

Training writeshops

Using writeshops to teach writing

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Question

What is the best way to learn how to write?

Answer

Have someone guide you while you do it.

Training writeshops are a good way to teach people writing, and to develop materials at the same time

Situation

Many organizations want their staff to write:

- ▶ **Policy briefs**
- ▶ **Research summaries**
- ▶ **Press releases**
- ▶ **Cases**
- ▶ **Extension materials**

Each of these types of documents tends to follow a **common structure** and is written in a particular **style**.

Solution

Hold a writeshop where the facilitator guides authors through the writing and editing process.

Five types of sessions:

- ▶ **Presentations by the facilitator** using PowerPoint presentations and examples of existing materials
- ▶ **Group discussions** and exercises
- ▶ **Individual work** writing and editing text
- ▶ **One-on-one writing clinics** with editors
- ▶ **Presentations by the authors** of what they have written

Example

Structure of a policy brief

Many **policy briefs** follow this pattern:

- ▶ Title
- ▶ Summary
- ▶ Recommendations
- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ The body (the main text)
- ▶ Policy implications
- ▶ Conclusions

Plus...

- ▶ Boxes and sidebars
- ▶ Cases
- ▶ Tables
- ▶ Graphics
- ▶ Photographs

This common structure makes it easier to teach people how to write this type of document.

Training materials

Download training materials from www.mamud.com/techniques.htm

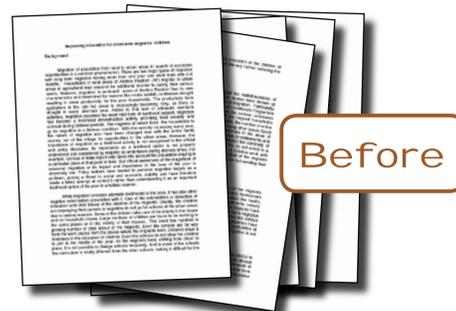


An editor advises an author on how to develop her policy brief

What can you achieve?

This depends on the **time** and **number of editors**.

- ▶ **2–3 days** Initial drafts ready, but need a lot more work
- ▶ **4–5 days** Drafts in more finished form, only a little extra work needed
- ▶ **One editor can handle all the presentations**, but you will need one or more **assistant editors**: one for about every **6 authors**.



How to do it

Preparation

- ▶ Invite authors to write drafts following guidelines
- ▶ Authors prepare drafts

Writeshop

- ▶ Presentations, discussions, exercises
- ▶ Individual work and writing clinics with editors
- ▶ Presentations by authors of their text, with comments from others

After writeshop

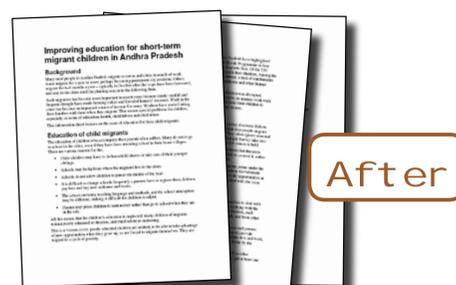
- ▶ Further editing and layout of text



Training participants in Vietnam discuss each others' drafts

You can ask participants to bring materials with them, or they can develop them from scratch in a writeshop.

But don't expect too much – writing is a skill that cannot be perfected overnight!



The one-on-one clinics let the participants learn while writing on their own speciality area.