HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR ACADEMIC ENGLISH

Getting the most out of an English speaking environment

Stew Markel: Coordinator, English for Academic Purposes (EAP)
Welcome

• The Center for the Study of Languages and Cultures
  • 329 DeBartolo Hall
  • Web: http://cslc.nd.edu/

• English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Program
  • EAP Fellow: Julia Feder & Sarah Baechle
  • Workshops & Blog
  • Tutoring & Consultation Services
  • Web: http://cslc.nd.edu/eap
# Graduate School Professional Development Activities Checklist

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<th>Department and Discipline</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Career</th>
<th>Ethics</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Early Stage</strong></td>
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<td>(coursework: pre-doctoral)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Learn about programs and resources</td>
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<td>- Synch to the professional development calendar</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Develop a strategic plan with your academic advisor</td>
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<td>- Meet with your subject librarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Explore resources for internal and external grants and fellowships</td>
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<td>- Sign up for COS and register professional profile</td>
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<td>- Apply for grants and fellowships</td>
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<td><strong>Mid Stage</strong></td>
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<td>(master’s research; candidacy exams)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Assess your strategic plan</td>
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<td>- Meet departmental milestones</td>
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<td>- Develop a network within your department</td>
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<td>- Pursue leadership and service options</td>
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<td>- Join professional organizations and build your external network</td>
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<td>- Participate in academic writing workshops</td>
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<td>- Attend and present at conferences</td>
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<td>- Apply for grants and fellowships</td>
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<td>- Volunteer as a journal reviewer</td>
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<td><strong>Late Stage</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(dissertation: job search)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Request references and identify job opportunities</td>
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<td>- Mentor junior students</td>
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<td>- Meet all deadlines</td>
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<td>- Write and practice your job talk</td>
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<td>- Attend a dissertation defense</td>
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<td>- Report placement to Graduate School</td>
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<td>- Form a dissertation reading/writing group</td>
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<td>- Build international and interdisciplinary network</td>
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<td>- Publish your research</td>
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<td>- Devise a 5-year research plan</td>
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<td>- Apply for dissertation fellowships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Identify funding sources for continued research</td>
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[graduate school link](graduateschool.nd.edu/professional_development)
http://graduateschool.nd.edu/professional_development/pdcalendar/
The Learning Process

• Describe a skill or aptitude you developed over time. (ex: musical instrument)
• What was the key to mastery?
• What advice would you give to a novice?

• Practicing consistently in meaningful blocks of time each day is better than practicing for several hours just once a week.
World Englishes

- How many different types of English can you think of?
- British English
- American English
- Australian English
- Caribbean English
- Hong Kong English
- Philippine English
- Singapore English
- South African English
- Indian English
- Hip-hop English
- ...
What is Academic English?

• Talk about the last time you had to explain a complex topic or idea.
• How is the language we use in conversation different than the language used to explain or teach something complex.
• Assume the person you are teaching has no prior knowledge or background in the topic?
• **Write down 3-5 features of Academic English.**
• Share them with a partner
Features of Academic English

- Rich detail and description
- Combine and link sentences: paragraph length discourse
- Narrate and describe using major time frames
- Handle challenges presented by complications
- Paraphrasing
- Multiple examples

- Consistent accuracy, clarity, and precision
- Without misrepresentation or confusion
- Can be understood by people unaccustomed to dealing with non-native speakers
- Variety of communicative tasks

For more info see: www.languagetesting.com
Improving Academic Writing By Reading

• “All text represents content, which is what we want to get out of the text, but it also has a structure or organization.” Joanna Williams, professor of psychology and education, Columbia University.

• Read for content first, **read again for form & structure**
Improving Academic Writing By Reading

- **Read for content first, read again for form & structure**
- Take notes on commonly used structures: descriptive, cause-effect, compare and contrast, etc.
- Look for key vocabulary and transition words/phrases
- Identify what you do not understand or what is confusing
- How does the author connect the central ideas to secondary topics?
- Keep a reading response journal
  - Example
Building Vocabulary

- When do you know a new word or phrase has been added to your vocabulary?
  - Know what it means (Definition)
  - Know how to say it (Pronunciation)
  - Know how to spell it (Spelling)
  - Know when and when not to use it (Context & Grammar)
- You can use the word/phrase with confidence
Vocabulary Notebooks

- Pay attention to what you hear and read
- Note words and phrases you want to use
- **Write them down in an organized place**
- Look up the definition and usage
- Track how often you use a word or phrase
- Choose **NO MORE** than 3-4 to practice each week
- If you can use it five or more times in a single week move on to a new word/phrase
Spoken Language

• How much time do you spend actually speaking English every week?
  • Not listening to a lecture or other students
  • Not getting explanations in your own language about how the language works
  • Not watching TV/Movies or listening to the radio

• How much time do you spend in focused speaking practice?
Strategies: SEAMAP

- Speak
- English
- As
- Much
- As
- Possible
Focused Speaking Practice

• **Record Yourself**
  • Talk about academic topics as if you were talking to an expert.

