

Using This Book in a Graduate Writing Group

This book can be used by an existing writing group or by a new group established in order to read the book together. Here are some ways you might to choose to draw upon this book (this guide is also available for download at press.umich.edu, via the *Thriving as a Graduate Writer* page):

- The group could all read the book independently, thus allowing its members to use the shared vocabulary in their conversations.
- The group could read the book together, chapter by chapter, over ten meetings. If the group wants to move more quickly, I suggest the following groupings:
 - Preface and Chapter One (*getting started and thinking about writing mindsets*)
 - Chapters Two and Three (*key principles*)
 - Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven (*understanding the needs of the reader*)
 - Chapter Eight (*building a revision process*)
 - Chapter Nine (*developing sustainable writing habits*)
 - Chapter Ten (*reflecting on what this all means for your writing mindset*)
- The group could choose an aspect of the book to focus on:
 - **Building a new mindset:** Take a look at the chart from Chapter One and ask whether this formulation resonates with each member's experience. How would you each alter this chart? Starting with the left-hand column, ask if these sentiments reflect your experience of writing. Those alterations can then lead to changes in the rest of the chart. In the end, each member can have their own mindset chart. My four words for graduate writing were

developmental, difficult, possible, and communal. Since it matters how we talk about a task, discovering your own guiding words can be powerful. Instead of altering my chart to suit your experience, you could take a step further back, working with a blank chart. The activity would involve starting with a collection of statements that characterize your sense of graduate writing. Those sentiments can then be distilled into adjectives. If those adjectives seem as though they might be limiting, try recasting them. With this reframing in place, try finding new adjectives. Those adjectives might then suggest the possibility of a new experience of graduate writing.

- **Considering the principles:** Write early, revise extensively, consider the needs of the reader, maintain an authorial presence. In Chapters Two and Three, I discuss the tensions around these principles; I think they are helpful, but I don't think they are easy. What other tensions have you experienced? What barriers have you encountered when trying to use these principles in your writing?
- **Focusing on strategies:** In Chapters Four through Eight, I have tried to show what the reader needs at the various levels of a text and what all that means for a successful revision process. Each writer will need some of these insights more than others. What strategies have you been able to use and thus recommend to others in the group? You could start with everyone's perennial favorite: the reverse outline. How did that work for you? What did you learn about your writing? What can you share with others about how to use the technique effectively?
- **Investigating writing habits:** Many writing groups exist to counter productivity challenges. Reviewing the ideas in this chapter might spur further conversations about what experimentation might be useful for you. The discussion in Chapter Nine of building greater writing awareness might create a space for more honesty about your lived experience as graduate writers. Lastly, my insistence on the centrality of writing expertise might lead to conversations about how to build that expertise (by reading earlier sections of this book, by following writing blogs, by accessing institutional writing support, by building communities of practice around writing).