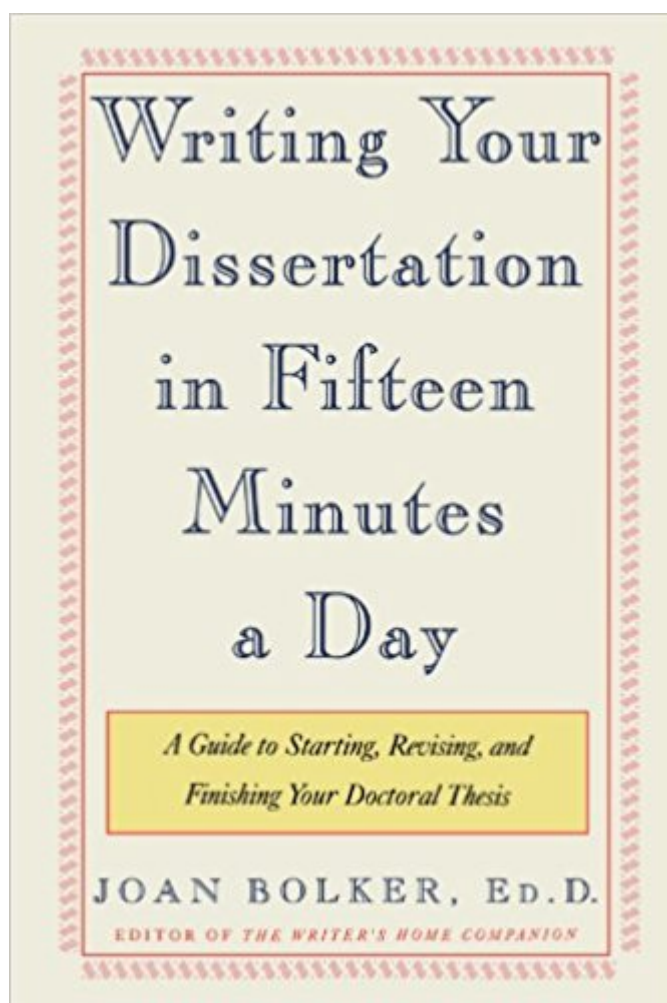


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Writing Your Dissertation In Fifteen Minutes A Day: A Guide To Starting, Revising, And Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis



Synopsis

Expert writing advice from the editor of the Boston Globe best-seller, *The Writer's Home Companion*. Dissertation writers need strong, practical advice, as well as someone to assure them that their struggles aren't unique. Joan Bolker, midwife to more than one hundred dissertations and co-founder of the Harvard Writing Center, offers invaluable suggestions for the graduate-student writer. Using positive reinforcement, she begins by reminding thesis writers that being able to devote themselves to a project that truly interests them can be a pleasurable adventure. She encourages them to pay close attention to their writing method in order to discover their individual work strategies that promote productivity; to stop feeling fearful that they may disappoint their advisors or family members; and to tailor their theses to their own writing style and personality needs. Using field-tested strategies she assists the student through the entire thesis-writing process, offering advice on choosing a topic and an advisor, on disciplining one's self to work at least fifteen minutes each day; setting short-term deadlines, on revising and defending the thesis, and on life and publication after the dissertation. Bolker makes writing the dissertation an enjoyable challenge.

Book Information

Paperback: 184 pages

Publisher: Owl Books; 1st edition (August 15, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 080504891X

ISBN-13: 978-0805048919

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 209.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 202 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #24,203 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #36 in Books > Education & Teaching > Higher & Continuing Education > Test Preparation > Professional > Professional #100 in Books > Textbooks > Reference > Writing Skills #178 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Writing Skills

Customer Reviews

"Fifteen minutes!" you say. "That's too good to be true!" Okay, author Joan Bolker admits she gave her book the title *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* to get the reader's attention. And she admits that it's unlikely you'll actually finish a dissertation at that speed. As she tells her

clients, however, a mere 15 minutes is much better than no writing at all when they're stuck. As a clinical psychologist who cofounded the Harvard Writing Center, Bolker has helped hundreds of writers complete their dissertations. She offers suggestions on how to create a writing addiction so that you feel incomplete if you don't write every day and stresses the need to set reasonable goals and deadlines for yourself to keep from getting discouraged. She also offers strategies for dealing with both internal and external distractions and for fending off writer's block. Even more important is the advice on some of the more awkward issues related to dissertation writing, such as how to choose your adviser carefully. (For example, when faced with the tradeoff between a famous advisor who is inaccessible and a less famous advisor who is willing to make time for you, Bolker advises, "If choosing a politically advantageous, famous advisor makes it unlikely that you'll complete your degree, it's clearly not worth it.") The book even includes a helpful appendix for advisers that could become the basis for an honest discussion of what student and adviser can expect from each other. Throughout this excellent book, Bolker acts as a therapist, cheerleader, and drill sergeant, all rolled into one. While some of the book's advice is of interest only to dissertation writers, much of the information--on battling writer's block, for instance--is valuable to anybody engaged in writing. Rather than being filled with rules defining how to become a great writer, *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* is about finding the process by which you can be the most productive--it's a set of exercises that you can use to find out more about you and the way you write. Along the way, you'll do a bit of writing. And that's what matters, especially when you experience writer's block--as Bolker says, "Write anything, because writing is writing." With its helpful advice and supportive tone, *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* should be required reading for anyone considering writing a dissertation. --C.B. Delaney

