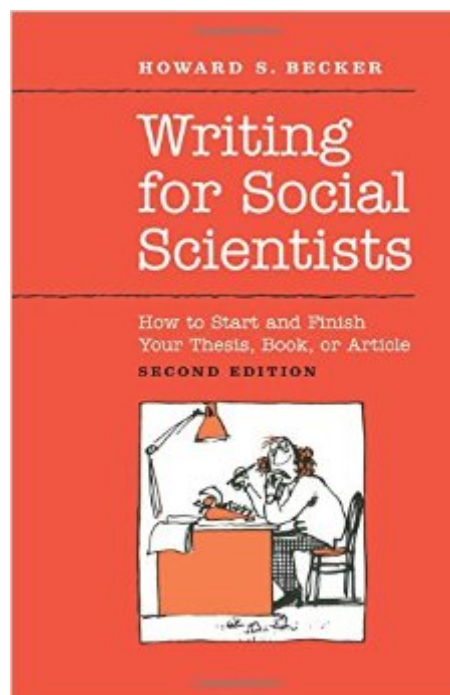


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# Writing For Social Scientists: How To Start And Finish Your Thesis, Book, Or Article: Second Edition (Chicago Guides To Writing, Editing, And Publishing)



## Synopsis

Students and researchers all write under pressure, and those pressuresâmost lamentably, the desire to impress your audience rather than to communicate with themâoften lead to pretentious prose, academic posturing, and, not infrequently, writerâs block. Sociologist Howard S. Becker has written the classic book on how to conquer these pressures and simply write. First published nearly twenty years ago, *Writing for Social Scientists* has become a lifesaver for writers in all fields, from beginning students to published authors. Beckerâs message is clear: in order to learn how to write, take a deep breath and then begin writing. Revise. Repeat. It is not always an easy process, as Becker wryly relates. Decades of teaching, researching, and writing have given him plenty of material, and Becker neatly exposes the foibles of academia and its âpublish or perishâ atmosphere. Wordiness, the passive voice, inserting a âthe way in whichâ when a simple âhowâ will doâ all these mechanisms are a part of the social structure of academic writing. By shrugging off such impedimentsâor at the very least, putting them aside for a few hoursâwe can reform our work habits and start writing lucidly without worrying about grades, peer approval, or the âliterature.â In this new edition, Becker takes account of major changes in the computer tools available to writers today, and also substantially expands his analysis of how academic institutions create problems for them. As competition in academia grows increasingly heated, *Writing for Social Scientists* will provide solace to a new generation of frazzled, would-be writers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Becker's message for his readers is to set aside their fears, relax, and do it. As unimpressive as that advice may sound, it is laid out in very modest, clear, practical terms and, like all good analyses, it is hard to implement because it goes to the heart of the matter and questions the assumptions that guide people's writing practices, mostly without them realizing it. It helps that Becker has been grappling with similar problems for 30+ years as a writer, teacher, and editor. I will try to give a bullet list of what I took away from the book. That fails to do justice to the book, predominantly for two reasons: Firstly, the proof is in the pudding. If Becker is critical of citation practices, his own relatively short bibliography is rich and thought-provoking. Secondly, he has a knack for situating the problem in its context. Along the way, he appears to sociological gems of analysis like the dichotomy between head and hand, "the corruption of indicators," "pluralistic ignorance," etc. Some of the conclusions are a little too quick, but, overall, this is quality sociology applied to a common problem. Some of the practical advice:- What if I cannot organize the chaos of my thoughts in the form of an attractive product that I can then "export" to my readership? This concern rests on a misleading dualism between thinking and writing, where writing is understood as the product of thinking rather than a process of thinking in its own right. Students tend to believe that, unlike them, adept writers simply sit at their desks and transcribe their perfectly orchestrated thoughts into well-structured compositions in one go. The dualism also blinds us to the complexity of the writing process and the different demands of, say, a first vs. final draft.

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