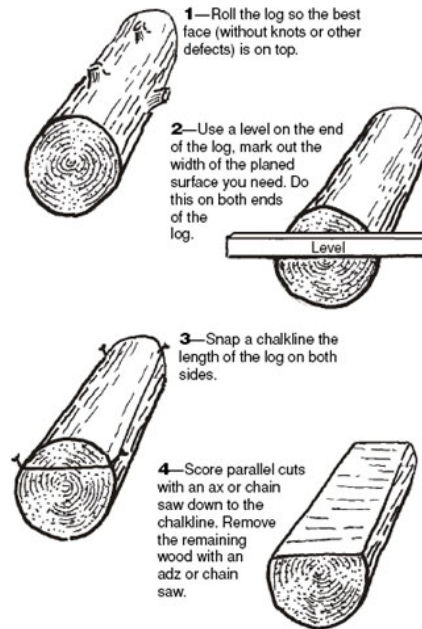


### Squaring a log



# Writer's Log

for the week of

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belongs to

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Amherst College  
Writing Center

writing@amherst.edu  
<http://amherst.edu/go/writing>

## Create the Conditions for Productive Writing

### Environment

1. Establish a regular, appealing place in which you do all serious writing.
2. Do not write in a place that you feel you must clean before you can write.
3. Minimize noisy distractions and temptations to multi-task.
4. Limit social interactions during writing.
5. Enlist another writer to join you for mutual quiet periods of work.

### Scheduling and Planning

1. Make writing a regular activity, regardless of mood or readiness. Do not wait for inspiration.
2. Observe what times of day and other conditions let you be most productive (log your writing for a week). Schedule regular writing sessions for the times when you are most alert and energetic.
3. Set a start time AND an end time for each writing session.
4. Break large projects into manageable pieces: Set SMART goals at each session (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound). Periodically review how these small goals contribute to the big picture.
5. Keep a writing log so you can see progress toward your goals, obstacles you have faced, and habits you are developing. Periodically re-assess how your small goals are moving you toward the larger goals.
6. When you are writing, keep a notebook handy to record the off-topic ideas, obligations, and reminders that try to interrupt you when you work.
7. Reward yourself when you meet important goals and share your progress with supportive peers.

### Self-Care

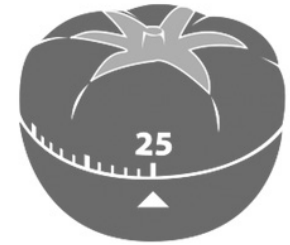
8. In advance, learn strategies and plan to deal with likely future obstacles such as procrastination, writing blocks, flu, hard drive crash, etc.
9. Manage stress, stay balanced. Get enough sleep, get it regularly. Eat healthy food. Know what is important to you and say no to things that aren't high priorities. Allow yourself to refill your well when you need to.
10. Seek support when and where you need it, whether from your advisor, the Writing Center, the Library, the Counseling Center, or fellow writers. Scholarship is challenging, and writing need not be a solitary struggle.

### Sources

Robert Boice, *How Writers Journey to Comfort and Fluency* (1994)  
Joan Bolker, *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* (1998)  
Charles Lipton, *How to Write a BA Thesis* (2005)

## Pomodoro Technique

Looking for a way to find focus and energy for your work? Try this popular, 6-step method for writing (or any kind of mental work) in short intervals.



### 1. Choose a task you'd like to get done.

Something big, something small, something you've been putting off for a million years: it doesn't matter. What matters is that it's something that deserves your full, undivided attention.

### 2. Set the Pomodoro for 25 minutes.

Make a small oath to yourself: I will spend 25 minutes on this task and I will not interrupt myself. You can do it! After all, it's just 25 minutes.

### 3. Work on the task until the Pomodoro rings.

Immerse yourself in the task for the next 25 minutes. If you suddenly realize you have something else you need to do, write the task down on a sheet of paper.

### 4. When the Pomodoro rings, put a checkmark on a paper.

Congratulations! You've spent an entire, interruption-less Pomodoro on a task.