Editor of the best-selling *The Writers Home Companion*, Joan Bolker, Ed.D., has taught writing at Harvard, Wellesley, Brandeis, and Bard colleges. She is currently a psychotherapist whose speciality is working with struggling writers. She lives in Newton, Massachusetts.

The author strives to give the dissertation candidate confidence by offering key strategies that speak to diligence. Rather than providing guidance on how to be successful in the individual elements of a dissertation paper, Ms. Bolker uses her successful and unsuccessful dissertation experience to prompt the applicant to be confident, not scared...to be diligent when attacking a dissertation, but she does not offer guidance on how to complete a proposal, do research...etc. She is clear that her book title does not suggest 15 minutes a day will suffice for dissertation success,

rather explains that the point of the title is that dissertation work must come first...each day...several hours a day or 5 pages a day. Her book speaks to structure and priority in the dissertation process...basically, the student must write something...anything...each day. She is successful in making the reader believe that the task-at-hand is a surmountable one. E.g., she explains that trying to get it right the first time (each paragraph or chapter draft) is not only NOT necessary, but detrimental...success is in the writing...initial quantity is better than initial quality. The final sections in her book provide guidance on how to publish the completed dissertation. Perhaps if I were at the point of the dissertation phase, I might have better appreciated those "publication" sections, but at my current status, I found those sections to be page fillers...hence, my four stars instead of five.

Good, common sense approach to working through the dissertation process, from selection of topic and advisor to transforming the dissertation into a potential book. The emphatic call to "just write" and the zero draft were good reminders that the process is more about getting the ideas out and revised than writing the perfect document - especially the first time through. I picked up some good tips and reminders. Good, if getting dated.

I like that the book is kinda unconventional. So it starts you off small on writing time & breaks up the writing process for you. It also foregrounds the creative part of the writing vs. scholarly quotes. What really worked for me was the suggestion that you free write and note everything dissertation & phd related that comes to mind- have it stored in your file. That really helps me write everyday- makes me feel like the writing is about stashing my ideas & thoughts- all of it rather than some laborious process every time. I like that I can have fun with naming stuff & titles. Works wonderfully well with Peg Boyle Single's book esp. For the nonconventional, 30+ year old scholar like me for whom schedules don't really work without a fun stake.

First time ever writing a review in .I love this book. I cannot AGREE more on some of the points, such as treating yourself well after writing continuously for a while, etc. The writing is smooth (i.e., like the author is talking to your directly). Examples fit to real life situations. I get out of several (indeed, more than several) pieces of advice for writing my prospectus (this book is good for that as well). Although the author is not an engineer, but as an engineer I agree with most of the opinions that she suggest (recommend for engineer who is pursing a PhD degree).This book will become one of my favorite book in my graduate study. :) I hope you will have no regret of spending several hours of reading this book.FYI: I decide to write this review because the author strongly suggest to

keep writing everyday, even at least 10-15 minutes. And she suggests a "messy writing" approach, that is I am experimenting here. :)

This book is so helpful. Really makes you feel like you have a friend giving you guidance on the dissertation path.

Good book for studying.

This was an awesome find. I'm a doctoral student, and have read my share of sites and blogs on this topic. This book however seemed to bring all the best parts together, even adding a touch of humour as well. I was able to recognise myself, my supervisors, my problems and my progress, all as reassuringly on track, and breathe a sigh of relief. Her approach to individual styles of study was what made it shine. Most other writers just tend to give a thinly disguised list of supposedly universal rules, which may not suit or be helpful. Joan Bolker instead works on building you up. Highly recommended!

Joan Bolker is a clinical psychologist who specializes in helping writers get over their problems. Also she has worked in the Harvard Writing Lab, so she has a great deal of experience with writers of dissertations. This experience really shines in this book. She approached the problem of writing from a psychological angle. She covers some common problems faced by graduate students and gives practical advice for overcoming these obstacles. The key to writing is to write while you are thinking, or even before. If you attempt to write after thinking, you will block out a lot of ideas before they have a chance to mature. The important thing is to get your thoughts out onto paper, then after you collect lots of ideas, go back over what you wrote and pick out the pearls. If you edit yourself while you're writing, you tend to be overly critical and the negativity blocks the flow of the writing process. Actually, I think this book would be great not only for dissertation writers, but for writers of any kind. If you're facing a wall in your writing, this book could help you out a lot.

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