

# NACADA Module Transcript

## Writing 4 – Reading for Writing

By

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### INTRODUCTION

I'm Rhonda Dean Kyncl; I'm the Associate Dean for Students at the University of Oklahoma where I oversee academic advising and student engagement. I also have a Master's degree and a PhD from OU in Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy. Most of my academic life has been focused on writing; I taught First-Year Composition on our campus for the entirety of my degree from Fall 2000 until Spring 2009. I returned to the classroom after I became Associate Dean and have taught composition classes online and in traditional settings. I've also recently taught our writing for the medical professions course as well.

I'm serving as NACADA's Coordinator of Writing Support. You may have seen one of our earlier webinars where I've discussed how our virtual writing groups work and the importance of giving and receiving feedback in a virtual writing group or the writing process and the significance of engaging writing AS a process. Today, I'd like to talk a little bit about reading as an impetus for good writing. Or perhaps, reading as the preparation for good writing.

One of the reasons many people feel inadequate to write an academic essay or research paper is because they aren't proficient in reading those types of writing. As primary role academic advisers, our professional lives are not necessarily conducive to academic reading. Our focus is on students and the practical, day-to-day work of reviewing policies and providing

academic services. We are often much too busy to give the time to the type of reading that would teach us the conventions of academic writing, and consequently, help us feel more prepared to write in that way. As faculty advisers, our focus of academic reading and writing is in our disciplines, which might have very different rules than the type of research and analysis we tend to do in the scholarship of advising.

How could you get started learning about this type of writing? The NACADA Journal, for example, is an academically rigorous, peer-reviewed journal. Everything you read in this journal is written in the format of an academic essay. If you want to be published in the NACADA Journal, read the NACADA Journal. If you want to be published in other academic journals, read the articles already published in those academic journals.

READING for WRITING is about noticing and learning the conventions of a particular style of writing.

So let's take the NACADA Journal as our first example. Reading the journal will first clue you in to a number of the conventions for this type of writing:

- most articles begin with an abstract;
- articles in the journal are either social science-based by presenting a quantitative study, meaning it shows data, statistics, or a qualitative study, meaning it presents narrative-based evidence, that support the findings and conclusions,
- or they are theory-based, which means the writer states a theory in the beginning, explains that theory, and then presents an idea or a practice that is grounded in that theory;

- each article contains a number of footnotes or endnotes that cite several sources. The purpose of footnotes or endnotes is to demonstrate how other ideas are integrated or influence this particular writer and her idea. The footnotes show a pathway, a trail if you will, of how the author has interacted with scholarship that already exists in this field or area.
- the writing style in these articles is quite formal; there are no contractions or slang; the vocabulary requires that you are a practitioner in the field in order to understand all the verbiage;
- the articles are divided under subheadings that are quite similar, such as: introduction, methodology, findings or results;
- the conclusion always demonstrates how the study or theory is applicable to the field of academic services or academic advising.

You can do a similar study of the conventions of any type of writing by reading it across several publications. You can read the many articles on the NACADA Clearinghouse, for example, to ascertain the conventions used there. You can read the *Academic Advising Today* to learn about that publication's conventions. And you can read the author guidelines of the *NACADA Review* to learn what's expected in manuscript submissions.

The point is that you must read a publication critically, closely, for a number of issues or a number of times to understand the conventions demonstrated. Then, you must internalize those conventions for your own writing for such a publication. No one can fully teach you that unless you commit to spending time reading this type of writing.

Another significant way to ensure you're meeting the conventions of the publication or site to which you're submitting your own work, is to join one of NACADA's virtual writing groups. This group of colleagues can serve as your accountability group to ensure that your work is mirroring the conventions of the publication to which you're submitting it. Or the website. Or the journal. Your colleagues may have good experience with the type of publication or the site where you want to publish, and they can offer you critical feedback by reading your article or giving you insight into the conventions you need to follow.

Another way to find this type of feedback outside of our writing groups, or even in addition to the NACADA writing groups, is through your campus' writing center. Most campuses have a writing center where writing accountability and review is available...even for staff and faculty. Access this good resource. Contact the writing center on your campus and request to meet with someone to review your article, or to give you advice on the conventions you need to follow for the type of publication you are preparing.

If you're not a member of a virtual writing group, or if your campus does not have an accessible Writing Center, then appeal to one of your colleagues on campus or across the world to provide this important feedback.

Reading a journal or blog or publication benefits you in other ways as well, besides learning the conventions of the outlet. Reading also ensures that you will gradually internalize the style, vocabulary, and, as we've already discussed, the conventions of a particular type of writing. Your writing will gradually begin to mirror your reading. If you are reading academic journals and research articles, your writing will begin to take on the same characteristics. But

conversely, if you are reading People Magazine, BuzzFeed, or Twitter, your writing will also begin to mirror those non-academic types of reading.

I have caught myself writing an email and using the letter “n” instead of typing the word “in.” Have you ever done something like this? This is proof of my internalization of the conventions of texting. I text so much throughout the day to my friends and family, that if I’m not careful, when I begin writing something more formal or academic, I will inadvertently, without even thinking, use a texting convention when it is completely inappropriate.

Take stock of what you’re reading. If you’re not reading academic articles, peer-reviewed journals, and formal book chapters or research essays, then it’s going to be very difficult for you to adapt to the academic conventions that are required for publication.

You have access to all types of journals, usually through your institution’s library database. Get some colleagues together and plan a “common reading” once a month during the lunch hour together, or even virtually on Zoom or Skype. Talk not only about the content of the interesting article about advising, but also the sections of the article, and the ways that the authors are stating their arguments and supporting their claims.

Notice the transitions between paragraphs and sections. And take note of how YOU might have written it more clearly. Not every article that is published is perfectly constructed.

The more you read, the more deeply you think. The more deeply the think, the more ready you are to write. You have an important voice; please share it with us!

Look for more information and resources on our NACADA Writer Support webpage.

Good luck!

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