

## Learning to Write

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When I was in high school, if you had asked me if I would love writing as an adult I would have given you that look teenagers do so often. English was not my favorite subject, and I certainly did not have the best grammar skills. In undergraduate dental hygiene school I had to write occasionally, but not much. All of this is to say that we all have to start someplace. Most of us are not natural writers.

I learned to write when I had to. It all started with my graduate program, when I was expected to conduct research and write a research paper. Then, I was under pressure to actually publish the work! When I completed my graduate work, I was so tired of it that I put it aside for an entire year before I submitted it for publication (my graduate students are not provided with that option). Then, I acquired a position in an academic institution with high expectations for scholarly activity, so I had to learn to write.

One of the most humbling experiences is being a beginning author and getting feedback on your writing. While it is meant to be constructive, it is typically perceived as critical. I will always remember the first time I had a journal editor (who was a faculty colleague at my institution) review one of the articles I planned to submit for publication. At that time, reviewers used red pen and not “track changes.” My paper came back soaked in red ink! After a couple of days I got over the shock and proceeded to revise the



paper according to the suggestions of the reviewer. Again, I asked the editor to look at the paper and again it came back with more red marks. I must say that this was one of the best experiences of my career as far as developing me as a scholar and writer. Was it painful? Yes! But one has to put themselves in a position of vulnerability in order to learn how to get better at something. One has to risk being criticized in order to improve. Did I get the paper published? Yes – with flying colors!

Now, after many years of writing, I welcome opportunities to help others learn how to write and contribute to the dental hygiene literature. Being a journal editor is a tremendous privilege and a huge responsibility. For one, it has made me appreciate all the help I received

along the way. It has also helped me appreciate the high bar that was set for me. The challenge is helping others reach their goals of publishing when they may not have the mentoring they need.

At ADHA we have set the bar high for our publications in the *Journal of Dental Hygiene*. We have a responsibility to all members of our profession to publish works that are of high quality and that will contribute to the dental hygiene body of knowledge.

Many times we receive papers from first time authors. I love receiving these papers. We need dental hygiene professions in the pipeline to carry on the research and scholarship for the profession. I commend these authors for taking the leap and making themselves vulnerable so that they can grow and learn. This issue of the *JDH* contains several papers from first time authors. They have climbed one hurdle. My challenge to them and those of you who are contemplating becoming a writer is best said in a quote by Pablo Picasso: “I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it.”

Most writers have had the thought that they cannot do it. Most persevere and learn otherwise. Try it – you might like it!

Sincerely,  
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Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Dental Hygiene*