

#WaterlooWrites groups are writing communities for graduate and faculty writers across campus. Writers tackling a big writing project often struggle with isolation or a lack of structure that leaves them procrastinating. If that sounds familiar, then writing groups can help. This social space with an established structure for getting writing done can help you feel connected to your peers while practicing effective and sustainable writing habits.



#WaterlooWrites

Participant Guidebook

Read through the material in this guidebook to help you figure out what kind of writing group suits you best and how to join one of the groups the WCC and our #WaterlooWrites team hosts

Join the #WaterlooWrites Team to drop-in on the WCC's Virtual Writing Cafes every Tuesday morning!



Since 2020, our #WaterlooWrites groups have held over 1,000 sessions!

Join a social writing space for you and your peers!

The #WaterlooWrites writing groups, including the WCC's Writing Cafes, are social writing groups. Unlike traditional peer feedback-based writing groups, we don't read each other's finished writing; instead, we write together to create a community of writers who can cheer each other on during what is often an isolating, difficult journey!

Start your writing journey today!

writing and communication centre

What is a #WaterlooWrites Group?



The Host

Each #WaterlooWrites Group has a facilitator who handles scheduling, booking, and moderating the sessions. These hosts find or book a writing space (or organize the virtual meetings), greet writing group participants, act as “time-keeper,” take attendance each week, and facilitate goal-setting and end-of session discussion.



The Participants

Participants in these writing groups commit to attending according to the etiquette of each group. Some groups are drop-in (like the WCC’s Writing Cafe!) while others expect regular attendance from participants, to create a more consistent community. However you attend, each session brings you closer to redeeming a free #WaterlooWrites coffee mug: attend any 12 sessions to get yours!



The Sessions

#WaterlooWrites groups set a schedule for meetings, so that you can rely on the writing group for regular writing time. Sessions last between 2 and 3 hours, which includes time for goal-setting, multiple 30-minute writing “poms” with short breaks, and a bit of time for reflection at the end. A standard writing session could look like this:

Total Time:

2h35m

You can set whatever schedule your participants want, but we recommend the Pomodoro Method: 25- to 30-minute working ‘poms’ with alternating 5-minute breaks (and a 10- to 15-minute break after 4 ‘poms’).

Use the Goal-setting and Tracking sheets your host shared with you!

Writing Time:

2h

Task	Time	Actor
Welcome participants and take attendance	5 minutes	Host
Introduce weekly writing tip	5 minutes	Host
Goal Setting	5 minutes	Individual
First Writing Pom	30 minutes	Individual
Break for coffee and socializing	5 minutes	All
Second Writing Pom	30 minutes	Individual
Break for coffee and socializing	5 minutes	All
Third Writing Pom	30 minutes	Individual
Break for coffee and socializing	5 minutes	All
Fourth Writing Pom	30 minutes	Individual
Wrap Up: reflect on progress and goals	5 minutes	Individual
Wrap Up: congratulate yourselves!	5 minutes	All

Why should you join a #WaterlooWrites Group?



Find time and space

Not only is it hard to carve out time in a demanding academic schedule, but the intensity of academic writing can also be very isolating – and both are obstacles to consistent writing! Joining a community of writers who meet regularly can turn writing from an impossible task to a core part of your week, and that's what the #WaterlooWrites groups offer.

Make writing a habit

People who write a lot tend to write for shorter periods of time, very consistently. In fact, writing for 30 minutes a day every day is way more productive than one weekly 7-hour session: it's really hard to stay focused for 7 hours and therefore it's likely you'll engage in procrastination to avoid that unpleasant day! Writing groups help you make writing a habit, by making it a consistent and achievable task.

Talk to other writers about writing

If you don't have other academic writers to talk to, you might start to feel really lonely as you write a thesis or other long writing project. Having a community of people going through a similar process can help: you can commiserate, share different strategies, and celebrate each others' wins! Friends and family who don't write often don't quite understand how writing a single paragraph can feel like a victory, but other academic writers definitely do!