### 5. Take a short break for 5 minutes.

Breathe, meditate, grab a cup of coffee, go for a short walk or do something else relaxing (i.e., not work-related). Your brain will thank you later.

### 6. Every 4 pomodoros, take a longer break.

Once you've completed four pomodoros, you can take a longer break. 20 minutes is good. Or 30. Your brain will use this time to assimilate new information and rest before the next round of Pomodoros.

- Learn more about the Pomodoro Technique from its creator, Francesco Cirillo, at <https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique> (source of above).
- Pomodoro doesn't require an app, but try <https://tomato-timer.com/> for a no-frills, web-based option.

**Welcome to the Writing Retreat.**

What would you like to accomplish this week?

What will motivate you to reach this goal?

**How might you divide your week's goal into daily session goals?**

At this point, the goals will be provisional, but try to visualize what it would take to meet that weekly goal.

Tuesday

Wednesday

**Congratulations! It's the end of the week!**

Thursday

What have you accomplished?

What surprised you?

What challenged you?

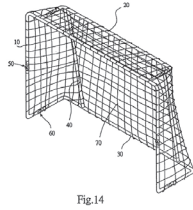
What are your next steps?

Friday

## Session 1 Goals

Starting date/time:

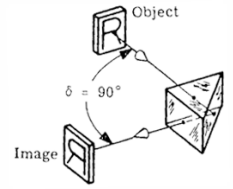
What are your writing goals for today?  
SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.



## Session 5 Reflections

Ending time:

How was the session?  
Did you meet your goals?  
What were today's challenges?  
What were today's successes?



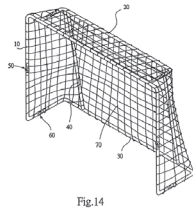
How will you start?

What are your next steps?

## Session 5 Goals

Starting date/time:

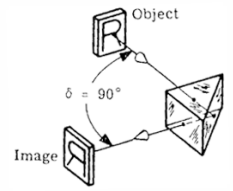
What are your writing goals for today?  
SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.



## Session 1 Reflections:

Ending time:

How was the session?  
Did you meet your goals?  
What were today's challenges?  
What were today's successes?



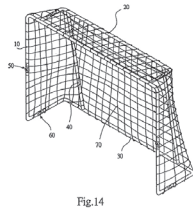
How will you start?

What are your next steps?

## Session 2 Goals

Starting date/time:

What are your writing goals for today?  
SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.



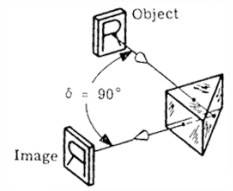
How will you start?

## Session 4 Reflections

Ending time:

How was the session?  
Did you meet your goals?  
What were today's challenges?  
What were today's successes?

What are your next steps?

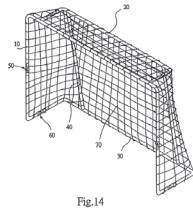




## Session 4 Goals

Starting date/time:

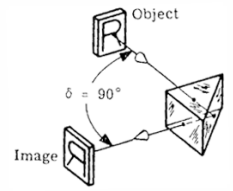
What are your writing goals for today?  
SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.



## Session 2 Reflections

Ending time:

How was the session?  
Did you meet your goals?  
What were today's challenges?  
What were today's successes?



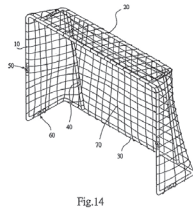
How will you start?

What are your next steps?

### Session 3 Goals

Starting date/time:

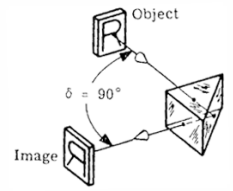
What are your writing goals for today?  
SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.



### Session 3 Reflections

Ending time:

How was the session?  
Did you meet your goals?  
What were today's challenges?  
What were today's successes?



How will you start?

What are your next steps?