commit to the act of writing, knowing they require editorial insights from others in their area

Tip 5: Don't fear peer review—embrace it

- You are always *already* collaborating on your research and writing
- The most senior people in your field crave feedback from junior members (the latest hottest new knowledge!) Why shouldn't you crave feedback from other people in the know to make your project stronger and more involved in the current academic conversations?

Tip 6: Make it relevant: engage with your writing and greater support community

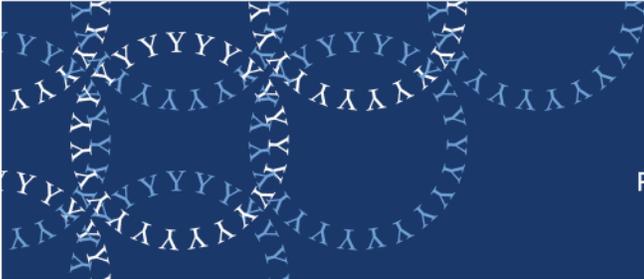
- Practice writing about your project to relate it to a broader audience and community impact (try the “matrix of relating your research worksheet”)
- Become a mentor to someone newer to the program than you
- Seek out good mentors and advisors, even in other disciplines/institutions
- Join/form an accountability writing hang or more structured peer review writing group

Tip 7: Practice self-care and admit when you need additional support

- Remember: self-care is a form of resistance

Tip 8: Just Keep Writing.

- Write every day, for at least 15 minutes to establish the writerly habit
- Develop your own creative pacing approach (different writers handle different stages of writing, well, differently)
- Leave yourself crumbs at the end of your writing day: a sentence fragment you complete the next day



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Additional reading and resources on writing your way out of imposter stress in academia:

1. <https://mystudentvoices.com/the-whisper-campaign-of-academic-trauma-fc917686fcc3>
2. <https://contemplativemammoth.com/2012/04/25/how-i-cured-my-imposter-syndrome/>
3. <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2015/04/13/essay-how-graduate-students-can-fight-impostor-syndrome>
4. <https://www.linguisticsociety.org/sites/default/files/Imposter%20Syndrome%202015%20Institute.pdf>
5. <http://adainitiative.org/continue-our-work/impostor-syndrome-training/>
6. http://www.uky.edu/studentacademicsupport/sites/www.uky.edu.UGE/files/ImposterSyndrome_Crocker-ClassActivities9March2016.pdf
7. Book: *Secret Thoughts of Successful Women: : Why Capable People Suffer from the Impostor Syndrome and How to Thrive in Spite of It* (2011)
8. <https://medium.powertofly.com/6-ways-women-of-color-can-overcome-imposter-syndrome-7f517302db5b>
9. <http://watercoolerconvo.com/2016/04/20/its-not-impostor-syndrome-when-youre-black-and-woman/>
10. <https://theestablishment.co/the-coding-of-white-trash-in-academia-7d07ebe37aee#.6mk7mulv7>
11. "Subjective Socioeconomic Status Moderates the Association between Discrimination and Depression in African American Youth." *Brain Sciences* 2018 8(4), 71.
<http://www.mdpi.com/2076-3425/8/4/71/htm>
12. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/inspired-life/wp/2015/03/24/how-to-troubleshoot-your-troubles-with-post-its/?utm_term=.83887ea70d13

For questions and additional resources in writing through imposter stress in academia, please contact
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