Plan and track your progress

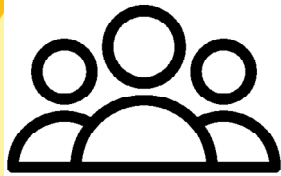
Because the #WaterlooWrites writing groups meet regularly and use the Pomodoro Method, they make it a lot easier to keep track of how you're spending your writing time and what your personal writing challenges are. Setting intentional writing goals – and keeping track of the time it takes you to achieve them – can help you identify what kind of support you most need in your writing project!



What will help you write?

Every writer needs something a little bit different, so take a few moments to reflect on what helps you write. We recommend that people take [Helen Sword's BASE inventory](#) as a first step to reflecting on what you might need to help you achieve your writing goals. Writing groups like ours are best at supporting the behavioural, social, and emotional habits of consistent writers!

How can you choose a #WaterlooWrites Group?



Choose your group

Each group works a little bit differently, so your first step is to figure out what you need in a writing group. Consider how frequently the group meets, whether it meets in person or virtually, and whether or not the hosts expect you to attend regularly. Different groups also invite different participants: #WaterlooWrites includes groups for people across campus as well as those for specific faculties, departments, and research teams.

Drop-in vs. attendance

Figure out if you want a group that has flexible, drop-in attendance or one that will expect you to attend every session. The peer pressure of mandatory attendance can help people who need a little extra motivation to get writing in the first place, whereas the flexibility of drop-ins can make it possible to sneak writing into a hectic and unpredictable schedule.

Online vs. in person

Think about whether you want to join a virtual writing group or one that meets on campus. In-person and on-campus groups can make it easier to stay focused during Pomodoros, since you can see everyone else working! However, the flexibility of a virtual group can make it a lot easier to show up in the first place.

Campus-wide vs. faculty-specific

Decide if you want to join a big, campus-wide group, and/or a smaller one targeted to your faculty or department. A small group of people from the same department can generate really supportive partnerships, but a larger group will have more people to help you stay accountable to your goals.

Daily vs. Weekly vs. Monthly...

Consider how frequently you want to join your writing group. If you're just starting to build your writing habit, a group that meets more often is a better choice than one that meets once a month. If you already have a strong writing habit, though, a group that meets less frequently can still offer you useful social connection with your peers and colleagues.



What will help you write?

At the end of the day, you should choose a writing group that will help you get your writing done. Try not to think about the kind of writer you 'should' be, and think about when and how you do your best writing: is it on campus, dressed in clothes that make you feel good? Or do you prefer to type away with your puppy at your feet in your living room? Trying to make a big change to your writing habits might make it harder to keep them up, so be kind to yourself!

How do you participate in a #WaterlooWrites Group?



Show up and write

We use the Pomodoro Method to organize writing sessions into smaller, more manageable chunks of focused writing with frequent breaks. As a participant, then, you'll get several 30-minute blocks of writing short breaks to help you re-focus, stretch, get coffee/tea/water, and chat with the other participants. Each group works a little differently, though, so check in with your host.

Join on time for goal-setting

Use the first few minutes to get in the writing zone by setting some clear goals for your Poms. Setting specific goals can make a daunting task feel a lot easier to do, and it gives you some concrete things to check off a to-do list, which always feels good.

Get to know your fellow writers

Make use of the breaks to talk to the other participants and cheer on their writing goals. You can also get to know them as people: for example, we have a regular pet-pic show-and-tell in the WCC Writing Cafes, and people also often share book, movie, and music recommendations. Especially for people who attend virtually, these small social connections can make the writing process feel less lonely!

Share your victories and challenges

One benefit of setting your goals with your fellow writers is that you can share your celebrations when you meet them, no matter how small! You can also share some of your challenges, which others might commiserate with you over – or even offer you strategies that worked for them.

Reflect on your progress

At the end of the writing session, take a few minutes to look back at the goals you set for yourself and what progress you made. Rather than being judgmental, use it as an opportunity to reflect on what worked and what you might do differently next time (like logging out of Twitter to make it harder to sneak a quick peek...)



