Accountability Partners: A Short Guide

What are the qualities of a good accountability partner?

- You can ask anyone to hold you accountable, but an ideal partner is a fellow writer who understands the ebb and flow of writing life.
- While an accountability partner can be a colleague, it is often beneficial to engage with a writer in a different department, at another university, or even a non-academic writer.
- The key is to find a partner who will provide support and motivation. A writer unfamiliar with your project or field can still promote accountability and help you maintain agency over your work.

How do accountability partnerships work?

- Accountability partnerships are flexible: You get to define what your writing progress looks like. Your partner prompts you to be answerable for this progress.
- Try setting one SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, & time-bound) goal ahead of each accountability check-in.
    - You might choose the most difficult goal or the goal that deserves the most priority that week.
    - It could also be a process-oriented goal (Ex: writing for 30 min. each day.)
- External pressure can be extremely motivating. You may find yourself more focused when you have to report whether you met your goal for the day or week.
- But it's not all about pressure! Support, advice, and feedback are equally important. A partner can help you to set more realistic and specific goals, and celebrate your successes.
- Commitment: Show up for your partner and show up for yourself! Even if you haven't achieved your goal, use your check-in to support your partner and share your struggles.

How do we get started?

Clearly define and agree upon realistic expectations and establish a regular meeting/check-in schedule. Consider this checklist for some suggestions:

What will happen at your check-ins (pick one or more)?

❏ Goal-setting

Set individual goals with deadlines, then report back to each other. Consider developing a shared document in which to track weekly goals.

❏ Sharing work

Exchange work with each other to meet agreed-upon deadlines. Decide whether you will offer each other feedback. If so, when and in what form?

❏ Wellness check-ins

Set aside time to check-in briefly about both writing and non-writing lives. What are you looking forward to this week? What's life like in your neighborhood? Video chats: Any pets, babies, or other fun visitors?

❏ Co-working

Each writer works independently on their own project, with a check-in at the start and end of the session. Consider using a Pomodoro timer, or an accountability app like Forest.

❏ Other

What would best support your own writing needs?

What will be your primary method of communication?

❏ Email/Text

❏ Phone/Video chat

❏ In person (If so, where?)

How often will you meet/check-in?

❏ Daily / more than once a week

❏ Weekly

❏ Biweekly

When will you meet/check-in? If you decide to have a phone call, video chat, or in person meeting, how long will it last?

Will you use any other form of tracking your progress? Ex: a shared Google spreadsheet logging word counts, page numbers, sections, or time spent.