• **Listen immediately and again 24 hours**
  • What do you notice about your own speech?
  • Which sounds do you have difficulty hearing?
  • Where do you pause or hesitate?
  • What vocabulary are you using

• **Favor frequency vs. length**
  • You will improve more quickly if you record yourself 10 minutes per day than if you try to do 2 hours once a week
Self-Monitoring: Speaking

- Take what you need from each and every communication encounter
- Continuously review your progress
Second Language Acquisition

• “We believe that what the learner does to learn a foreign language is far more important than what the teacher teaches.”

• The ABCs of Languages and Linguistics: A Basic Introduction to Language Science" by Curtis Hayes, Jacob Ornstein & William Gage

• What does this quote say to you about building language skills?

• With a partner: Come up with your own statement about language learning
Goals Survey

- What do you hope to accomplish regarding your academic English?
- Why do you want to improve?
- What is clear & effective communication?
- What is your present level? What is your target?
- How much time can you realistically spend practicing your academic English?
Goal Setting Best Practices

• Take into consideration the your personal time commitments and abilities.
• Identify strategies to achieve your goals, create a plan with objectives and execute it.
• Monitor your progress and refine your goals, objectives, strategies and plans as needed.
• The more you put into your language the more you will get out of it.
Example Goals

• I want to improve my English pronunciation so I sound just like a native speaker.

• I want to improve my English pronunciation so I can communicate my dissertation topic to people unfamiliar with my accent.
Action Plan

• Make a plan for working on your academic English
  • Set realistic goals
  • Learn about the features of academic English
  • Record and listen to yourself
  • Read for more than just content
  • Build self-monitoring skills
  • Use your new vocabulary in your daily life
  • Gain confidence and comfort
Looking for advice

• Read the following situation with a partner and discuss possible solutions for Sam.

• Sam is preparing to give a presentation at an academic conference at the end of the semester. Currently he does the following:
  • He reads various articles on the topic of the presentation for 1-2 hours a week.
  • He writes notes on the topic for 30 minutes once a week.
  • For the remaining hours of the week, he is focused on other things.
  • He usually works individually in the lab, at the library or at home.
  • Sam only talks to his professors and colleagues about other topics: what is going on in the lab, what classes to take, etc.
Looking for advice

• *Read the following situation with your partner and discuss possible solutions for Mae.*

• Mae is trying to improve her spoken English. Currently she does the following:
  • She goes to EAP workshops occasionally and has never made an appointment with an EAP tutor.
  • She usually works individually in her lab, at the library or at home.
  • Although she watches English language TV she speaks very little.
  • She only occasionally speaks with her professors outside of class.
  • Most of Mae’s friends are from her native country, so when she socializes with friends she usually speaks her native language.
Making Pronunciation a Habit

• Practice *everyday* for 10-20 minutes
• Practice in a quiet environment
• Do a lot of listening
• Self-monitor
Self-Monitoring: Speaking

- Take what you need from each and every communication encounter
- Continuously review your progress
Resources on Campus

- ISSA
  - [http://issa.nd.edu/](http://issa.nd.edu/)
- University Writing Center
  - [http://writingcenter.nd.edu](http://writingcenter.nd.edu)
- English for Academic Purposes
  - [http://cslc.nd.edu/eap/](http://cslc.nd.edu/eap/)
Upcoming EAP Events

• Starting a Successful Job Search
  • Co-sponsored with the Career Center
  • TH Sept. 12  303 DeBartolo 6:30

• US Classroom Culture: What to Expect as an International Student and a Teaching Assistants
  • Co-sponsored with the Kaneb Center for Teaching & Learning
  • TU Sept. 17  303 DeBartolo  6:30

• Sign-up today for a tutoring session
  • http://cslc.nd.edu/eap/tutoring/