What will help you write?

We encourage you to share and chat with your fellow participants, but sometimes the best thing to do between writing pomodoros is to step away from the computer and give your brain a rest. If what you need is to take a quiet five minutes to yourself between difficult writing tasks, then that's what you should do! Consider sneaking in some gentle stretching so that your body gets a rest, too.

How do you redeem a #WaterlooWrites Mug?



Attend 12 sessions

To help you kick-start your writing habit, we have a reward for you once you've attended any 12 sessions of any #WaterlooWrites writing group! We encourage you to get those 12 sessions in the same semester, but you will still earn the mug however long it takes you to get your 12 sessions in.

Fill out your stamp card

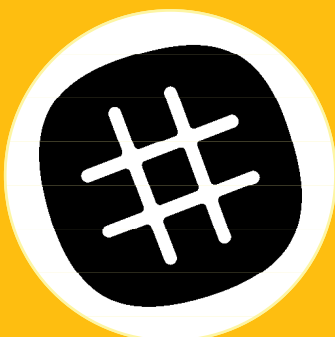
Whenever you attend a #WaterlooWrites group, whether it's in person, online, hosted by the WCC or hosted by a volunteer, you are one step closer to getting a free mug! Download the stamp card online from the WaterlooWrites website and keep a digital copy or print it out to keep track of your attendance yourself. We also have physical copies in the Write Spot (SCH219) and at the WCC's in-person Writing Cafe. Your hosts take attendance, which we'll double-check when you redeem your mug, so ask your host(s) how many sessions you've attended if you aren't sure.

Bring your full stamp card to SCH219

If you have the digital stamp card, you have two options: you can print it out to bring to the WCC Write Spot receptionist in SCH219, or you can [email us](#) the digital copy to before stopping by. If you email your stamp card, please give us one business day to check your attendances and notify the Write Spot reception before coming to redeem your mug.

Redeem your mug!

Once you have a mug with all 12 attendances, you can come to the WCC Write Spot in SCH219 and ask the receptionist to trade your card for a #WaterlooWrites mug. If you attend the WCC's Wednesday Writing Cafe in the GSA Grad Student Lounge, you can also redeem your card for a mug there! Once you've got your mug, you can work on collecting more stamps to redeem for a second one.



Use #WaterlooWrites

Show off your mug on social media using the tag #WaterlooWrites to celebrate your accomplishment – and hopefully your new writing habit!

FAQs #WaterlooWrites Group!



Connect with the WCC

The WCC is here to help you with any questions, concerns, obstacles, challenges, or curiosities as you figure out what group to join, or once you've started. Let us know how it's going by filling out our feedback survey on the WaterlooWrites website.

If you have any questions, visit our [#WaterlooWrites website](#) for contact information or make a post on the Teams channel.

What if none of the groups work for me?

It's possible that there's no group with the perfect combination of timing, participants, and vibe for you! If it's a matter of timing or because you want to write with people in your department, we encourage you to think about starting your own writing group. Check out the Host Guidebook on the #WaterlooWrites website for more information on how you can become a #WaterlooWrites host.

Can I claim more than one mug?

Yes! As long as you have a full stamp card, you can get a mug. If you've stored up multiple 12-session stamp cards to redeem all at once, you can redeem each of them for a #WaterlooWrites mug – but please let us know before you come in so we can make sure we have them on hand!

What if I don't want to use the Pomodoro Method?

We don't force our volunteer #WaterlooWrites groups to use a system that doesn't work for them and their participants, so talk to your hosts to learn how they work. However, we recommend the Pomodoro Method, so we use it during the WCC Writing Cafes. Although it can be difficult to get into the habit of shorter writing bursts if you're used to hours-long-marathons, we encourage you to try it out for a few weeks. The structure supports sustainable, consistent writing habits and lends itself to setting goals and tracking progress, all of which essential for completing a long-term writing project.

Happy writing!